

# Living Church News

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## Inside:

**Sympathy vs. Compassion** ..... 3

**What Is Your Calling?** ..... 6

**What Are Your Priorities?** ..... 9

**What Lessons Did You Learn From the Apostasy?** ..... 12

**Four Deadly Playmates** ..... 15

**The Place to Which We Shall All Come** ..... 17

**Local Church News** ..... 22

**Commentary** ..... 24

## Rekindle Your Zeal!

Dear Brethren and Friends,

With an entire cascade of prophetic events coming together, we in the Living Church of God should have a genuine sense of *excitement*! For these events are *encouraging* and *inspiring*! And they herald the soon-coming Kingdom of God and the time for our reward!

- End-time prophetic events are coming together in the Middle East, Europe and elsewhere.
- The *impact* of our Work is increasing all over the world.
- *Far more* new donors, co-workers and even prospective members are joining our ranks—presaging *real growth* at the local congregation level in coming months.

Brethren, back in the 1950s and 1960s a definite “sense of excitement” permeated God’s Church. *Many* of you older brethren remember that. There was constant growth. There was constant expectation of Jesus Christ’s *soon return* and the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Yet with the various upsets, trials and tests of the 1970s and 1980s, the death of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986—and the massive apostasy and splintering of God’s Church that took place—the sense of excitement has certainly diminished among God’s people. And the virtual explosion of little “one-man groups” popping up here and there has also caused many to become cynical or disillusioned.

But, my brethren, we obviously *are* near the *end* of the age now—and the *dozens* of prophetic events moving ahead certainly indicate this to those who have “eyes to see.” So I am encouraging *all* of us as a Church to “snap out of it” and rekindle the *zeal* and the *sense of excitement* we ought to have, when we realize that Christ has granted us the magnificent opportunity to help prepare the way for the most awesome and exciting events ever to occur on planet earth. The final trumpet blast shattering the earth’s atmosphere, the glorious return of Christ as King of kings, and an *entirely new world* emerging will bring a degree of peace and joy *beyond anything* this world has yet experienced!

By *focusing* on this, and earnestly preparing for Tomorrow’s World, we can *all* have a sense of purpose and excitement! The Apostle Paul instructed 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. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life

appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).

As each of us, daily, cries out in fervent prayer to God to send His Kingdom soon, and asks God to powerfully use us in preparing the way, we will be encouraged and blessed in our daily lives. But, far beyond that, we will learn to work together as a “team”—under Christ’s direction—in helping proclaim His message to “all the nations” of this earth. It truly is vital, brethren, that we consciously strive to learn and to practice God’s form of government as we carry out His Work today. Otherwise, we are not preparing to administer that very type of government in Tomorrow’s World.

The principle of “servant leadership”—of constantly thinking, “how can I serve others?”—must be increasingly inculcated into each of our hearts and minds. For, even today, some among us simply want to “be important”—and are more concerned about their “feelings” or their present “position” in God’s Church than about giving, helping, serving and truly preparing the way for Christ’s return. Yet the living Jesus Christ really is “watching” us, to see if our actions match our words as genuine Christians. Will we serve loyally on Christ’s team—doing His Work—only so long as we have an “important” title or position?

Think carefully about that, brethren!

How can Christ trust us to be loyal to Him and to His government for all eternity if we show ourselves ready to “jump ship” over some real or imagined hurts—or even, occasionally, actual mistakes by His human leaders—while the Truth is being preached and the Work is being done? How often could Mr. Dibar Apartian, Mr. Carl McNair and I have “jumped ship” and left the Church under Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong’s leadership when we saw genuine mistakes being made?

No way!

Each of us, and many other loyal ministers, “hung in there” because we were willing to see the Big Picture. We knew that Mr. Armstrong was preaching the Truth, that the genuine Work of the Gospel was being carried out through him and the Work he was directing, and that—even though imperfectly at times—the biblical form of Church government was being taught and practiced under his direction!

The Living Church of God is definitely showing these same “fruits” today! So let us move forward, brethren, with zeal and with enthusiasm! As end-time prophetic events speed up, let us increase our zeal and our efforts in doing the Work. Even though the “pride” of our power is being broken, the value of the U.S. dollar is decreasing, and America is being hated more and more in nearly every corner of the earth, we in God’s Church should nevertheless be grateful, because these seemingly “bad” events are a specific fulfillment of what we have preached for decades! As storms and earthquakes and disease epidemics begin to strike with increasing power, and as more droughts, famines and acts of terror strike our nations, let us nevertheless be thankful. For this simply means Christ’s return is that much closer! As Jesus Himself told us after describing these coming events,

continues on page 20

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# Sympathy vs. Compassion

*It is easy to sympathize with a person who seems to be “picked on” for reasons we do not understand. What does Scripture say on this important topic?*

## **Editorial**

By Roderick C. Meredith

**H**ave you ever had a “suffering hero” complex—a state of self-pity in which you felt everyone was down on you? Chances are, you probably have. Most of us have it at least once in a great while.

But, with some people, this complex becomes a fixed mental habit. When such persons are denied what they want—even though they may not deserve it—they begin to feel sorry for themselves and to place the blame on others. They usually set out to win sympathy for their cause, and often lead many others into an attitude of bitterness toward those who, in their view, are persecuting them or not giving them the answer or decision they want.

Psychologists are quite familiar with this complex. Every organization or business of any size has its share. And, in nearly every case, one factor seems to be constant with these individuals. They place the blame for their troubles and lack of success upon their leaders, whose position and success they secretly envy. Yet they are unwilling or unable to take the steps to produce the fruit in their own lives that would entitle them to similar position and success.

## **Christian “Martyrs”**

Brethren in God’s Church, even with God’s Spirit, are subject to all the temptations and deceits of human nature, one of which can be the tendency some show to regard themselves as persecuted “martyrs” or “suffering heroes,” if they are unable to have their own way in Church matters or in problems with other Church members.

Jesus Christ was never inclined to feel “put down” or to get into a bad attitude, thinking He was not allowed to have His own way. Just before He had to give His life in an agonizing death on the cross, Jesus prayed, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Jesus was still flesh and blood, and He dreaded what was coming. But He surrendered His own will, that God’s will might be done. Jesus was not too concerned about His feelings or having His own way on that night before the crucifixion. If He had been, we would be without a Savior!

In spite of Jesus’ example, some who call themselves Christians are continually feeling “hurt”—either by imagining that they are being persecuted, or by sympathizing with someone else whom they mistakenly believe is a victim of unjust treatment.

## **Sympathize with Sin?**

Nearly everyone tends to sympathize with a “victim.” However, too few people realize that in God’s Church, such sympathies are in many cases actually *against God Himself* and the way of God! In plain language, anyone who thinks that God is correcting a person unjustly is actually sympathizing with Satan the devil!

Yes, we should love those who have erred. But too many people fail to distinguish between the *love* we *should* have for such people, and the inappropriate active “sympathy” we *should not* have for their wrong choices or way of life.

Naturally, when we speak of having “sympathy” with sin, we mean the attitude of condoning and agreeing with the wrong principle involved. We should have compassion on sinners, just as Christ did.

God loves His children. Yet, we read in Hebrews 12:6, “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” God’s chastening is not something that we enjoy, but we know He does it for our ultimate good.

In like manner, the true ministers of Jesus Christ have the responsibility of correcting and rebuking the Church (Titus 2:15). Jesus gave His ministers the authority, under God, to make binding decisions in their func-

tion of teaching and directing the Church (Matthew 16:19, 18:18).

In matters involving the governing and directing of the Church, Christians are commanded to obey those whom Christ has used in faithfully preaching the word to them and in bringing them to the truth (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Such true ministers are responsible to Christ for ruling His Church, and He will guide them with the Holy Spirit.

In doing so, God's ministers need to make a great many decisions in directing the Work of the Church—decisions that may be misconstrued if all the facts are not known, or if human reason is used to pervert the facts. And remember: no one should try to appoint himself as a minister, an elder or a teacher, or to any other position in God's Church.

### God's Direction

How do we know when God is working with and directing an individual? The answer is found in the Scriptures. In Luke 6:12–16, we find the account of how Jesus prayed all night to God for guidance before “He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.”

Not one of these men appointed himself. Jesus chose each one. Later, He told them, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (John 15:16).

After Jesus ascended to heaven and the Church began to grow, the apostles found that too much of their time was being taken up with physical service, which others could perform. So, they asked the brethren to “seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

Notice that these men were appointed by the apostles, who had already been specially called and chosen by Jesus. They did not appoint themselves.

Later, a man named Saul was feverishly engaged in persecuting and destroying the Church, when Christ struck him down and blinded him, and brought him to repentance. One of the disciples, Ananias, was told in a vision: “he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Even after God specially chose the Apostle Paul, He confirmed his choice by revealing it to someone who was *already in* God's Church.

Paul tells us, “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Here we find that it is God who sets people in positions of authority in His Church.

Notice that, in every case, God revealed a person's calling to those who were *already in authority* in His Church—either the apostles themselves, or the prophets or the elders and teachers whom they had appointed through God's direction.

God's Church was governed and supervised from the top down. When calling or choosing someone for an office in the Church, God always worked through those He had already set in authority. That way, there would be no division or confusion in His Church. That is God's way, the revealed Bible way. We need to follow it!

### Training Necessary

Another fundamental fact, which few realize, is that God always used men who were trained and prepared for the work to which He called them.

Moses was reared in the Pharaoh's palace, where he would be trained and schooled in the knowledge of the Egyptians, one of the most cultured peoples of that time (Exodus 2).

Daniel was instructed in all the wisdom and learning of the Chaldeans, the greatest nation of that era (Daniel 1:4).

The apostles were first called disciples or students. They were trained and schooled for more than three years by Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was prepared for his mission by studying at the feet of Gamaliel, recognized as probably the greatest Jewish teacher of that time.

In modern times, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong was prepared for his worldwide ministry by being led to enter the advertising and publishing field, where he received the special kind of training necessary to prepare him for conducting the Work using radio, television and the printing press.

Christ has promised to be with and specially guide His called servants in matters of Church government and discipline (Matthew 18:15–20). That is the way that Christ rules the true Church.

Even so, there will be problems in God's Church. And not all of these problems will be solved to everyone's complete satisfaction. This is because very few people keep close enough to God to know His will in directing the Church. So, when personal desire and ambitions enter into the picture, it is easy even for a converted person to let self-will get in the way of God's will.

These factors will give opportunity for those who continue in self-will to cry out that they are being treated unfairly, or that they are martyrs or “victims.” You need to realize this, and ask God to help you get all sides of the case before jumping to a hasty and wrong conclusion!

### Jesus Guides His Church!

Although Jesus specially promised to guide His ministers in



exercising their authority to “bind” or “loose” in applying God’s law to a particular case, He did not promise that they would never make a mistake. Paul told the Ephesian elders whom he ordained: “from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:30).

So, even though they diligently seek God’s direction, God’s ministers today may make a few human errors in their decisions, including their appointment of elders, deacons or others to offices in the Church. But that is for Christ to judge! God’s ministers are responsible to Him.

Jesus is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). *Think it over!*

Knowing that the true Church of God is a spiritual organism which Christ rules and directs through His ministers, we should be very careful not to let Satan put into us a spirit of antagonism against them. Once God has shown you where He is working in carrying the true Gospel to the world, and whom He is using in this ministry, you should obey them in matters of Church government and direction.

In matters of faith, you should follow them *as they follow Christ* (1 Corinthians 11:1). This way leads to

If possible, you should try to point out their mistake, help them to get their minds off their own selfish desires and warn them in a loving way that such an attitude among God’s people is one that the devil is working day and night to bring about (1 Peter 5:8).

Whatever you do, *do not succumb to an aggrieved person’s attitude yourself*, or let the person make you embittered to the extent that you reject God’s truth and thereby fail to gain eternal life. Yes, the embittered—and those who sympathize with them—may well even be in danger of the lake of fire. History has

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**God’s Church was governed and supervised from the top down. When calling or choosing someone for an office in the Church, God always worked through those He had already set in authority. That way, there would be no division or confusion in His Church. That is God’s way, the revealed Bible way. We need to follow it!**

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If God’s ministers seem a little slow in appointing someone to an office in the Church, or if they appear to have made a mistake in such an appointment or in any other decision they may need to make, the truly Christian thing to do is not to criticize and condemn, but to get down on your knees before God, and ask Him to show God’s ministers His will, to rebuke and chasten us if necessary—and to guide us in directing His Church, as He has promised to do.

And, while you are at it, you had better ask God to show you if *you* are the one who is wrong! The Bible reveals that when individuals disagreed with God’s called servants, those individuals were *nearly always* the ones who were wrong (3 John 1:9–10; 2 Timothy 1:15).

In the past, Jesus has always directed His Church and His true servants so that they were far more fair and just in directing the Church than others would have been.

unity, peace and love as God intends. It avoids strife and confusion, which are of the devil.

### **How to Provide Real Help!**

If occasions arise where brethren around you have become disgruntled over a supposed injustice, you should remind yourself that Christ has promised to guide His Church into all truth—and you should ask Him to do that. If people in the Church feel they have been wronged or discriminated against by God’s servants—and if they come to you looking for sympathy—you *should* help them.

Yes, you *should* help them! God shows you how.

First, find the real reason for their attitude. You will not be helping if you actively sympathize with their supposed cause. This will only make them feel more secure in their error, and seem to substantiate their feeling of bitterness.

shown that if people allow themselves to become embittered and reject a minister, they usually end up rejecting Christ’s message!

It just does not pay to fight God’s true servants. When the men of Israel became angry because of Samuel’s sons and wanted to reject Samuel, God said, “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7).

The problem of distinguishing between sympathy and true compassion will *always* be solved if brethren are willing to obey God’s will, which He expresses by directing the Church through His called and chosen ministers—and if all of us *pray earnestly* that God will protect His Church and keep it free from strife and division. Christ’s Body, the true Church, is not to be divided (1 Corinthians 1:13). Only by working *together* can we carry out the worldwide mission Christ has given to all in His Church. ☞

# What Is Your Calling?

By Douglas S. Winnail

**T**he Bible describes people being called by God. But what does that mean? Just what is a calling? Have you been called? How would you know? Why does God call people? Is a calling the same as conversion?

In this article, we will examine what the Bible reveals about a calling. We will find out what constitutes a calling and why it is such a unique opportunity. We will also learn why it is vital to understand what Scripture reveals about this important subject. Many questions arise today because some have forgotten—or never understood or do not believe—what the Bible plainly states about a calling.

## An Old Testament Calling

In the book of Isaiah, we find several references to a calling from God. Isaiah refers to a “Servant” of God, an “Elect One,” who is called by God to be a “covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6). These verses are referring prophetically to Jesus Christ and the role He was to fulfill. However, they seem to contain a dual reference to the nation of Israel, which the previous chapter describes as the “servant” of God (Isaiah 41:8–10). This same parallel reference to Christ and Israel is found in Isaiah 49:1–6, where the servant of God is called to be a light to the Gentiles. The Hebrew word translated “called” is *qara*, which means “invited, requested, ordered.” These scriptures indicate that God called both Christ and the nation of Israel for a purpose—to do a job. We will see that this same meaning—being called for a purpose—carries over into the New Testament.

## Jesus Explains

In the book of Matthew we read that “out of Egypt I called My Son” (Matthew 2:15). Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with the infant Jesus to save His life (Matthew 2:13–14). However, this refuge in Egypt was only temporary (vv. 19–23). Jesus was called out of Egypt to fulfill a mission—to preach the gospel, train disciples, give His life as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind and raise up a Church to continue His work. As we will see, God calls people into His Church not to hide from the world—nor just to socialize together—but to take part in a vital mission.

To the disciples He called, Jesus clearly outlined the purpose of a calling. The Greek word translated “called”

means to be invited or to receive an invitation. Christ invited the disciples to “follow” Him and become “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18–22). They were invited to follow His example and instructions—and to do His work. They were not invited to criticize or second-guess their Teacher. They were not invited to ignore His instruction to preach the gospel or to innovate upon His teachings. They were called for very important reasons—and to receive a specific reward! Jesus also stated “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Matthew 9:13). We are not called because of our goodness or because we deserve to be called, but because we need to change! The Bible plainly states that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In spite of the message of the old Protestant hymn, a person is not called to remain “just as I am.” We are called to repent and change, to grow and overcome and to learn to live by the laws of God—for a truly awesome purpose that is outlined in numerous scriptural passages.

Jesus told His called disciples they were given spiritual understanding not available to other people—not even to others who professed belief in God. When asked by His disciples why He spoke in parables, Jesus answered: “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [other Jews of that day] it has not been given” (Matthew 13:10–11). Jesus then quoted Old Testament prophecies indicating that people who were not called would not understand what His called disciples would understand (Matthew 13:12–16). The parable of the sower warns about taking a calling for granted, about giving up on our calling during trials and letting the cares of this world distract us from our calling (Matthew 13:18–23). Jesus told the disciples He had already called, “unless you are converted... you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3), revealing that a calling is not synonymous with conversion. Jesus also cautioned, “many are called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16). In essence, He said a calling does not mean that a person will automatically be in the Kingdom of God!

In the book of John, Jesus makes another surprising observation about a calling. He states that “no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44). In other words, in spite of what people are told today, you cannot become a real Christian just by attending the church of your choice. A calling is not just

a matter of deciding to give your heart to the Lord. God must first call you—and understanding must be granted to you! Jesus then launches into a very spiritual discussion that many of His disciples did not understand (see John 6:60). Those that did not comprehend simply ceased to follow Him (vv. 63–66). This means that while people may sincerely believe in God, if their minds have not been opened to grasp the plan of God and the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, they are not being called right now. Billions of people, including professing Christians, believe in God. But if they cannot grasp the Truth, they simply have not been called. A calling, which God grants for a specific reason, is a very special invitation by God to understand His plan and the purpose of human life.

Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus did not go running after followers who did not understand His message, to try to convince them to change their minds so they could be saved! Jesus knew God the Father was calling those

on Him,” believe the gospel and act on it will be saved. Paul also explains that God is calling an “elect” (Romans 11:5) but that his own countrymen, although they believed in God, were temporarily blinded from fully understanding the plan of God because they did not believe Jesus Christ was the Messiah (Romans 11:8–25). Paul explains that while a calling (to be the chosen people of God) is irrevocable, they are currently in a state of disobedience, in contrast to the elect who are being called now (Romans 11:28–32) to learn to live by every word of God.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “you see your calling brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). God is only calling those who are humble enough to follow His instructions as recorded in His word—the Bible. God is not able to work with people who like to argue over Scripture or who want to interpret

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who were given to Him, and that others were simply not being called at that time. Other scriptures reveal that their calling—their opportunity to understand—would be at a later date.

### **Paul’s Perspective**

The Apostle Paul was inspired to reveal additional details about a calling. He explains 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). He explains that in God’s plan of salvation He predestined (or predetermined) to call an initial group of people who would be justified by Christ’s sacrifice to become glorified spirit beings as the firstfruits in God’s kingdom (Romans 8:23–30). Paul shows that if we accept that calling and are willing to be led by God’s Spirit (following what God opens our minds to understand) we will have the opportunity to become “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). That is an awesome opportunity, as we will see!

Paul goes on to emphasize that one must respond to the gospel preached by God’s true ministers—ministers “sent” by God (Romans 10:13–15). “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (v. 15). Only those who “call

the Bible according to their own feelings. Paul repeats Jesus’ words that the Holy Spirit imparts special spiritual understanding of the mysteries of God to those who are called—understanding not available to others in the world at this time (1 Corinthians 2). This is a key aspect of a calling from God.

If you can clearly see what the Bible reveals as the plan of God—if the gospel of the Kingdom of God makes sense to you—you have tangible proof that you have received a calling from God! The question is, what are you doing with that calling? We are also told in Scripture that God gives His Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). This means that if we begin to compromise the truth of God, argue with Scripture and follow our own ideas, we will begin to lose the discernment that God’s Spirit imparts (2 Timothy 1:6–7). We could then be deceived, and we could lose out on our calling (Hebrews 6:4–6)!

Paul’s writings also discuss other aspects of a calling. He told the Corinthians who were called but were still in slavery or had an unconverted mate, “let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (1 Corinthians 7:20). A person called as a slave might seek freedom (v. 21), but freedom in itself is not the chief goal for a true Christian. We are not called to change the world now—that will come in the future—we are called now to

change ourselves! The main purpose for our calling is to learn to live by the commandments of God (v. 19). Paul urges the Ephesians to “walk worthy of your calling” in humility, gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:1). He explains we are called into one unified body and one faith—not into many different groups and versions of the “truth” (Ephesians 4:3–6). He warns called Ephesians not to be deceived by returning to the works of darkness, out of which they had been called (Ephesians 5:1–14).

Paul similarly advises the church at Thessalonica that we have been called to holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7). This involves learning to avoid the lusts and evils of this world (1 Thessalonians 4:1–7). If we reject living by God’s instructions we will, in essence, reject God and our calling from God! We understand that it was Paul who, in Hebrews, told those who were called to inherit salvation to “give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away” (Hebrews 2:1). Paul asked the same audience of called individuals: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3). The Bible plainly reveals that a calling is not something to take lightly!

### **Peter’s Principles**

The Apostle Peter reiterates many of the same points that Jesus and Paul made about a calling. Peter writes that we have been called out of darkness (our former religious or irreligious background) to be a special people “to proclaim the praises of Him who called you” (1 Peter 2:9). He warns that some may stumble over the word of God (1 Peter 2:8) by becoming involved in fruitless arguments or developing doubts, and lose out on their calling. Peter goes on to show (as did Paul in Ephesians 5) that our calling involves learning to follow God’s instructions. We are to be subject to government, servants are to be subject to their masters, women are to be subject to their husbands, husbands are to love their wives, children are to honor their parents and we are all to be of one mind (1 Peter 3:8; Ephesians 6:2). We are called to learn God’s way of life so we will be able to teach it to others—both now (1 Peter 3:15) and in the future Kingdom of God (Isaiah 30:20–21).

Peter stresses the “exceedingly great and precious promises” that we have been called to receive, promises of eternal life, a knowledge of God’s purpose for human life, to be partakers of the divine nature [become members of God’s family], and to escape the corruption [deception and depravity] that permeates this world—once our minds have been opened (2 Peter 1:1–4). Peter admonishes us to “make your calling and election sure” by adding specific qualities to our character—including

knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and brotherly love (2 Peter 1:5–11). Peter is saying that Jesus does not do everything for us!

There are things we must do to make our calling sure! Peter also explains that those who are called will be given a “more sure word of prophecy” (KJV), so they can accomplish their mission of warning the world of events that will precede the second coming of Jesus Christ (v. 19). And he states clearly that Scripture is not for private interpretation (v. 20). Peter also warns that those who are called must be careful to avoid being deceived by false teachers who spread heresies, who despise authority and are self-willed, who promise freedom, yet bring people into bondage to misleading and wrong ideas (2 Peter 2:1–19). He observes that a Christian who willingly returns to false teachings after being called is like a dog returning to its own vomit (v. 22). That is a strong statement, but it is how God views someone who turns away from His calling! But why is God calling a special group of people now before He calls the rest of mankind? What is the ultimate purpose of our calling?

### **A Calling: The Ultimate Purpose!**

Some of the most exciting details of a calling are found in the writings of the Apostle John in the closing books of the Bible. John reveals that we are to be “called children of God” and that “when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1–3). Our purpose for being called is to learn to become like God—to think as He does and to act as He does. This will require serious effort on our part (1 John 3:4; Acts 24:16). Those who accept this calling—to repent and change and grow in their understanding and application of the laws of God—will be given the opportunity to reign as kings and priests with Jesus Christ when He returns to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 11:15–18). Those called now are invited to become the firstfruits—a small, specially trained nucleus of individuals that God will begin to build His kingdom around (Revelation 7:1–4; 14:1–4). They will become founding members of a world-ruling government that Jesus will set up in Jerusalem to bring peace and justice to this planet (Isaiah 2:2–4; 9:6–7). They will have the opportunity to teach God’s way of life to all mankind (Isaiah 11:9). But what will it take to achieve this incredible goal?

Who will actually have the privilege of accompanying Jesus Christ at His return? Again, the Apostle John’s inspired writings reveal the answer. In the book of

*continues on page 19*



# What Are Your Priorities?

By Dibar K. Apartian

**D**o you know how to set priorities? When several things need to be done, are you able to decide which ones should come first in order of importance?

Suppose you are sitting peacefully in your living room watching the news on television. Suddenly you notice that the room is filling with smoke. Your house is on fire!

What do you do first? Do you get down on your knees and ask God for His help in stopping the fire? Do you call the fire department? Do you dash through the other rooms of your house to see if some other member of your family is caught in the fire? Do you run outside to get the hose and try to put the fire out?

All of those things may be necessary, but what do you do first? That is the big question!

Consider another example. One evening, you are in the middle of housecleaning. Your rooms are in disorder and neither you nor the other members of your family look presentable. The phone rings. It is your employer. He tells you that he will be over in a few minutes because he has something important to tell you.

What is the first thing you should do? Do you hurriedly put the house in order? Do you change your clothes and put on something more appropriate for the occasion? Do you check the kitchen to see if there is something you can offer your boss when he arrives?

Once again, all these things may be necessary, but what must you do first? It is a question of setting right priorities.

Priorities play a major role in our lives. We all have good intentions, at least most of the time. But what really counts is executing an intention at

the appropriate moment—doing the right thing at the right time. As Solomon wrote, there is a time for everything under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8). Growth results from learning to put first things first.

## Right and Wrong Priorities

Remember the story of Martha and Mary, the two sisters Christ visited? Both sisters liked and respected Christ very much. Both of them did what they thought was most important when He came to see them.

“Now it happened as they went that He [Christ] entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving” (Luke 10:38–40).

There is nothing wrong with “much serving,” is there? All of us are called to serve, and Christ Himself was the greatest servant of all. However, in this instance, priorities were at stake.

“Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?” Martha asked Christ. “Therefore tell her to help me.”

Christ answered: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (vv. 40–42). Just then, the most important thing Mary and Martha could do was listen to Christ’s teaching.

When Christ called His disciples, some of them hesitated. Others followed Him right away, because they had their priorities straight. Simon Peter, for instance, “fell down at

Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man’” (Luke 5:8).

Why did Peter say that? Because he and his fishermen friends had witnessed, a few moments earlier, an astonishing miracle Christ had performed (vv. 4–7). Simon Peter and his companions had their priorities right. Upon hearing Christ tell them, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men’... they forsook all and followed Him” (vv. 10–11). No wonder James, John and Simon later became apostles!

However, not everyone reacted the way these three men did. Not everyone had the right sense of priorities. For instance, a man who had expressed a desire to follow Christ turned away from Him when he heard Him say, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:58).

Another man turned Christ’s offer down, arguing that he first had to bury his father (v. 59). Now, what is wrong with that? Nothing! But Christ set the man’s priorities straight. He told him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God” (v. 60).

Yet another man, upon being called, told Christ, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house” (v. 61).

Again, there is nothing wrong with saying farewell to those dear to you. But much more was involved in this particular case. Most importantly, God did not come first on this man’s list of priorities. Also, you can almost detect a feeling of sorrow in his answer. He seemed to regret being called there and then, and perhaps he hoped his loved ones would convince him not to leave them for the sake of

the Gospel! That is why Christ told him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (v. 62).

### Priorities and Your Calling

Do you remember the circumstances of your calling? How did you first react? Did you perhaps want to bury someone or something before truly deciding to follow Christ? Did you hesitate to turn away from the world, finding it hard to choose between those of your household and Christ? What was your attitude then—and what is it now?

Regrettably, some in the Church are still burying their dead fathers! Some are still looking back and trying to pursue their personal ambitions before deciding to follow Christ!

Time is running short. Rearrange your priorities before it is too late!

If you put first things first, God will always take care of your needs. This does not mean you should neglect your part and stop taking care of your household. It simply means that you are to put first things first—be filled with God and His Work. You must endeavor to please Him with your attitude and growth.

As Christ said, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [all that you need] shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Do you believe this promise of God? If so, live by it!

Your baptism was symbolic of your decision to put God first in your life, no matter what the circumstances. Do you still feel the same way today? You accepted the condition to love God more than anyone or anything else, “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). This is the greatest commandment of all. Does it have first priority in your life? And after that does the second great commandment—loving your

neighbor as yourself—have all priority in your life (vv. 38–39)?

As you can see, even love has priorities! First, you must love God, and then love your neighbor. This does not mean you should neglect loving your neighbor because you love God first. It is just a matter of priority. Actually, if you really love God—if you obey His commandments and do His will—you automatically love your neighbor, because you cannot love God without loving your neighbor (1 John 4:20). Remember not to neglect *anything* on your list of priorities.

### God Came First in Abraham's Life

If you had a child whom you loved with all your being—and you had eagerly waited and prayed for years for him—would you be willing to give him up?

Abraham was put to such a test. Humanly speaking, it did not make much sense. Why did God give Abraham such a seemingly cruel order, saying, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering” (Genesis 22:2)?

Abraham must have spent a sleepless night struggling with his thoughts, wondering why God demanded such a sacrifice. He loved God, for sure. But he also loved his son Isaac very much. He had to choose between his love toward God and his love toward his son. The choice was all the more difficult since he did not understand its purpose.

Nevertheless, whatever Abraham's thoughts and concerns may have been, he set his priorities properly. He “rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son... and went to the place of which God had told him” (v. 3).

Would you have done this? Would you have obeyed God to the point of being willing to sacrifice your only son, whom you loved? Abraham passed the test.

How about you? Does God come first in your life, before anyone else, even members of your family? If you cannot put God first in your life today, how will you put Him first tomorrow, when things will be even tougher?

### David's Priorities

Kings David and Saul had totally different attitudes. David's attitude made him a man after God's own heart, while Saul's caused him to be rejected. Have you ever considered that one of David's most important qualities, far outweighing his mistakes, was his sense of priorities?

Saul was jealous of David, and had gathered 3,000 men from all of Israel to seek David and kill him. Strangely enough, the circumstances changed, offering David a unique chance to capture and kill Saul when the king was resting in a cave. What an exceptional opportunity! After all, the two men were at war with each other, and Saul had proved himself to be merciless.

“Then the men of David said to him, ‘This is the day of which the LORD said to you, “Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you”’” (1 Samuel 24:4).

It would have been only natural, humanly, for David to kill Saul, and to justify himself by saying that God had promised to make his enemies fall into his hands. But David did not reason that way. He “arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe” (vv. 4–5).

Why? Why should David's heart have troubled him? He did not commit any crime! No, but on his list of

priorities, obedience to God came first. “And he said to his men, ‘The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD’” (v. 6).

There you are! Even though Saul wanted to kill him, David refused to do any injury to the king. Respecting God’s anointed came

A question of priorities! The disciples’ lives were at stake, but they were willing to follow Christ’s instructions even if it meant death. They had learned that “He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39).

On your own list of priorities, do God, His Church and His Gospel come before your own life? Or do you perhaps desperately cling to

comes first in your life. It becomes the happiest moment in your day, because it allows you to spend some time with the Supreme Creator of the whole universe, the Almighty God who loves you and finds time to listen to you. Think of it! If He has time to listen to you, why would you not find time to talk to Him?

It takes much effort to maintain your priorities faithfully. It takes

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## As a true Christian, you should be aware that Bible study and prayer are two indispensable tools in your growth as a child of God. But how often do you use these tools? How much time do you spend with God and the Bible each day?

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before fighting for his own life. David’s tremendous attitude is an example to all of us today. Is there any wonder why he will be a king in the soon-coming Kingdom of God? As for Saul, he carnally sought his own selfish interests, going after power and personal exaltation. That is why God rejected him.

### **Obey God Rather Than Men**

The disciples of Christ, before receiving the Holy Spirit, did not have the necessary power and faith to fight the enemy. They forsook Jesus and fled when the Roman soldiers arrested Him. The promise they had made to Christ a few hours earlier, to never forsake Him, was not engraved on their list of priorities.

However, after their conversion, the disciples learned their priorities. Faithful to their mission, they preached the Gospel, despite threats and persecution.

On one occasion, when they were brought before the council, the high priest asked them, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name?” But they answered, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:27–29).

your own life for fear of losing it? Remember Christ’s words! Unless you get your priorities straight, you may end up losing your life.

### **Bible Study and Prayer**

As a true Christian, you should be aware that Bible study and prayer are two indispensable tools in your growth as a child of God. But how often do you use these tools? How much time do you spend with God and the Bible each day?

Some in the Church consider Bible study a hard chore! They do not seem to find time for it in their daily schedules. They do not realize that the more they study the Bible, the more they learn about the will of God and the way to please Him.

If you are truly Christian, the Bible must have priority over all of your other readings and studies. You are doing yourself a favor when you study the Bible. Bible study is a privilege, not a chore or a task.

And how is your prayer life? Do you look forward to speaking to God every day? Do you actually enjoy praying? Or has prayer become for you just a routine, a duty that you have to perform? If your priorities are straight, prayer automatically

thinking and hard work. If the Church today is not quite ready for Christ’s return, it is because, as a whole, we do not push hard enough and often lose our sense of priorities.

In a world that has cut itself off from God, Satan wants you to reverse your priorities or cast them aside altogether. Do not let that happen! Follow God. Obey Him. Put Him first—and you will be much happier.

### **Tithing**

Tithing is a law. It is a blessing. When you tithe, you do not do God a favor, you do yourself a favor.

How do you pay your tithes? What is your attitude? Do you pay the first tenth of your check as soon as you receive it, or do you pay it only after you have paid your other bills? I remember Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong telling us during a ministerial conference that he always paid his tithe first, as soon as he received his check. His other bills had to wait. The first check he wrote was always to give God what is God’s.

What a wonderful example for all of us to follow! Put God first in your life. Some of God’s people have

*continues on page 19*

# What Lessons Did You Learn from the Apostasy?

By J. Charles Ogwyn

**F**or most members of God's Church, the 1990s were a very difficult time. The organization that had introduced most of us to the Truth began to teach heresies, and abandoned biblically sound doctrines. When the organization's leaders began to modify doctrines, we were told that nothing substantial had changed, and indeed that no major doctrinal changes would be made. Yet as time progressed, and we saw more and more doctrinal deviations being introduced, the picture that emerged was very clear: the organization whose doctrines we had embraced was rapidly becoming—when measured by those doctrines—unidentifiable as God's Church!

Most of us shared common feelings of denial, betrayal, anger and hurt before we accepted the reality of what had happened and we chose to take action, separating ourselves from what was no longer God's Church. Yet although we shared many feelings in common, we often found our individual experiences different from those around us, sometimes because of our varied personalities and sometimes because of the varied ways the changes were handled in our local congregations.

As a result, different people learned different lessons from the apostasy—and from how they responded to it. What lessons did you learn? What lessons should we all learn? And what do those lessons mean for us today?

Both the Bible and secular history demonstrate that it is easy to look back at history and draw the wrong conclusions. There are many examples of people who learned the wrong lessons from the past, and who as a result had to endure the bitter consequences of their mistakes.

After God delivered them from slavery, the Israelites spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness because they had learned the wrong lessons. The Israelites had witnessed, first-hand, the awesome power of the great God of Israel, who had begun to introduce Himself and His power through the ten plagues. After they walked on dry land through the parted sea, they saw the pursuing Egyptian army destroyed behind them. The wandering Israelites saw God's care for them as He provided manna for their daily meals. Yet, despite these and other miracles, the Israelites *failed to trust* that God would continue to care for them. In fact, they learned the *wrong* lessons when God delivered them from Egyptian slavery. Many became complainers and gave in to murmuring, and were destroyed (1

Corinthians 10:10). Later, many even hardened their hearts in rebellion against the God who had delivered them (Hebrews 3:15). Did they feel complaining was okay because they had something to complain about? Did they feel it was okay to have a hardened heart because of past suffering? Did that hardened heart justify rebellion? Clearly, the Israelites learned many lessons upon their deliverance from Egyptian slavery. But their actions demonstrated that much of what they thought they had learned was wrong!

Drawing the wrong conclusions from our past experiences can be dangerous—even fatal. Scripture shows us the condition of the Church just before Christ's return, and warns us about the trials God's people will face. To prepare for that dangerous time, it is vital that we draw the right conclusions from past lessons—and in particular from the apostasy that so recently destroyed our former association. How can we be sure we are learning the right lessons? Is there a way to be sure we have drawn valid conclusions from our past experiences? Certainly, there is—and the Bible is ever our guide! Whatever issues and situations we are facing, others before us have also faced (Ecclesiastes 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Romans 15:4). Before we assume we have learned the right lessons, we should look to Scripture to validate—or refute—our assumptions.

If we do not learn from the mistakes of history, we are bound to repeat them. What lessons did you learn from the apostasy of the 1990s? Many of the most common lessons people have taken from their experience are, in fact, wrong.

## Lessons about Governmental Structure

One common lesson from the apostasy involves the suitability of a particular form of Church government, or the approach needed toward leadership. Entire organizations have been formed directly around people's conclusions about this lesson. But has the right lesson been learned? Are the underlying assumptions valid?

Scripture shows us that on this earth, God's perfect form of government has always been applied through imperfect tools. God does things decently and in order, without confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40). God's form of government has always been one of servant leadership based on love. His form of government has always been



hierarchical, yet no one in the flesh has ever practiced it perfectly except Jesus Christ.

Consider the example of King David—a man after God’s own heart, who will in the future rule over Israel in the Kingdom of God (Acts 13:22). David was far from perfect. In fact, during his reign, he was at times headstrong and ignored wise counsel (2 Samuel 24:2–4). He allowed a rape to go unpunished because the rapist was a family member. He committed adultery with the wife of a loyal and faithful servant, and then was responsible for the murder of that devoted servant in a botched effort to keep his sin a secret (2 Samuel 13:1–21; 11:2–17). David’s conduct would be the stuff of sensational tabloid headlines today. He was a man who made some terrible mistakes—he was very human.

Can David’s faults be blamed on the form of government under which he ruled? Or does the fault lie with the human tool God selected? Seeing how both Saul and David had sinned, did God change His form of hierarchical government in future administrations? Certainly not, and neither should we. The form of government that exists in the God family today—and that will exist in His Kingdom—is hierarchical. The forms of government that God used throughout both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the physical family unit, are hierarchical. God’s approach has been—and always will be—consistent.

The old adage “once bitten, twice shy” sums up the lesson many people learned from the apostasy of the 1990s. Most who endured those troubled times became distrustful and suspicious of leadership. Why did so many learn *this* lesson, in spite of the clear biblical pattern? Why were they no longer willing to imitate the godly conduct of, or follow the godly example of, true Christian leadership (1 Corinthians 11:1)? Because they felt hurt and betrayed by what they had experienced. Satan used people’s hurt to promote his message—that you cannot rely on God to provide His leadership in His way; instead, you need to trust in your own human reasoning to protect yourself and your personal interests, even if this goes against God’s clearly established pattern.

In abstract theory, it is easy for us to acknowledge that all leaders will make mistakes because they are human. However, in practice, it can be hard for us to keep the proper perspective when we see—or think we see—a leader making mistakes.

To have the proper perspective, we must have faith—without which we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). That perspective includes a deep understanding that it is God who appoints people to positions of leadership, to work out His purpose as He sees fit, even though we often do not understand why He has done things the way He

has (Psalm 75:6–7; Isaiah 55:8–9). If we always understood what God was doing—and why—we would not need faith, because we would be able to see and understand for ourselves. Faith requires that we walk with God, trusting that He knows what He is doing and will see us through until the end, as long as we walk with Him (Hebrews 11:3).

Self-preservation is an aspect of human nature, but God expects Christians to overcome their carnal human nature. Many correctly saw during the apostasy that their leaders cared more about themselves than about the brethren. How sad and ironic it is, then, that some brethren have decided that they, too, must look to self instead of to God to protect their interests. Such a faithless and self-centered approach is not compatible with living faith and daily surrender to our Creator.

### **“If only I had known...”**

If you knew back then what you know now, what would you have done differently? What should you have done differently?

Perhaps you could have tried to stop the apostasy. However, Scripture reminds us that the Church was led astray by individuals whom God had placed in their positions of leadership (Psalm 75:6–7). Anciently, King David clearly recognized King Saul’s failings. Yet even though he knew he was to be Saul’s successor, he also knew better than to try and hasten God’s timing (1 Samuel 26:9–11).

Christ recognized character flaws in Judas. He knew that if He selected Judas to be one of the twelve, he would betray Him. However, Christ chose Judas in spite of his failings, because this fit with the purpose God was working out at that time.

Similarly, it was God who allowed leadership positions to be given to those who led so many people astray in the 1990s. By allowing those leaders to lead, He was working out a purpose that none of us saw or recognized at that time.

What was God doing? What good did He accomplish? How does what happened fit in with Romans 8:28? In retrospect, we can see that God was pruning His Church (John 15:1–2). Pruning explains the pain that we went through and the reason for it. Pruning also explains the destruction that we witnessed. God did this for our growth and for our benefit; He wanted us to deepen our relationship with Him, and as a result bear more fruit in our lives.

We all recognize the need to be close to God and to rely on Him. Yet we often need a motivator like pain or danger to give us a sense of urgency about our need to draw close to our Savior. Scripture shows us that ancient

Israel apostatized many times. The Gospels warn of apostasy. Paul writes about it. So do James and Jude. From Scripture we learn that apostasy tore at the Church early in the New Testament era, and that it will tear the Church at the end of the age. We find a very blunt warning about this in Acts 20:29–30.

So what should we have learned from our previous experience—and what can we do to avoid going through it again? Scripture records the answer. Notice what Paul says of the Bereans: “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Not only did the Bereans study God’s word daily; they also received what they were taught with “all readiness.” They did not receive it with suspicion, or with doubt, but rather with eagerness and an open mind. They had a strong desire to be fed spiritually, but how did they receive what they were fed? Not with unconditional acceptance (like so many did during the apostasy of the 1990s), but rather with the Bible in hand. The Bereans diligently searched Scripture to determine the truth of what they had been taught.

From Acts 17:11, we know that the Thessalonians had a different approach than the Bereans. What did Paul counsel the Thessalonians? “Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:20–21). Instead of being predisposed against what they were taught, they were to test it against Scripture. Paul told the Thessalonians to hold tightly to what they proved from God’s word as true, and to discard anything that was otherwise. Should we do any less today? Certainly not!

Had we more closely followed the example of the Bereans, would the outcome of the 1990s apostasy have been any different? For many of us, the process would have been much less painful, and we might have recognized the apostasy earlier than we did. Sadly, while many of us were emulating the Bereans imperfectly, many more were not emulating the Bereans at all—and as a result they were led astray.

From Paul’s words we can understand that it is not enough to have “proved all things” just once. There is never a point at which we can say, “I have searched the scriptures enough.” Unless we are daily re-proving and strengthening our relationship with God, can we really say that we love God with all our “heart, soul, and mind” (Matthew 22:37)? David loved God’s word and thought about it continually (Psalm 119:97). He never grew tired of it. His desire to study God’s word never grew stale. Our adversary the devil is very subtle, and he has not given up on trying to destroy us (2

Corinthians 11:3). When people’s lives are going well, it is easy to be lulled into a false sense of safety and become complacent—and this is exactly what our adversary seeks. When this happens, people become careless and let their guard down. Armed with a false sense of safety, they let down the armor of God and no longer search the scriptures daily. They stop relying on the Bible to prove the truth of what they are being taught, and instead rely on their own human reasoning (Ephesians 6:12–13).

If we continually look to the Bible as our guide—the true source for evaluating the lessons God is teaching us throughout our lives—we can be confident that we are learning the right lessons. Other writings can be extremely valuable in helping us understand Scripture and how we should apply it, but no human being’s writings are a substitute for, or should take precedence over, the words of Scripture. When someone asks you to follow a human being’s words that contradict the words of Scripture, you can be sure such a person is promoting a personal agenda that is not of God’s word or His Work—so turn away (2 Timothy 3:5)!

As we search Scripture daily, we can easily distinguish between the false conclusions that some have drawn about the apostasy, and the valid conclusions that we should draw—and we can recognize the difference that this should make in our lives.

We do not get to choose which trials we go through. However, if we learn the right lessons and draw the appropriate conclusions from our experiences—and the experiences of those around us—we can ensure that the trials ahead will be much less painful. King David endured many difficulties during his lifetime, and came to understand this principle very deeply. In Psalm 23 he wrote of the comfort we can have if we make sure, when we walk even through our darkest days, that we walk with our Creator.

What effect has the apostasy had on your life? Are you more cynical and distrusting of authority? Or do you trust in the words of the Apostle Paul, who admonished us that “there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25–26)?

God used the apostasy of the 1990s to prune His Church, so we as its members would bear more fruit “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Our trials will either make us bitter, or they will make us better. Which has it been—and will it be—for you? ☞

# Four Deadly Playmates

By Don Davis

**T**he Apostle Paul gave us a very simple instruction, “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good” (Romans 12:9). Though his instruction is simple in principle, many of us find it much more complicated in practice. Evil comes in a variety of disguises, ready to deceive us and convince us to turn aside, to give up our crown because we think we know, better than God, what is good. Carnal pride—vanity—leads to destruction (Proverbs 16:18). Paul wrote: “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, *vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind*, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (Colossians 2:18–19).

Vanity spurred Lucifer to rebel and become Satan. He let go of the Head and sought his own will, which led him to ruin. God created Lucifer, the light-bringer, as one of the three top angelic beings mentioned in Scripture, the summit of God’s angelic creation: “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:15). In spite of his great attributes, Lucifer allowed a fatal flaw to develop in his character, which would cost him his position in the government of God: “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you” (v. 17). Lucifer had become vain. He corrupted his God-given office and sought inordinate gain, so his Creator cast

him out of heaven as punishment for his greed. Vain Lucifer, because of his lust for the throne of heaven, became jealous of God and greedy for His office, which led to his downfall (Isaiah 14:12–15; Revelation 12:7–9).

## We Are Known by the Company We Keep

Vanity has three deadly playmates: Jealousy, Lust and Greed. These four are virtually inseparable companions; where you find one, you almost always see the other three tagging along. Just as breaking one of God’s commandments means breaking them all, “hanging out” with any one of these four deadly playmates leads to entanglement with the other three. “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law” (James 2:10–11). Yes, if we walk arm-in-arm with Vanity, we will see that Jealousy, Lust and Greed are also strolling along with us.

The *New Webster’s Dictionary and Thesaurus* (1992 edition) defines “vain” as “useless; unavailing; something one is conceited about; worthless.” God does not want His people to be conceited, or to present a false image to try to deceive others about their worth. “Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as if with a cart rope” (Isaiah 5:18). Maintaining one’s vanity is a burden that requires more work than it is worth. King David, a man after God’s own heart, was inspired to write, “I

hate vain thoughts; but thy law do I love” (Psalm 119:113, KJV). Vanity is self-worship, which is idolatry (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). Scripture explains that we should put our love of God first, and should have as much concern for others as we have for ourselves. “So he answered and said, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27).

## Jealousy

Vanity and his three deadly playmates are our enemies; yet, if we are not careful, we can easily find ourselves embracing one of these four (and therefore the other three as well) almost every day. Jealousy, like Vanity, is an enemy to be avoided. *Webster’s* defines “jealous” as: “envious; suspicious; apprehensively watchful; solicitous; zealously careful.”

Is there such a thing as “godly jealousy”? Yes, God is “jealous” for His people, Israel: “You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 6:14–15). The difference between godly jealousy and vain human jealousy is that God’s jealousy comes from His concern for His people, while carnal human jealousy has its roots in mankind’s selfishness—our vanity, lust and greed.

When the people of Israel praised David as a hero, King Saul became jealous. “So the women sang as they danced, and said: ‘Saul has slain his

thousands, and David his ten thousands.' Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?' (1 Samuel 18:7–8). Once Saul allowed jealousy to take root in his mind, a spirit of murder overcame him, which led him to try to kill David on several occasions.

## Lust

Where we find Jealousy, we inevitably find his deadly playmate, Lust. *Webster's* defines "lust" as, "longing desire, sexual appetite; craving... desire passionately... having inordinate carnal desires." Jealousy is often inflamed by lust—by the desire to have something (or someone) that we neither have nor deserve. In the very last of the Ten Commandments, God condemns this deadly attitude: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17).

Sometimes we lust for people or things; other times we lust for power or position or the approval of others. Much of this world's society involves emulating, or seeking the company of, "the beautiful or powerful people"—those who will make us the envy of others. Even in our school days, we probably noticed that most girls hoped to date the star athletes, while the boys pursued the "prettiest" cheerleaders. That attitude often continues into adulthood, when instead of seeking companions with good minds and sound character, many seek the ones with "good looks"—the outward beauty that will fade in a few years, and will end in dust. "This is the way of those who are foolish, and of their posterity who approve their

sayings. Selah. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall be consumed in the grave, far from their dwelling" (Psalm 49:13–14).

## Greed

Greed is another deadly playmate that can be found whenever Vanity makes his appearance. *Webster's* describes "greed" as "an eager and selfish desire; covetousness; avarice, having a keen desire for food, drink, wealth, etc., ravenous." Lust is the desire to have what is not ours; greed is the insatiable desire to have more and more—to have whatever we want, not simply what God tells us we need. When we turn our hearts toward greed, we forget Christ's profound instruction: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:33–34).

Greed represents the "get" way of life, completely opposite from God's loving way of giving, sharing and providing for those who need our help. "But the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you'" (Luke 11:39–41).

## Put Away the Four Bad Companions

How can we root out the vanity, jealousy, lust and greed that are such integral parts of the natural, carnal mind of every human being? "When

I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:11–13).

As we mature in God's Church, we should all be putting on Jesus Christ. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26–27). As we learn to put on Christ, we learn to shed our spiritually self-destructive relationships with Satan's four deadly playmates: Vanity, Jealousy, Lust and Greed.

The love of God, dwelling within us through His Holy Spirit, will force vanity out of our lives. The humility of Christ, growing within us, will help us overcome jealousy. Devoting our minds to prayer, Bible study, fasting and meditation will help us overcome lust. Practicing the way of "give" will drive away our greed. "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" (Philippians 2:3–4).

Immersing ourselves in the Work of God, and keeping our eyes on things above, will keep us focused on God's Kingdom and on Christ's returning soon in glory. We must keep ourselves unspotted by the vain ways of Satan's world. "For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:16–17). LCN



# The Place to Which We Shall All Come

## Facing the reality of a funeral

By J. Davy Crockett, III

“I really hate to think about this,” the woman said to me, “but I guess people should consider planning for their final expenses, and the details of what kind of arrangements they want when they die.” She was right; most people do not want to face the inevitable, but we must.

Truly, ancient King Solomon put it very well: “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–2).

In the United States of America, each day, about 8,000 people reach age 60. The number of “senior citizens” is increasing rapidly as a percentage of the total population in the developed countries of the world. The membership of the Living Church of God reflects a similar demographic; while as many as a third of those attending services are under age 18, the median age of our membership is over age 50. Even among younger people in our fast-paced world, accidents, injuries, sickness and disease take their toll. While some people enjoy long lives, some are cut off in their prime.

By preparing for final things, we show our love and care for those around us. For example, have you written a Last Will and Testament to ensure that your wishes will be carried out after you die? If you have not already done so, please refer to “Final Things: Is Your House in Order?” in the March-April 2005 *Living Church News*.

Death is a certainty for us all (Hebrews 9:27), and the Bible gives many examples of planning for our death and burial. In the book of Genesis, we see that Abraham provided for his own burial as well as for his beloved wife Sarah. “Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, ‘I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight’... So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place” (Genesis 23:3–4, 20).

Jacob instructed Joseph not to bury him in Egypt, but rather to return him to Canaan for interment (Genesis 47:29–30). Joseph told his brethren that his remains

would be taken out of Egypt when the time came for the Israelites to leave Egypt. (Genesis 50:24–25). We find that Asa, King of Judah, was buried “in his own tomb, which he had made for himself in the City of David” (2 Chronicles 16:14). The Bible is filled with examples showing the pattern of being prepared for one’s own death.

When someone dies, many decisions must be made rather quickly, during a time of emotional upheaval and sadness for those who loved the deceased. Those experiencing shock and grief can find it difficult to think clearly, and to make sound choices about funeral arrangements. Some of those choices include deciding between conventional burial or cremation, between chapel or graveside service, and among the many professional services offered by the funeral home or mortician. These choices can involve thousands of dollars in expense, and can be more than some families are financially prepared to handle.

Keeping this in mind, and realizing that there have been reports in the press about occasional price-gouging and abuse of distraught relatives of the deceased, some guidelines may be helpful to assist families of the deceased in making wise and cost-effective decisions.

One basic principle is that in the Church of God, the funeral service is simple and dignified, focusing on the comforting words of Scripture that explain the resurrection of the saints and the Christian’s hope of being born into the family of God at Christ’s return. Where non-member relatives and others outside the Church have a part in planning the service, it is important to be careful in selecting appropriate music and eulogies and other elements of the service, so that the family and friends of the deceased will not become embarrassed or uncomfortable because of inappropriate choices or comments.

One way you can help to ensure that your own funeral will be handled well is to prepare what is often called an “Ethical Will”—giving specific instructions about your funeral service, and any other matters you wish to share with your heirs. Although an Ethical Will has no special

legal standing, it can be a comfort to your heirs and can help them make better decisions, guided by the sure knowledge of your wishes.

How can you evaluate the services offered by funeral homes? Brethren in the United States should know that the United States Federal Trade Commission has issued guidelines under which funeral homes must operate, and has provided guidelines to help families select the appropriate funeral home services. This information is available online (at URL: [www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/products/pro26.htm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/products/pro26.htm)); a helpful summary statement from that Web site states: “The Funeral Rule, enforced by the FTC, makes it possible for you to choose only those goods and services you want or need and to pay only for those you select, whether you are making arrangements when a death occurs or in advance. The Rule allows you to compare prices among funeral homes, and makes it possible for you to select the funeral arrangements you want at the home you use. (The Rule does not apply to third-party sellers, such as casket and monument dealers, or to cemeteries that lack an on-site funeral home.)”

The FTC guidelines also contain this good advice: “Planning your own funeral arrangements can be a thoughtful and considerate way to ease the burden on your family. Planning lets you shop and compare goods and services without time constraints. You can find the best prices, make sensible decisions, and discourage emotional overspending on elaborate arrangements that family members might be tempted to purchase in their bereavement. Share your plans with family members so they understand your desires and have the information they need.

“Many people say that discussions with a lawyer about preparing or updating their will, living will or powers of attorney (including a durable power of attorney for health care)—or conversations with a financial advisor about investment strategies for retirement—prompt them to think about making arrangements for their own funerals.

Attorneys and financial consultants can be good sources of information about planning funerals” (*ibid.*)

Because it can cost so much less than a burial, many families nowadays are choosing cremation for the final disposition of their loved ones’ remains. Church members are sometimes uncomfortable with this option, as the Bible shows no examples of God’s people choosing cremation. However, it is significant that the Bible also seems not to offer any admonition against cremation; the important point is that the deceased person’s remains be handled in a respectful manner. Note that the patriarchs Abraham and Job called themselves “dust and ashes” (Genesis 18:27; Job 30:19).

No matter what decisions are made about a funeral, there will be unavoidable expenses in handling the deceased’s final arrangements. If no advance preparations were made, these expenses can be a real burden or hardship for survivors—especially since most funeral homes only provide their services upon payment up front. It is startling to read the statistic that in 2006, the level of financial savings in the U.S. was the lowest in 74 years, which means many people will not have enough ready cash from their savings to pay for either a cremation or a conventional funeral. As a result, it can be wise to carry life insurance with limits sufficient to cover final expenses. Prepaid funeral plans, and life insurance

plans that direct payments to a funeral home, should be approached with caution, since some may not be good deals for the purchaser.

Though some readers may be unsettled by the subject of this brief article, it is a subject that we will all face. Even if you think you are at an age where you will live until Christ’s return, you could be the victim of an accident or a disease. Rather than deny our mortality, we should show love for our families by preparing as well as we can. By doing so, we will bring peace of mind and comfort to our loved ones, and make it easier for them to cope when we die. ☐

## The Funeral Rule in Brief:

You have the right to choose the funeral goods and services you want (with some exceptions).

The funeral provider must give you a General Price List (GPL) that states your right to choose what you want in writing.

If state or local law requires you to buy any particular good or service, the funeral provider must disclose it on the price list, with a reference to the specific law.

The funeral provider cannot refuse to handle a casket or urn you bought elsewhere—or charge you a fee to do that.

A funeral provider who offers cremations must make alternative containers available.

You cannot be charged for an embalming that your family did not authorize, unless it is required by state law.

### **What Is Your Calling?**

*(continues from page 8)*

Revelation we are told that Jesus will return to this earth in triumph as King of kings and Lord of lords, “and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14). As we have seen, those who are called are given special spiritual understanding that is not yet available to the rest of mankind.

This understanding enables them to grasp the true purpose of human life and the overall outline of God’s plan. *Those who are chosen* have accepted their calling and repented and are being led by the Holy Spirit to grow and change. They have learned to live by every word of God so they can teach others. Those who are faithful will

endure through the trials and temptations of this life. They will avoid being deceived by false teachers and resist being distracted and derailed by the cares of this world. They will hold on to the truth and not compromise the beliefs that God has opened their minds to understand. They will receive the reward of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:20–22, 50–54) to rule on earth as glorified spirit beings among the very first members of God’s growing family. This is the ultimate reward for those who have been called and who remain true to that calling!

Brethren, do you see your calling? Do you really understand why you are being called? Do you grasp the incredible opportunity that you have been given—to be among the firstfruits in God’s plan? Are you determined to take advantage of

that calling? As we approach the end of this age, do not take your calling lightly! Do not take for granted the unique spiritual understanding that God has granted to you!

Do not let the cares of this world sidetrack you from that remarkable calling. Do not let anyone deceive you and rob you of your crown. Make your calling and election sure by developing the knowledge, character and skills that God will be able to use in the years just ahead. You have been called to share an awesome reward—the opportunity to play a major role in setting up the Kingdom of God on this earth. Do not miss out on the special invitation God has offered to you! Now is the time to ponder the question, “What are you doing with your calling?” LCN

### **What Are Your Priorities?**

*(continues from page 11)*

lost the blessings that result from paying tithes, because they bargain with God. They have lost their sense of priorities. They do not realize that tithing is a privilege and a blessing, not a burden.

Today, some people try to abide by the letter of the law and not the spirit. They try to bargain with God when paying their tithes. They will cut corners to see how much they can save, or how little they can possibly give. With that attitude, tithing becomes a chore and not a blessing. God loves a cheerful giver, and He is able to provide you with every blessing (2 Corinthians 9:6–7). Are you a cheerful giver?

### **The Purpose of Your Calling**

Do you really know and understand the purpose of your calling? Did God call you specifically in order to save you at this time, or to entrust you with a certain task in this world? That is a question every Church member should ask himself—and understand the answer.

You were not called just to be saved, but to be part of a team to do a job. That is a priority—a priority for your being called! Your own salvation for the moment is not a priority; your fulfilling the task is. If you faithfully do

your part and persevere until the end, you will be saved. However, if you neglect your share and turn away, God will raise someone else to do your part.

We in God’s Church today are the firstfruits. In a sense, it is like having received a birthright from God. We are the first ones called before the big harvest, with a mission to prepare for that big harvest.

Sadly, some have sold—or are selling—their birthrights, just like Esau did. But once Esau lost it, he ended up despising it. In like manner, once you lose your sense of priorities, you lose your sense of values. Do not neglect your birthright. Do not disdain it. Set your priorities straight.

Perhaps one of the hardest priorities of all is to humble yourself, and to count others better than yourself (Philippians 2:3).

Satan wants you to be puffed up. God wants you to be humble. Satan will do everything in his power to make you feel that you are better than others. But God wants you to count others better than yourself. That is the difference between God’s teaching and the teaching of the world under Satan’s influence.

As God’s people, we need to learn our priorities. The Bible is our manual. Our Teacher is God, through the writings of the prophets and the apostles. Whatever the circumstances, we should live to please God. That is our first and foremost priority! LCN



## RADIO CHURCH OF GOD

Box 111

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG  
PRESIDENT and PASTORBroadcasting  
"THE WORLD TOMORROW"Publishers of  
The PLAIN TRUTH  
The GOOD NEWS

Palm Springs, 12/12/58

I have just noticed, in going over letters written in the Letter Answering Department, a tendency which--as this reminds me--most of us have unconsciously followed.

It is the habit of speaking of salvation only in terms of "living out a life of OBEEDIENCE to God." We seem to have a tendency to speak ONLY and solely of OBEEDIENCE--commandment keeping!

We seldom mention that experience of CONVERSION--utter SURRENDER, total REPENTANCE, accepting CHRIST in living FAITH as personal Saviour, and receiving the HOLY SPIRIT.

We do not seem to stress sufficiently CHRIST as SAVIOUR--faith in Him, and then HIS faith in us (living Faith which is inseparable from obedience). We must remember that the orthodox fundamental worldly churches and evangelists stress almost solely just CHRIST, and FAITH in Him, and accepting Him as personal Saviour. Our more or less general omission of this leads many automatically to assume we preach a gospel of EARNING salvation by WORKS. To a world accustomed to hearing almost altogether about CHRIST and a "born-again experience" (which of course they do not understand), we put ourselves and God's TRUTH in a wrong light. Instead of speaking of being CONVERTED--CHANGED--by real repentance, surrender, FAITH in CHRIST, and receiving God's Holy Spirit, we speak of "coming into the TRUTH." A man may "come into the TRUTH"--that is, let a certain amount of truth into his mind, and still be totally unconverted. We must not lead people to gather that we believe only in Commandment keeping (which to them means SATURDAY-keeping) and EARNING salvation by WORKS.

We must stress the WHOLE TRUTH more--repentance, surrender, CHRIST AS SAVIOUR, being CHANGED by God's Spirit as God's GIFT, by GRACE, following our conforming to His conditions of repentance and FAITH IN CHRIST--the CHANGE from carnality to Spiritual-mindedness--being BEGOTTEN--and THEN the overcoming and enduring and GROWING life of obedience and living faith, with Christ living HIS LIFE in us. Let's not leave CHRIST and GRACE out of our speech and letters.

With love, in Jesus' name,

Herbert W. Armstrong

to want to latch on to the tiniest "loose brick" in order to attack this Work, or to attack us personally! Satan is always very active in stirring up this type of turmoil. He *hates* those who are truly doing God's Work! Yet, if you back off—and truly think and pray and analyze where the Truth of the Bible is being most fully preached, and where the Gospel is being most fully proclaimed to "all the nations" through a group of dedicated men and women—can you honestly find another work that approaches this Work in the "fruits" being produced? For millions have by now viewed our programs on television—and increasing millions are also learning of our message through the growing power of the Internet. As you know, we do not mince words. We are out on the "cutting edge" of preaching powerfully the real understanding of prophetic events and warning the Israelite-descended peoples, as we are commanded to do in Ezekiel 33. There is truly no other Work doing this in the same way or to the same extent.

So, I am grateful. I deeply appreciate your continued support, your prayers and your encouragement in every way. As end-time prophetic events speed up, we need each other, and the prayers and support of one another. I hope each of us in the Living

### Rekindle Your Zeal! (continues from page 2)

"Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28).

Confused and misguided people will often impute wrong motives to us in this Work. We know that. Constantly, our words or actions are misinterpreted—and some people seem quick



Church of God will go “all out” in getting behind the Work with all our hearts—trying to avoid the “nit-picking” into which some people seem to fall. We should be putting our focus on the Big Picture of where God is truly working in a balanced way to proclaim the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God and the true name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12; 28:30–31).

We in this work honor Mr. Armstrong, and we want to follow the true pattern of what he taught and practiced from the Bible—not the made-up patterns imagined by some who never really worked closely with, knew well, or even remotely understood that wonderful man of God! Mr. Armstrong was a balanced man, and when he saw the Work “going into the ditch” one way or another, he would correct it. On the page to the left, I am reprinting a copy of a letter he wrote in December 1958, emphasizing the importance of Christ and the need for true conversion, which at that time he felt the Work was not stressing enough. Sadly, some today are still neglecting this vital point. Brethren, I hope we all come to realize more fully our absolute need for Christ’s sacrifice!

Dear brethren, as we add more and more television stations in this Work, as the impact of our Internet effort increases all over the world—and, yes, even as *greater persecution* comes our way, which it must—we have **every reason** to rejoice! For *we*, in the Church which God is using to do His Work today, understand *why* these events are occurring. And *we know* what the outcome will be for those of us who are *truly surrendered to Christ* and *fully involved* in His Work. For Jesus Christ will soon return and say to *this kind* of loyal, zealous Christian: “*Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities*” (Luke 19:17).

May God grant that **all** of us intensify our Bible study, our fervent prayer and contact with God, our heartfelt **fasting** and seeking His will—and our *active service* to the living Christ and to His Work—that God may soon speak these very words to *us*!



## Upcoming ***Tomorrow's World*** Telecasts

WGN: Sunday, 6:00 AM ET

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

WORD: Friday, 1:30 AM ET

Air Date	Broadcast Title
March 4	Satan's Attack on the Bible
March 11	America and Britain—A “Special Relationship”
March 18	The Superpower “Beast” of Revelation
March 25	Armageddon and Beyond
April 1	Your Future in Tomorrow's World
April 8	Why Were You Born?
April 15	Which Christ Do You Worship?
April 22	Five Keys to a Successful Marriage
April 29	Modern Morality and the Ten Commandments

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

## Bible Study Course Goes Online!

The *Tomorrow's World Bible Study Course* is going online as of April 1! The *Bible Study Course* has historically been a very powerful tool not only in bringing those new to the Truth into a fuller understanding, but also in strengthening the spiritual foundation of those already in the Church.

The new online format will allow participants to take the course at their own pace. If you previously began taking the print version of the *Bible Study Course*, but have not yet finished, you can begin the online course at the point you left off in the print version, or you can choose to go back and review the earlier material.

In addition to better serving current *Bible Study Course* participants, the Church will now be able to reach a whole new audience that would not be interested in a printed course. Many should find the new format more convenient, and should find it easier to progress through the lessons at their own pace.

The new format will also allow the Work to deliver the *Bible Study Course* more cost-effectively. It costs

approximately \$1.15 to print, mail and process each four-lesson booklet and test offline; the cost of fulfilling these same functions online is essentially \$0.00.

Some brethren who started taking the *Bible Study Course* have “given up” because they found the tests “too easy” and as a result assumed they knew everything the *Bible Study Course* could teach them. In fact, experience has shown that Church members gain much more value from completing the study questions in each lesson, which allow much deeper learning than the tests—which were deliberately designed to be easy enough to encourage new subscribers to continue through the *Bible Study Course*. If you gave up on the print version because you did not find the tests challenging enough, we urge you to try the online course, and to spend more time working on the study questions!

The content of the online course is identical to the print version developed by the late Mr. John H. Ogwyn.

## Dulaney's Honored

On the Sabbath of December 16, 2006 the Winchester, Virginia congregation honored its local elder Mr. Gerald Dulaney, and his wife, Mrs. Margie Dulaney, for their years of devotion and dedication to the Church. To commemorate this occasion, the congregation presented Mr. and Mrs. Dulaney with an elegant, inscribed vase, and Mr. James Dawson gave a speech recognizing Mr. and Mrs. Dulaney's long history of service in God's Church.

Although they would not know it until they met years later, the Dulaney's were both called into the Truth at the same time—the summer of 1959—via Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's radio broadcast. Mrs. Dulaney was baptized in 1961; her future husband was baptized in 1964. Ironically, one of the first conversations Mrs. Dulaney had with Mr. Dulaney lamented the lack of men in the Church for her to date. Little did she know that a few years later, in 1979, that man would become her husband!

Throughout their years in the Church, the Dulaney's have demonstrated the deep roots and strength of their faith. They were among the first to associate with the Global Church of God in Winchester, and they even opened up their own home for Sabbath services. So devoted have they been to their local Church area, that in the last 25 years they have only been away from the area three times! Such devotion has made them pillars for the brethren in their area. Truly, they continue to serve as examples of the faith and dedication to which we should all aspire.

—Tonya Dawson

## Ordinations

*William H. “Tex” Malone* was ordained as an elder by Pastor Bob League on the Sabbath of February 17. Mr. Malone, who had been serving as a deacon in God's Church since 1980, will continue to serve the brethren in the Nashville, Tennessee area.

*Wilner Pierre*, of the Charlotte, North Carolina congregation, was ordained as a deacon on the Sabbath of February 24, by the four Headquarters evangelists: Messrs. Roderick Meredith, Richard Ames, Dibar Apartian and Douglas Winnail. Mr. Pierre, who is a bilingual English-French speaker, will continue to serve the Headquarters congregation and also make occasional visits to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to serve the French-speaking congregation there.

## Weddings

*Troy Belcher and Jessica Conner* of the Bluefield, West Virginia congregation were joined in holy matrimony on September 16, 2006. The ceremony was performed by Mr. Davy Crockett. The happy couple resides in Radford, Virginia.

*Mr. and Mrs. Richard and Laura (Reynolds) Harmon* were married on November 19, 2006 at the home of the bride's parents in Bunkie, Louisiana. The wedding ceremony was performed by Mr. Rod Reynolds, the bride's father. Friends and family gathered to witness

the joyous event. The happy couple will reside in Peculiar, Missouri.

*Julie Elizabeth Arnold and James Elbert Sampson* were married on December 3, 2006, in Houston, Texas. The bride's parents are Steven and Becky Arnold of Alvin, Texas. The groom's parents are James and Reta Sampson of Newark, New Jersey. Mr. Jonathan McNair performed the ceremony.

*Mr. Damian Weekes and Miss Yonnette Greeman* were married by Mr. Fitzroy Greeman on December 17, in Valsayn, Trinidad.

## Births

*Kennedy Eden Bird* was welcomed into the world February 15 by her parents Ryan and Roxanna Bird of Calgary, Alberta. She weighed 7 pounds, 14 ounces, and measured 21.5 inches. Her older sister Hannah rejoices in this new addition, as do the brethren of the Calgary congregation. Congratulations to the family!

*Caleb Celestin*, the third child of Mr. & Mrs. Jean-Guerdy and Marie-Ange Celestin, was born on January 22. He was 19.5 inches long and weighed 6 pounds, one ounce. The Celestins' brethren in the Montreal, Quebec, Canada congregation were very happy about the family's new addition!

*Jeremy and Desiree Hooks*, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Noah Bradley Hooks, on January 1. Noah weighed 6 pounds, 7 ounces and was 19 inches long. Grandparents David and Martha Hooks and big sister Aubrey welcome Noah to the family.

## Philippines Youth Camp

Myrna Te Beach Resort, in Zamboanga del Norte, was the site of the Philippines' Living Youth Camp, held December 26–28, 2006. The camp was designed to serve youth from the Bogabongan and Sindagan congregations, but youths also came from Bukidnon and Cagayan de Oro. A total of 21 young and courageous campers attended, enjoying cool breezes over the peaceful coconut trees facing the seashore.

Four ministers gave lectures on spiritual values and lessons to be learned as young and growing people in God's Church. Topics included the Ten Commandments, Lazarus and the rich man, the life of King Solomon, fruits of the spirit, the importance of prayer and fasting, honesty, dating and marriage, clean and unclean meats, pride and humility, the resurrections, and the coming Kingdom of God.

Staff also taught practical life skills topics such as personality development, table etiquette, dance, healthy diet and first aid.

When campers departed on the morning of December 29, they left full of joy and courage to face another year of life's challenges with God's direction and blessings.

—*Gideon and Rosanna Benitez*

## In Loving Memory

*Lena Mae Allen*, long-time member of God's Church, died in the loving company of her husband on December 5, 2006. Mrs. Allen was born in April 1920, in Long Lane, Missouri. Widowed in 1961, she married Mr. John Allen in 1964; she and her husband were baptized into God's Church in the mid-1960s. Most recently, the Allens had attended the Springfield and Rolla, Missouri, congregations. A hard-working woman with a special love for the outdoors, she will be missed by all who knew her. In addition to her husband, she is survived by a brother and two sisters, as well as a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren.

*Beryl Jacobs* of the Red Deer, Alberta congregation died peacefully in her home on February 17, at age 93. She and her husband Harold were baptized in the early 1980s. Mrs. Jacobs will be remembered for her courageous no-nonsense pioneer spirit and her love of animals, especially her fine horses. She was predeceased by three young sons, and then in 2004 by her husband; she is survived by five children and their descendants. A memorial service was held on February 23.

*Joan Splicer*, wife of Wayne Fordham, died of a heart attack at their home in Grand Falls, New Brunswick, Canada, on June 24, 2006, at age 72. She was from the Mohawk Nation, and was a renowned singer and musician who performed with her husband for many years.

# Commentary

## Is Germany Making a “Right Turn”?

By Wallace Smith

During a time when Germany finds itself inching into the global spotlight as the leading nation of the European Union, its population is beginning to experience an interesting shift in its sentiments about who should have power—and how that power should be wielded.

Earlier this year, journalist Bertrand Benoit reported on this shift, in an article titled, “On the march—how Germany’s extreme right is making gains in the blighted east” (*Financial Times*, January 9, 2007). It seems that Germany’s National Democratic Party (in German, *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or NPD) is beginning to make substantial gains through impressive grassroots efforts, especially in eastern Germany. The NPD is pursuing a strategy of winning leadership at the local level as a springboard into national levels. The strategy seems to be working, and many are becoming concerned.

Why the concern? Benoit writes, “The NPD does not recognize Germany’s Fundamental Law as a legitimate constitution, because it was not put to referendum when it was passed in 1949, and sees U.S. forces on German soil as occupation troops. The party is unashamedly racist and anti-Semitic and does not consider itself an actor in the political system but an alternative to it.”

Previously seen as a “gray-haired party for SS veterans,” the extreme-right, neo-fascist NPD is now making great headway among younger Germans. What is its appeal? The *Financial Times* article quotes Cord Bollenbach, an anti-NPD activist in northeastern Germany, who says, “They like the idea of a Führer, which was as much part of the East German political culture as it was under the Third Reich.”

Consider this in light of the results of a poll taken of 5,000 German citizens, reported by *Spiegel Online* on

November 8, 2006. Pollsters found that 15.1 percent of the respondents—almost 1 in 6—agreed with this statement: “We should have one leader to rule Germany with a strong hand for the good of everyone.” Another 11.6 percent agreed that “if Hitler hadn’t exterminated Jews he would be seen as a great statesman today.”

One is reminded of the words of Dr. Paul-Henri Spaak of Belgium, first president of the United Nations General Assembly and one of the founders of the European Common Market—which grew into the European Union: “We do not want another committee, we have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all the people and to lift us up out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man, and whether he be God or devil, we will receive him.”

Is the stage being set for the appearance of “such a man”?

The Bible powerfully proclaims that a dictatorial power will rise in Europe—a revived Roman Empire, pictured in Revelation as a beast rising out of the sea (Revelation 13:1). Though the nations mix poorly, like iron and clay (Daniel 2:41–43), this power will have a man of “sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all the people,” aided by the influence of a powerful religious figure (Revelation 13:11–13). This power will persecute true Christians who keep the commandments of God and who hold the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17; 13:7). This power will rise in the end times just before Christ’s return (Daniel 2:44). The shifts of thought, sentiment, and power we see occurring in Germany—and elsewhere—are laying the foundation for events that will soon come to pass!

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