

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

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## University or Skilled Trade?

*Dear Brethren,*

Our world is changing at lightning speed before our eyes. Australia was one of the last English-speaking nations to accept same-sex “marriage,” and since that acceptance on December 7, 2017, it has become one of the most aggressively “accepting” countries in the LGBTQ+ movement. The United States is experiencing a political transformation that was unimaginable even three years ago. Activists in both academia and the media shamelessly spawn social tsunamis, which increasingly affect all of us.

How are our members to advise their teens and young adults about getting an education, in light of the war against godly values that has spread throughout much of academia? Universities are hotbeds of anti-God indoctrination, where naïve students become pawns in a grand, satanic scheme to transform our world into something very different from that which we embrace in the Church of God. Immorality of every sort is not only allowed but encouraged. What is a parent or young person to do?

Fundamentally, we must consider God’s design and the roles He has ordained for us. A young man is expected to one day provide for a wife and family, and a young woman is expected to grow into the role of homemaker, with the skills needed to uphold her husband and care for her children. The educational paths we choose should keep God’s loving design at the forefront of our minds.

With that understanding firmly in place, wise judgment is the key to determining how to prepare for future roles in life. For example, not every school is the same. On both the pre-university and university levels, there are still schools that restrain bad behavior and encourage character devel-

opment. They are becoming fewer, but they are out there. Also, what is good for one young person may not be good for another. There are high-paying skilled trade jobs available for the energetic young man who is more inclined to work with his hands and who excels in doing so, and this option often avoids generating a huge load of debt. Nevertheless, skilled trades require education, which is often gained from a trade school, an apprenticeship program, or a combination of the two. The more knowledgeable and skilled one is in a trade, the more sought after and better compensated he will be.

Some young men are “all thumbs” and would starve if they tried to go down the skilled trades route, but they may make excellent engineers, accountants, and yes, even lawyers. The list of honorable careers that require a university education is long, but how does one gain such an education and avoid the destructive influences too often found in universities? Here are three suggestions.

First, the choice of career is vital. There is a great deal of wisdom in sticking to practical disciplines based on absolutes. For example, engineers must work within dynamic laws. If they don’t, the plane will crash, the building will collapse, the electric circuits will fail. A real estate or corporate attorney will spend his time learning about the laws that govern his discipline. An accountant learns the language and workings of that profession. In other words, there are honorable professions that avoid politics and social engineering. Other disciplines—say, pursuits in history or language arts—may involve more subjective evaluations but can still provide practical skills in writing, research, and critical thinking, if handled carefully. Regrettably, however, many of the social sciences are rife with the very trends and

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abominable philosophies that are tearing civilization apart, and their “leading lights” are often those most passionately seeking, through societal reprogramming, to undermine even the most fundamental godly values. It is foolishness to think that surrounding our sons and daughters with influential educators, passionate about promoting such twisted philosophies, will have no impact on our children’s worldview and character. Options should be considered and evaluated with care.

Second, carefully plan for the specific academic courses ahead and how to approach them. The first two years of a university education normally have general prerequisite classes, and these are not always directly related to one’s desired major. Some courses may deal with social engineering and attempt to break down biblical values. Science courses most often promote evolution, but this need not be a problem for the student who is well-grounded and who does some study on the subject. Our booklet, *Evolution and Creation: What Both Sides Miss*, is a good starting point, but there are many additional informative and helpful resources out there for anyone who wants to explore them. The greater problem is the indoctrination of students through a collection of classes designed to tear down biblical standards. This is why one must carefully investigate schools and the courses they require. By doing so, one may be able to minimize or avoid the worst influences of university life.

Finally, consider where your student will live and the pros and cons of that environment. The greatest challenge for young people on their own for the first time is campus life, which more often than not stands in direct opposition to the Christian life in many ways. This is why many of us in the ministry recommend that a young person live at home and attend a local or community college for, perhaps, the first two years. This decision can also save thousands of dollars.

At some point, a local institution may not suffice for the degree one is pursuing, and the last two or more years may require the student to attend university away from home. Certain decisions then need to be weighed carefully. Can the student live with a relative, Church member, or others who share your values? We must always remember to put God first and seek His ways above every other consideration. Is there a congregation nearby where your student can attend services and remain connected to the Church (Luke 14:26)? Is one required to live on campus as a student? There are reasons some schools require this. Just as our one-year

Living Education program has this requirement in order to help us teach *godly* values, worldly universities use this requirement to *indoctrinate young people into a radically different value system*. Co-ed dorms, for example, increasingly mean co-ed bathrooms and shower areas. The Internet

gives plenty of “what’s the big deal” advice on this, but one ought to ask the simple question, “Why?” What is it that they are promoting by breaking down natural barriers between unmarried people of the opposite sex? There is an agenda behind this.

Dr. Miriam Grossman worked as a psychiatrist at UCLA and has become an outspoken critic of what is happening on university campuses. In her seminal work *Unprotected*, she writes:

There are seventeen million students enrolled in [U.S.] colleges and universities. Many are still adolescents, impressionable and confused; they are at a critical point in their development, questioning who they are and what they want.... As a parent, I know that behind most students are a mother and father who are worried, hoping, praying for their

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## EDITORIAL By Gerald E. Weston

# The Tasty Fruit of Joy

**A**ppearances are often deceptive. Have you ever seen a couple lovingly holding hands after years of marriage, only to hear of their divorce soon thereafter? And what about comedians who appear happy and full of life, but are strung out on drugs and sometimes end their lives early? And then there are those with perpetual smiles, but sadness and utter turmoil on the inside.

The number of people who appear to have it all together on the outside but inwardly are dissatisfied with life might surprise us. It is not that they intend to deceive others, and, to be sure, there is no need to wear all of our feelings on our sleeves. But too many people, though they want to be happy—and try to be happy—are inwardly unable to achieve their desire.

One of the criticisms of social media is that it presents people as living exciting lives filled with travel, friends, and fun—a standard that their “followers” fail to achieve. The reality is that though few live up to the unrealistic standards portrayed by social media, many vainly aim for them, lamenting that their own lives seem forever disappointing in comparison. It is human nature to display our successes in front of our friends and family. We want others to know what a wonderful life we have—that we are “succeeding” at life. In many ways, this has always been the case, but Facebook and other Internet tools magnify the problems with this way of thinking. Today we can post pictures instantly to family, friends, and complete strangers all at the same time. No need to pay for expensive film and wait for the pictures to be developed.

Sliding down a zipline, bungee jumping from a bridge, parachuting out of a perfectly good airplane, and sipping from a glass of wine among smiling friends on an alpine veranda all give the appearance of living “the good life.” But appearance is not reality. There are plenty of people in the world, celebrities especially, who have the time and money to follow these and many other pursuits, but whose lives are miserable, given to depression, divorce, and drugs.

It is natural to desire to be happy, and to want others to be happy as well. Most of us truly want our friends and family to enjoy “the good life” and we do our best to help them achieve it—and to experience it alongside them. It is clearly important to us. So, why is true fulfillment in life difficult to find?

### The Search for Lasting Joy

Let us begin our search for answers with the prophet Isaiah. He both asks the question and gives the answer. “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?” (Isaiah 55:2). The context shows that he is referring to far more than breakfast. He is pointing out that people are searching in the wrong places for that which truly satisfies. This was a problem then, and it remains a problem today. Our nature is prone to chasing mirages, which look like answers but fail us in the end.

King Solomon rightly explained that there is nothing new under the sun. He, too, sought happiness and he could buy as much of it as was available: wine, women, song, and much more. He planted beautiful gardens, was entertained by the best musicians of his day, and surrounded himself with gold, silver, and all kinds of precious things. In the end, he still felt empty and came to despair of life. “Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

Isaiah’s question, “Why do you spend money for what is not bread?” is perhaps even more relevant today than ever. We cannot keep up with Solomon, yet the average person has more access to options for relaxation and leisure activities than those of generations past. Much of that, however, is passive, “spoon-fed” entertainment: television, movies, video games, and social media. Instead of living in a real world, one can vicariously fight off aliens, steal cars, or be a fighter pilot, all while expending far less mental energy than it takes to read a good book—and virtually no *physical* energy at all. We don’t even have to get out of our chairs to change channels. For those who remember “The Clapper” light switch, there is not even a need to clap your hands to turn lights on or off: Just tell “Alexa” what you want, and she will do it for you! All these gadgets are interesting, but not one of them can provide us with a rewarding life.

It is a mistake to equate fun and entertainment with happiness. Riding roller coasters is fun for many, but standing in line in the hot sun is not. There’s nothing wrong with good, safe fun, but the rides come to an end and real life remains at the end of the

day. Entertainment is temporary at best, relies on external sources and stimuli, and can descend into boredom, leaving one unfulfilled. True happiness is an internal state that lasts through good times and not-so-good times.

Isaiah chides his audience for focusing time and resources on that which will never bring lasting satisfaction. Wine, milk, and bread only satisfy for a short time. Therefore, Isaiah points us to food and drink that lasts: “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.... Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isaiah 55:1–2).

Isaiah uses food and drink as a metaphor contrasting physical and spiritual, and he was not the only one to do so. Jesus Christ also used this metaphor when talking to the Samaritan woman at the well, telling her He could give “living water” and she would never thirst again. That sounded good, but the extent of her understanding was that this living water would eliminate laborious trips between her home and the well. She could not comprehend that the water He spoke of was the Holy Spirit, which would give a satisfaction that nothing physical ever could (John 4:7–15; 7:37–39).

Jesus came as that true bread of life prophesied by Isaiah. This was the point He made when He compared manna to Himself: “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die” (John 6:48–50). He went on to say, “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:56–57).

Dr. Roderick C. Meredith so often referred to the Bible as the mind of God. Jesus is the Logos, the Spokesman, the One who inspired that amazing book. When we drink in and eat of the words of the Bible, we are feeding on Christ. Dr. Meredith’s favorite scripture was Galatians 2:20, which tells us that Christ must live in us, and we know that He does so by the power of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is the mind and power of God. “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Romans 8:9).

### The Source We Seek

One of the fruits of God’s Holy Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22). The English word “joy” comes from a word that means “*cheerfulness, calm delight*.” One may glean from how the word is

used in the New Testament that joy may be either temporary or lasting. When Philip went down to Samaria and God performed miracles through him, we read, “And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:8). That was clearly a temporary (and understandable) joy, but joy’s inclusion as a fruit of the Spirit indicates a permanent state. This does not mean the person in whom the Spirit dwells experiences a constant, steady state of joy with no lows. It is also true that, for a variety of reasons, some people simply exude more cheerfulness, calm delight, and joy than others. But true, lasting joy and contentment through thick and thin is a fruit of the Spirit. When God’s words, His mind and

attitudes, abide in us, we think as Christ did while He was on earth, and we daily become more like He is.

It is through having the Holy Spirit that we can rejoice—have joy—even during severe trials: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by

various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7).

This kind of big-picture understanding does not characterize the natural mind. This has been brought home to me on more than one occasion. For example, there was the dying man my wife and I visited in the hospital. He told us that coming down with cancer was the best thing that ever happened to him. He realized he had been spiritually drifting for years. He saw it as a wakeup call, a call to the reality of his very purpose for being. As he explained, in his case he was not looking to be healed. His sight was on the resurrection, when he would wake up in the Kingdom of God.

At the same time, there was another man dying of cancer. He was a new convert, but he, too, put his trust in God, and every time I saw him, he had a big smile and did all he could to encourage those around him. These men, both so near to death, had a calm cheerfulness about them. Through God’s Spirit, they could understand the big picture, and had living hope in the resurrection. What examples they were!

### Perspective in Trials

We see this in the Apostle Paul. He suffered with some kind of affliction for which he sought God three times for relief. God’s answer was *no*. “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul came to a deep understanding from this experience: “Therefore

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# One Way to Know God Better

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By **Dexter B. Wakefield**

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**S**ometimes a person will ask, “Do you know the Lord?” The Bible says that in the Kingdom of God, all the House of Israel is going to know the Lord. God promised this to Israel through His prophet Jeremiah:

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: *I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” for they all shall know Me*, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jeremiah 31:33–34).

How will the house of Israel come to know God? Only a few in Judea recognized Him when He visited them in the flesh two millennia ago. He said through Jeremiah that when He comes next, “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” and forgive them.

*In the future, God will reveal a lot about Himself through His law, and it is important for us to remember that He does so now for His Church as well.*

How well do you know God, and do you seek to know Him in all the ways He provides? We should all want to know the Father in order to develop our relationship with Him, and to become like Him and Jesus Christ. And one way that we can

know God better is the same way God tells us that the House of Israel will learn about Him in the Kingdom of God—by studying, practicing, and internalizing God’s law. Sadly, this is a valuable way that most professing Christians reject.

Studying the *biblical statutes* is a very helpful way to gain insight into God’s character and to know Him better. It’s not the only way—just one way to help you “know the Lord” that much more fully as you study your Bible.

## **Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments**

When God set up the nation of Israel, He gave the Israelites everything they physically needed, including wise statutes and judgments based on the Ten Commandments. *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* has a helpful commentary on the source of the Ten Commandments:

The foundation and source of the moral law is God’s character. “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” is the way the Ten Commandments are introduced. The Heb. name here used (Everlasting Eternal Almighty) intimates that the principles of law have their standing in the character of God. “I am... thou shall.” That is the connection. And that is what makes the moral law so awful [awesome] in its unchangeable majesty. It is law because God is. It cannot be changed without changing the character of [God] Himself. Right is what it is, because God is what He is, and therefore it is as unchangeable as God (3rd edition, 1966, pp. 256–257).

God's commandments reflect His very character! They communicate what He defines as right and wrong, and God does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

The biblical organization of the law is "commandments, statutes, and judgments" (Deuteronomy 7:11; 1 Kings 8:58). Some reorganize it theologically as "moral law, civil law, and ceremonial law," but while that may be useful in some cases, it is not the revealed, biblical organization. The statutes derive from the Ten Commandments, so the principles communicated through the statutes further illuminate God's character—the very basis of right and wrong. The judgments implemented various aspects of the statutes at the local level in Israel.

The Apostle Paul applied a principle in the statutes when he taught the gentile Church in Corinth, Greece. He wrote,

For it is written in the law of Moses [in Deuteronomy 25:4], "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? (1 Corinthians 9:9–11).

Paul was saying that while this statute required kindness to a working animal, its primary purpose was to teach a *spiritual lesson* to the Church. You did not have to own an ox in order to obey the principle. Note that he wrote, "*Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written....*" Paul was telling the gentile brethren in Corinth—and us today—that the Church can learn much from the statutes.

In his instruction to Timothy, Paul also affirmed the validity and importance of the law and the prophets. He wrote, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14–15). When Paul mentioned "the Holy Scriptures," he was referring to the Old Testament canon, since the New Testament canon did not exist when Timothy was a child. Paul wanted Timothy

to remember that while his salvation came through his faith in Christ, God's commandments, statutes, and judgments would give him valuable understanding and guide him in his spiritual growth.

Paul continued, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (vv. 16–17). We should all remember that God's divine law provides us with the valuable doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness that are necessary if we are to do all the good works He expects of us.

Those who reject God's law miss out on a lot!

While we can learn from all of the Scriptures, the judgments generally applied to the ancient nation of Israel under the national covenant made at Sinai, and were implemented as civil laws. Historically, the application of the judgments in Judea ended with the destruction of the remaining Jewish state by the Romans. For example, God's Church today is under the commandment requiring fidelity in marriage, but, of course, not the judgment requiring that adulterers be stoned to death!

Still, God did say that other nations would see the wisdom of His laws in ancient Israel and seek to emulate them (Deuteronomy 4:5–8).

## The Two Great Commandments

Jesus was once asked an interesting question: "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the *first*

and great commandment. And the *second* is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." *On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*" (Matthew 22:35–40). Jesus was actually quoting Himself, as recorded by Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18.

How do "all the Law and the Prophets" hang on these two commandments?

Jesus certainly was not saying that these two commandments negate the Ten. For instance, we cannot love God with all our hearts if we worship idols and take His name in vain. And we cannot love others as ourselves if we steal from them or lie to them.

A hin is a liquid measure of roughly two gallons. An ephah is a dry measure of roughly one bushel. **Do you have an honest hin and an honest ephah? Must you own a hin or an ephah to obey this statute?**

The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with how we love God, and are summarized by “the first and great commandment”—that we should love God with all our being. The next six commandments have to do with loving our fellow man and are summarized by “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” It is interesting that the fifth commandment, “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12), which has to do with our relationships with our physical parents, is a bridge between loving our heavenly Father and loving mankind.

The **two great commandments**, love of God and love of mankind, are expressed in more detail in the **Ten Commandments**. Then, the **statutes** are derived from, or descend from, the Ten Commandments, and the **judgments**, generally speaking, represent local implementations in Israel of the principles in the statutes under their national covenant with God. The law is a fundamental aspect of God’s government—which is His *applied love*. The **prophets** were God’s voice to the people. God instructed them to communicate Israel’s transgression of the commandments, statutes, and judgments, as well as His calls for repentance and His reminders to Israel of the agreed-upon terms of, and consequences of breaking, their covenant with Him. They also communicated God’s promise of His coming government, which is the Kingdom of God, saying, for instance, “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3). God’s government, which is based upon laws that express His character, will spread throughout the world under the prophesied Kingdom. So we can see why Jesus said, “*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*” God is love, and God’s governmental law derives from love for God and love for mankind.

### The Statutes Applied Today

We saw earlier that the Apostle Paul gave the gentile Church in Corinth the example of not muzzling an ox as the application of a statute. Here are two additional examples of statutes that show the character of God.

In an application of the commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” Israel was instructed, “You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:35–36). Notice that God stamps this law with His name, saying, “*I am the LORD your God.*”

A *hin* is a liquid measure of roughly two gallons. An *ephah* is a dry measure of roughly one bushel. Do you have an honest *hin* and an honest *ephah*? Must you own a *hin* or an *ephah* to obey this statute?

Our God is a God of truth, and Jesus said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). His truth sanctifies us, and the dishonesty, greed, and covetousness that lead to theft are completely alien to Him. So God forbids theft and deception in all its forms, and this statute derives from the commandments that say, “You shall not steal” and “You shall not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:15–16). Our God is a God of love, truth, and *giving—not getting*.

How can we apply the principle of this statute in our lives? What does an “honest *hin*” look like today? It means that we observe honesty in *all* our dealings with others—not just in weights and measures. Do we give people what they bargained for—or do we somehow find ways to short them?

### A Dishonest Ephah or Hin

What does a dishonest *hin* or *ephah* look like in our day? Some examples:

- *How well do you measure out your labor?* If we are on the job for eight hours, we should give our employer the full eight hours of work he or she is paying for—not just six hours’ worth. Give full value to people—God does, *and in addition, it’s just good business*. If we don’t give full value for what we are paid, we may be taking pay that we don’t deserve. Happily, many employers are very pleased to have members of our faith working for them, because they have learned that the same person who is careful to keep the Sabbath commandment is also careful to give an honest day’s work for his or her pay. When a prospective employer raises an objection to one’s Sabbath observance, it can be helpful to advise them of that.
- Have you ever worked with someone who claimed to do good work, but in fact the quality of their work was deficient? *How do you measure out the quality of your work?* Do you provide the full quality that your employers bargained for? Our God always does quality work, and we should emulate Him in our work.

Those are just two examples, and since you know the biblical principle, you can probably think of others. *Our God is a God of quality and truth.*

Here is another statute from which we can learn: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor



shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: *I am the LORD your God*" (Leviticus 19:9–10).

Do you have to be a farmer to learn from this statute? Notice that just as with the statute about the weights and measures, God stamps His name on this one as well: "*I am the LORD your God.*" So perhaps this one also expresses His character. Let's look at it more closely and consider.

An owner who goes to the trouble and expense of gleaning his fields and vineyards, down to every last grain or grape, spends a lot of labor in the end for minimal gain. He is at the point of diminishing returns, but he doesn't want anyone else to have his fruit. The gleaning statute provides for the poor—those who have no resources but their own labor—and makes it possible for them to spend their labor productively to obtain necessary food. In ancient Israel, God made the gleaning laws not only to benefit the poor, but *also to keep the landowner from greed. God built fairness and honesty into His statutes—not greed. Everyone benefitted!*

How about the application of the gleaning statute in modern times? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a God of love and outgoing concern—*giving* is His way of life, not *getting*. Greed is alien to His character. So what does a person who gleans his own fields look like today? Here's one way. Perhaps you have seen people whose business philosophy is, "*In any transaction, leave nothing on the table, not even the varnish.*" They try to *take* as much as they can from the other parties in any commercial relationship. They think

that they haven't succeeded until the other guy suffers. But a person who is led by the mind of God knows that it should be possible for all parties who perform their part to benefit. *Leave the varnish on the table and reject greed!* We must beware of any inordinate desire to *get*, which can even lead us to oppress others. We can apply the gleaning statute in many ways in modern life.

### Dive into the Statutes!

If you would like to study the statutes further, they are found mostly in the following chapters: Exodus 20–24; Leviticus 16–27; Numbers 18–19, 27–36; and Deuteronomy 12–28.

Be mindful that these chapters also contain many of the ritual laws, sacrificial laws, and purification laws, which we do not

apply physically today because of Christ's ultimate sacrifice (Hebrews 7:26–28; 9:11–15; 10:6–10). We are Christ's temple because of the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). The Church is to be pure (2 Corinthians 6:16–17) and offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5) as part of our New Covenant relationship.

But this fact does not diminish the benefits provided by studying the statutes God inspired in His word. **One great way to spiritually profit from the study of those statutes is to look for the character of God in them and discern how that character can be applied to our lives today.** The statutes are profitable indeed, and some, like just weights and measures, are wisely incorporated into our modern laws. The principles contained in the statutes make us better employees, better employers, better businessmen, and more Christ-like. They are there for our *good!*

God's divine law expresses His holy, righteous character, and He gave His commandments and statutes for our benefit (Deuteronomy 10:13). One of the ways that God reveals Himself is through His commandments and law, which are holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12).

So God's begotten children shouldn't ask, "How much of God's law do I *have* to apply?" We should ask "How much of God's law *can* I apply?" We need to know the many ways we can apply God's law and emulate His character in our lives. And looking for God's character within His statutes—as well as applying the principles behind the statutes—helps us to "know the Lord." (LN)





# Blessed Are the Merciful

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By **Peter Nathan**

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**A**ll of us like to be on the receiving end of mercy, but in the fifth beatitude, Jesus explains that there is a condition attached to this: If we want mercy, then we must ourselves be merciful!

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7).

To be merciful is simply to show or exercise mercy.

The eight beatitudes have to do with our own personal approach to our relationship with God. However, the last four additionally involve how we interact with our fellow humans—our relationships with and duties toward them. So, this fifth beatitude shifts our focus to include how we deal with others.

So how do we go about fulfilling the condition necessary to receive mercy? And what exactly did Jesus mean by the word “merciful”?

## **Mercy Defined**

The way we use the words “mercy” and “being merciful” shapes our understanding of the terms. We usually see them in a legal sense, and so attach a forensic meaning to them. Rather interestingly, this view was influenced by Shakespeare, who, in the courtroom scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, described mercy as the opposite of justice. As a result, our understanding of mercy has largely equated it with forgiveness, especially forgiveness of a perceived injustice. So if we were to translate Matthew 5:7 into the vernacular, it

would probably read: “Blessed are those that forgive, for they shall be forgiven.”

But if this is our view of mercy, then we are short-changing what our Father intends, because it is an incomplete view, arising partly out of a mistranslation of the word.

Our problems continue. We speak in the English language of the *mercy seat* on the Ark of the Covenant, but in Hebrew, the seat is called *Kafforet*, which is the Hebrew word for *atonement*, not mercy. The English translators of the *King James Version* of the Bible translated this word as *mercy*, but, in so doing, they obscured the meaning of the original Hebrew and added to our misunderstanding of what mercy really means. However, such a misinterpretation is not surprising considering the English etymology of the word. Merriam-Webster provides this background:

Mercy: Middle English, from Anglo-French *merci*, from Medieval Latin *merced-*, *merces*, from Latin, price paid, wages, from *merc-*, *merx*, merchandise.

Hence its usage:

1 a: compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power; *also*: lenient or compassionate treatment “begged for *mercy*”; b: imprisonment rather than death imposed as penalty for first-degree murder.

2 a: a blessing that is an act of divine favour or compassion; b: a fortunate circumstance “it was a *mercy* they found her before she froze.”

3: compassionate treatment of those in distress  
“works of *mercy* among the poor.”

British dictionaries are even more direct, as the *Oxford Dictionary* sets out:

mercy /'mə:si /  
noun  
(plural mercies)  
[mass noun] compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm:  
*the boy was screaming and begging for mercy*

Yet “mercy” in the primary sense the word is used today—the legal sense, to signify forgiveness—is rarely the intended meaning in the New Testament where the word is often found in our translations. Rather, the quality of mercy is far broader than we think. Although the term merciful *is* used in the context of forgiveness, we need to look at the rest of Scripture to fully understand what being merciful is all about.

### A Word of Challenging Depth

In the Old Greek translation of the Old Testament, which subsequently came to be known as the Septuagint, or LXX, the first occasion where we find the Greek term that is often translated as “merciful” (as used in the beatitude of Matthew 5:7) is in Exodus 22:26–27.

If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am *gracious* [or *merciful*].

Here, the Greek word often translated “merciful” is translated “gracious.” The *English Standard Version* translates it “compassionate.” So, we might state that for those early translators, there was an understanding that being merciful reflected the idea found in the first use of the term in the Bible—that of the Eternal's *gracious* and *compassionate* character. That idea appears in the next usage in the Septuagint, as well.

And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the

children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:6–7).

In reading verses 7–9, we should note that there are at least two additional Hebrew words that connote the idea of forgiveness—translated “forgiving iniquity” in verse 7 and “pardon our iniquity” in verse 9:

So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance” (Exodus 34:8–9).

The aspect of forgiveness is well covered within God's character, but this also points us to the fact that being merciful is much *more* than forgiveness. In fact, if we look at some of the usages of the word “merciful” in Scripture, we find it has some interesting associations:

I love the LORD, because He has heard My voice and my supplications.... I found trouble and sorrow.... Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful. The LORD *preserves* the simple; I was brought low, and He *saved* me. Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has *dealt bountifully* with you. For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living (Psalm 116:1–9, emphasis added).

God's mercy here is characterized by His preservation of the simple, His saving of those in need, and His bountiful dealings with His people.

The Scripture also reveals that mercy is an integral part of the covenant relationship, as these verses show:

Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. For if you return to the LORD, your brethren and your children will be treated with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him (2 Chronicles 30:8–9).

The Hebrews well understood the concept of being merciful and the Hebrew language effectively expresses it. Their under-

standing of the concept influenced the Hebrew writers, under inspiration, to frequently associate the word for “mercy” with the one for “graciousness,” often coupling the words together.

But you, O Lord, are a God *merciful and gracious*, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give *your strength* to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant (Psalm 86:15–16, *ESV*, emphasis added).

The LORD is *merciful and gracious*, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy... toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities [or “shows compassion toward”] those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He *remembers* that we are dust (Psalm 103:8–14, emphasis added).

So the characteristic of being merciful is closely linked with that of being gracious.

### Insight from Its Origins

Knowledge of the etymology or derivation of the Hebrew word for merciful will also help shape our understanding of the term. The word often translated “mercy” and “merciful” is related to the Hebrew term for the womb, both being derived from the same root. Hence, a sense of protection and nurturing are an essential part of the idea of being merciful.

The depth of this love is shown by the connection of this word with *reḥem/raḥam*. Compare: Isaiah (49:15) who uses it of a mother’s love toward her nursing baby. It can also refer to a father’s love (Psalm 103:13) (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*).

Interestingly, in both the Spanish and French languages, the terms “mercy” and “merciful” carry this same focus on compassion, rather than the “legal” sense so often conveyed by the English use of the word.

As we have seen already, the translators have not consistently rendered the term “compassionate” as “merciful.”

As described in Scripture, mercy is a quality is a quality that is associated with godly character.

Indeed, you may be surprised to learn that although God’s word does occasionally speak in general of people with this quality, it almost never singles out any specific human being, **not even David, a man after God’s own heart, as being merciful. The only exception to this, of course, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

Several times in the Old Testament, the English word “merciful” is translated from another Hebrew expression, *hesed* (e.g., Jeremiah 3:12; Proverbs 11:17). Actually, in the Psalm

that most frequently uses the term “mercy” in most translations (Psalm 136), the word is in fact translated from this Hebrew term, *hesed*. This is one of the most difficult Hebrew terms to translate, since, biblically, it is used only of the Godhead and lacks the sort of connections to descriptions of humans that the word for “mercy” possesses.

Normally translated in English as “compassion” or “mercy,” the word *hesed* more correctly corresponds to the concept of *grace* as it is used in the New Testament. (See the article “Charis, Hesed, Law and Grace” in the November-December 2014 *Living Church News*, for more information.) Throughout this current article, I have been careful to choose instances where the underlying Hebrew or Greek corresponds to the sense of “mercy” or “merciful” that is intended in the beatitude of Matthew 5:7. To do further study on your own, use a good concordance to ensure that the English translation reflects the correct word.

### Ultimately Not a Human Quality

Mercy, as described in Scripture, is a quality that is associated with godly character. Indeed, you may be surprised to learn that although God’s word does occasionally speak in *general* of people with this quality (see 1 Kings 20:31, for example), it almost never singles out any *specific* human being, not even David, a man after God’s own heart, as being merciful. The only exception to this, of course, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17).

Although we find many examples throughout the Bible of *God’s* mercy, and examples in the New Testament of *Christ’s* mercy, examples of *human beings* being merciful to one another are very rare. In fact, Paul makes it clear that *not being merciful* is one of the results of being cut off from God.



**It is incredible that the God of all power, the Great God of the Universe, would extend this degree of mercy to us mere mortals!**

Yet He does, and He also expresses His compassion, graciousness, and mercy to us in many other ways, as we have seen.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, *unmerciful*.... (Romans 1:28–31).

We see, then, that the fifth beatitude describes a quality that does not come to humans naturally. Mercy is an aspect of godly character that we must take on as part of our own character. It is something we must internalize, guiding our thinking processes and actions. And of course, this is something that can only happen in its fullness after we have received God's Holy Spirit—the gift of which is another example of God's mercy!

### **God's Mercy Toward Us**

As the Apostle Paul explains, it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). And later in that epistle, referring to Exodus 33:18–19, he says this:

For He [God] says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy (Romans 9:15–16).

So our very calling is an act of God's mercy and graciousness toward us!

It is incredible that the God of all power, the Great God of the Universe, would extend this degree of mercy to us mere mortals! Yet He does, and He also expresses His compassion, graciousness, and mercy to us in many other ways, as we have seen.

And *this* is the kind of mercy that He expects us to show to others. *This* is what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are the merciful." As He went on to tell His disciples: "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).


### **Reflecting the Father**

The quality of mercy, as discussed in the fifth beatitude, encompasses more than simply a relationship with justice. Certainly, that is a factor in how we currently use the word, but the act of showing mercy goes much further than this.

Being merciful has to do with our sense of caring, nurturing, and compassion for one another. Our Father's willingness to forgive is an expression of that compassion (John 3:16). It is the godly act of showing other human beings, created in the image of the God, the same care and concern that the Father has for His creation, the work of His hands. And as we take on this godly attribute and learn how to be merciful—as our Father in Heaven is—then we will, in turn, receive the mercy from Him that we desire and need so very much.

We will look at one last scripture that relates to the situation in the Laodicean era of the Church of God. We are well aware of the correction given by Jesus Christ to His Church. In that correction He notes that the Laodiceans are "miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The term miserable means without mercy! In a day and age when the Laodicean attitude prevails, it is essential that we seek to understand the place of mercy in our lives. (LN)





# Pentecost and Our Family History

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By **Rod McNair**

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**O**ne of my family's valued possessions is a family history book researched and compiled by one of my now-deceased aunts. Among other things, it contains American Civil War-era letters from my great-great-grandfather, John Williams McNair. He was drafted into the Union Army in 1864 and served as a medic in the final year of that terrible conflict. Here is an excerpt from a letter he wrote to his wife on December 27, 1864:

Dear Meda,

I am getting very anxious to hear from home though you know that much without me telling you. We have got along this far without any accident and I hope we will be successful the balance of our time that we are out on this campaign.... Take care of yourself and the children. God only knows how you will get such things as you are bound to have, for I don't expect I will get any money before my time is up and if I had it, it would be a very uncertain business to send it home.... I want you to send me your likeness. I would rather have it this morning than to have one hundred dollars laid in my hand (as bad as I need the money).... Meda, I want you to write often when I get to a place where I can receive them for a letter from you does me more good than you think it could....

John, I want you and Leo to be good boys. Don't fight Mary and mind what your mother tells you.

Meda, be good to the children—make them mind you. Remember me in your prayers. I trust God in his mercies will remember you and comfort in your troubles.

*J. W. McNair*

I can't read this, or other letters like it, without getting a little emotional! I imagine this man, far away from home, never sure of another day of life, yet trying to cheer up his wife and reminding his children to mind her! The open tenderness and raw feeling are profound.

Family testimonies and histories are important. Knowing where we came from helps us to understand that we are not just "islands in the sea," unconnected to anything else. We need to understand the context of who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. Knowing these things helps us not to feel alone in our daily struggles—helps us escape the feeling that we are the first ones to ever face trials and setbacks. If others persevered, so can we.

In the season of Pentecost, it's good to think about our *spiritual* family history—which is more important than the history of any physical family. And we know quite a lot about that history, because the Bible records it. In this article, let's look at several parts of our *Church family history*, as recorded by Luke, Peter, John, and two of John's disciples.

## **Family History from Luke**

The Day of Pentecost inaugurated the New Testament Church of God (Acts 2:1–4). On this day in 31 AD, Jews and proselytes from all over the Roman Empire were in

Jerusalem keeping the Feast of Firstfruits. They had great respect for the Scriptures. When these individuals came to understand how the role of the Messiah affected them personally, and Who that Messiah was, they responded. They became a family. And they began fellowshipping, sharing, and spending time together (Act 2:46–47).

Think about it: why can we even read this today? Because someone thought it important enough to write it down, to *preserve that family history*. Luke addressed both his gospel and Acts to an individual named Theophilus (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1–3), apparently a convert and probably someone of some financial means. Luke may have been commissioned by Theophilus and apparently recorded a portion of our common family history to give him an accurate, preserved statement of what happened.

What a treasure the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts are! Think about all that the book of Acts tells us about the early Church—how it started, what transpired, what were the challenges, how they faced those challenges. We owe so much to this man, Luke, who felt inspired to write down what he had seen and what he had heard from eyewitnesses.

We trace our spiritual roots to these events. This is our spiritual family history, our Church family history. Just as a family will cherish photo albums and books about their own family history, so do we treasure these books of the Bible.

### Family History from Peter

Like Luke, Peter was conscious of the need to preserve the truth for the future. Notice what he wrote in 2 Peter 1:13–15, toward the end of his life: “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.”

While he was alive, Peter was able to give an eyewitness account of the events of Christ’s life. But now that he was near death, there was an urgent desire to make sure there were accurate records of the truth. Mr. John Ogwyn explains this in his January–February 2002 *Tomorrow’s World* article, “How Did We Get the Bible?”:

Peter was concerned about the future. He knew his death was coming soon, and he was determined that an accurate documentation of the events of Christ’s life and early Church history would be preserved. **What a blessing it is that God inspired this remarkable leader, nearly 2,000 years ago, to commit to writing vital details so we might have the truth!**

In the aftermath of Jesus’ resurrection, accounts of His life and ministry were written. Letters to fledgling congregations were written. As the decades passed, those who were firsthand witnesses of what Jesus Christ said and did began to pass from the scene. False teachers arose who were teaching “a different gospel” (2 Corinthians 11:4). They also wrote letters, often signing the name of one of the Apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:2). In such confusion, how was an accurate account of Christ’s teachings

and the teachings of His Apostles to be preserved for future generations of disciples? Peter addresses this issue in 2 Peter, the last letter that he wrote. Written shortly before his execution, not long after Paul’s death, Peter puts things in perspective. Referring to his soon-approaching

death in verse 14, Peter states: “Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease” (2 Peter 1:15). The only way that he could ensure a permanent record of what he had taught was to leave behind writings officially designated as Holy Scripture.

People debate about how we got the canon of the Bible. It’s fairly obvious that God supernaturally commissioned certain men to *write down what they and others saw* to preserve it for future generations. Peter was a preeminent figure among the Apostles, so he would have had a big role in preserving the truth in document form. Mr. Ogwyn continues:

Beginning in verse 16, Peter abruptly switched from using the first person singular to using “we,” the first person plural. Who was the “we” to whom Peter referred in verses 16–19? He defined the “we” in verse 18, when he referred to them having witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus in the Mount. This event is detailed in Matthew 17:1–13 where we learn that only Peter, James, and John accompanied Jesus to the mount and were first-hand witnesses of this event. James the brother of John was the first of the Apostles to be martyred (Acts 12:1–2) and had been

dead for decades at the time Peter was writing 2 Peter. Therefore, the “we” being referred to by Peter could only refer to him and John.... In other words, Peter was pointing out to his readers that he and John were the ones designated by Christ to leave behind an authoritative record that would guide the Christian community in generations to come, long after the death of the original disciples.

Peter was concerned about the future. He knew his death was coming soon, and he was determined that an accurate documentation of the events of Christ’s life and early Church history would be preserved. What a blessing it is that God inspired this remarkable leader, nearly 2,000 years ago, to commit to writing vital details so we might have the truth!

### Family History from John

The Apostle John is also a remarkable figure. Peter talked about the “we” who saw Christ’s transfiguration on the mountain—Peter, James, and John. After Peter died, John was the last of the original Apostles who could serve as a living eye-witness of Jesus Christ. He saw himself as a grandfather-figure with a mission to complete for the family. Notice how he addressed his correspondent in Asia Minor:

The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (3 John 1–4).

For those of us who have had the blessing of knowing our grandfathers, there is a very special connection. Do you remember hearing your grandfather tell stories of what he’d been through in his life? Cherish the time grandparents take to share wisdom, experience, and family history with you. There will come a time when they are gone, and unless it is written down, much will fade from memory and be lost. This is what John surely must have had in mind, as he was the last man standing of the Twelve. What did he focus on in his writings?

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and

heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full (1 John 1:1–4).

Notice the context, that we are a family, and that we need to be connected to one another. Where would we be if the book of Acts had not been written, if Luke and other writers had not worked so hard to preserve an accurate account of our family history? Peter and John labored to preserve and collect and record, for all time, the body of truth on which the New Testament Church was built. Like Peter, John was looking back and was very concerned that accurate accounts would be preserved. And he was also looking forward and training disciples himself.

### Family History from Polycarp and Polycrates

And we have written records of John’s disciples, Polycarp and Polycrates. They continued in his doctrine, and just as important, they recognized the authenticity of the New Testament scriptures. Notice this quote from *The Apostasy of the Lost Century*, by S. Gusten Olson, written in 1986:

In an era when heresies were widespread, it was imperative that the norms and doctrines of Christianity be established by the writings of the apostles. The definition of Christianity would otherwise become lost. The bishops who submitted to the criterion of the apostolic writings were able to discern the deviations from the original faith. Hence Polycarp, who seems to live and have his being in the Word of God, noticed the error which led to the Quartodeciman Controversy (p. 92).

What was the Quartodeciman Controversy? Simply that, early in the second century, the church at Rome *ceased* to keep the Passover as the Apostles had done, in favor of keeping Easter, and those who *continued* keeping Passover on the 14th of Nisan came to be called Quartodecimans by the Roman church, meaning “fourteeners.” Mr. Olson continues:

As he was familiar with John’s first epistle, he realized that dissenters and antinomians had once been mistaken for converted members of the Church (1 John 2:19). Ever since the first century, false teachers simply rejected parts or the entirety of writings which the Church had already considered Scripture. Others were perverting the meaning of them (2 Peter 3:17)... Polycarp and the Asian Christians[']...

staunch refusal to compromise with their Christian principles was based on their belief that Scripture was inspired by God and provided an authentic and trustworthy means by which Christ was speaking (pp. 92–93).

### Passing on the Family History

What does this all have to do with Pentecost? It emphasizes our need to *know our family history*. It gives us an accurate understanding of who has come before and what they believed. It gives us context, and even holds us accountable for our actions! We need to be connected to our past, and to be aware that our actions reflect on our spiritual family.

We also need to think about the future! Our work is to prove the truth, cherish the truth, and pass on the truth. We need to be involved in not only absorbing what we have been given in the past, but also making sure we are part of passing it on in the future.

We are, perhaps, living in one of the most selfish and inward-looking times in human history. The trend is to look only at the here and now. The temptation today is to focus only on what we are doing and not care about anyone but ourselves. We can allow our world to get smaller and smaller, especially when we suffer trials and difficulties.

But brethren, now is not the time to do that! Now, of all times, is the time to think big!

Pentecost is about the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20–23). We are preparing now for positions in God's Kingdom (1

Corinthians 6:3). We will someday rule and have power over the nations (Revelation 2:26). God is not giving us power over the nations so that we can aggrandize ourselves, but so that we may relieve the suffering of the world. We will be a part of the team that will bring peace and help ensure that no one lives in fear anymore (Micah 4:1, 3–4)!

God is starting small with us now. He's training us through the work we do in our own families, and He's wanting us to note personal testimonies that can be part of our own individual family's history. Dr. Jeff Fall explained this in the booklet *Successful Parenting: God's Way*:

Family testimonies, or family stories of God's dramatic interventions, healings and other blessings, can help

children appreciate the reality of God, and of His loving nature as a living and vital Lord who is personally interested in our lives.... Over the years, my wife and I have talked with our children about many such dramatic interventions—including many healings. These stories have become our personal family “**testimonies**” of God's intervention—stories that have reinforced our appreciation of the **love**, the **reality** and the **power** of our God. All parents should regularly share personal testimonies from their own lives, to help bind their children to the real God (pp. 28–29).

Whether we work with our physical children now, or *spiritual* “children” in the future—the many people living during the Millennium who will look to us for guidance, inspiration, and understanding—we will all have opportunities to share personal testimonies!

As we keep Pentecost, we are not alone. We are a part of a big family with many members. We have elders and ancestors who lived righteously, providing us with good examples—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. They continued the

heritage they were given, and they looked ahead to what was coming (Hebrews 11:13–16). We are part of a wonderful heritage, shared by all those who have come before and those who will come after (Hebrews 11:39–12:2).

The baton has been passed to us. The trials we face now and will face in the future are a small blip in the span of history. We can easily get caught up in the here and now, in problems of the moment, in the “cares of this world”

(Matthew 13:22). But now is our time to sacrifice, to persevere, to give up our own will, to give up the self, to crucify the self—to go all out in accomplishing the Work Jesus Christ commissioned us to do until the end of the age (Matthew 28:18–20).

The Day of Pentecost teaches us that we have a priceless heritage, being a part of the family of God that will be born into literal spirit life. It also teaches us that we have a job to do. We are to take this truth and take it forward, to stand up, to do our job, to be strong, to be faithful, to not shrink back but to be bold, so that we can show the way to future generations.

Let us use that big picture to keep us focused and zeroed in on seeking God with all of our hearts and fulfilling our role as firstfruits. He is building a family. We are writing our part of that family history right now. (LN)

**As we keep Pentecost, we are not alone. We are a part of a big family with many members. We have elders and ancestors who lived righteously, providing us with good examples—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. They continued the heritage they were given, and they looked ahead to what was coming.**



# Second Thoughts: Internal Organs Are Important, Too!

*Each week, students in the Living Education–Charlotte program gather for Student Assembly to hear from an invited speaker who addresses a topic of his choice—often something related to his role in the Church or personal lessons learned. The essay below is adapted from a section of the Living Education website where Thomas White, a student in the program who has been working in the Editorial Department, contributes his personal reflections on the week’s Assembly presentation in a blog series titled “Second Thoughts.” Blog posts from the 2018–2019 school year are available for reading online at [LCGEducation.org](http://LCGEducation.org).*

*This particular essay was written as a reflection on the presentation made by Mr. Jerry Ruddlesden, LCG Financial Controller. We wanted to include this sample as part of “opening the doors” of Living Education’s on-campus program and illustrating what our students are doing. We hope you enjoy it! —Editorial Staff*

**“I think of a body of believers when I think about the Church.... [T]he body of believers is made up of so many different kinds of people, from all different kinds of backgrounds, all different kinds of races, all different kinds of experiences, different cultural backgrounds, and different talents.”**

**—Jerry Ruddlesden**

A novel by Robert Heinlein includes a quote that ends with “Specialization is for insects,” claiming that every human being should be able to do basically everything under the sun. That’s all well and good if you’re a character in a novel with as many inexplicable talents and abilities as the author can write for you, but in real life, no human being can do everything. The Apostle Paul says as much in 1 Corinthians 12, where he informs us that God’s Church is a body, and that each member of it makes up a separate and unique, yet unified and integral, part of that body. For this week’s assembly, Mr. Jerry Ruddlesden informed us of the absolutely staggering amount of work that goes into maintaining and operating that body, from the local ins and outs of making sure our Sabbath services across the world have halls in which God’s people can meet, to the intricacies of creating a professional, global telecast and finding television stations on which to show it. All of this is done by an immense number of people—and most of these people work almost entirely “behind the curtain.”

**“The body needs a head, the body needs a foot. The body needs an eye, the body needs an ear. We preach the Gospel, we feed the flock, and all those little things that happen here, all of us together, we’re a part of that.”**

**—Jerry Ruddlesden**

All these unseen yet hugely important things being done by all these unseen yet absolutely invaluable people

caused a thought to occur to me. Thanks to Paul’s inspired words, we understand that some members of Christ’s body are eyes, some are ears, some are hands, and some are feet. Obviously, all these parts are on the *outside* of the body—we don’t need to be X-rayed to see that we have eyes, ears, hands, and feet. But what if you’re none of the above? After all, a body is a lot more than just what the mirror shows. What if you’re a pancreas? A thyroid gland? A spleen? These parts aren’t visible—unless something really, really bad just happened to you—but... well, try spending a day without your thyroid. Actually, please don’t. It will *not* go well.

**“The members in the Church who are not in charge have their part to play. And it’s not just to ‘pay and pray’.... It’s way more than that.”**

**—Jerry Ruddlesden**

You see where I’m going with this, and Mr. Ruddlesden went there first, as he explained that, for example, though each *Tomorrow’s World* telecast may only be presented by one man, there are perhaps dozens of people who are never shown, but without whom that telecast would never be produced. Those people aren’t parts of the body’s face; they’re internal organs, and you don’t need to be a doctor to know that a body *needs* internal organs. The telecast needs more than presenters. The magazine needs more than writers. The Church needs more than people in Charlotte. Preaching the Gospel and feeding the flock takes every single one of us. Whether it’s Mr. Weston teaching doctrine to the members, or the teenager in a tiny congregation being a light and example to everyone around, both contribute to the feeding and preaching in their own special ways using their own particular talents. We’ll always need faces, but internal organs are important, too.

**—Thomas White**

# Woman to Woman

## *Seeing God Behind Our Man*

By **Jeanine Smith**

**M**any of us have read Ephesians 5:22. Mr. Ames refers to it as a “memory scripture,” implying we should know it by heart. It reads, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” 1 Peter 3:1 is very similar. It tells us, “Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives....”

When we read this, we have to recognize that it is a command. Not a suggestion or request, but rather God’s inspired instruction. Peter’s words tell us that even if we have an unconverted mate, we are not off the hook. And notice how the command doesn’t have “terms” or “conditions” that govern whether or not we need to follow it. It doesn’t say, “Submit when your husband makes a decision you agree with” or “Accept the decrees you think are wise.”

So, what happens when our husband makes a decision that we might consider to be unwise? What if we don’t think he has considered all of the facts before he made his decision? On the path to becoming one as husband and wife, disagreement is inevitable. When our mate makes a decision that we deeply believe is a mistake, what are we to do in those situations?

Let’s look at the example Sarah set for us. Peter himself points us to her as an example from which we can learn (1 Peter 3:6).

### **Our Husband’s Story Is Ours, As Well**

Abraham is called the Father of the Faithful, and even though Sarah is not given a similar sort of title, she is mentioned among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. When you read the story of Sarah, you quickly realize that the subject of the larger story is God’s working with Abraham. But in working with her husband, God also was working with Sarah, and God did talk to Sarah herself. The text does not tell us He gave her visions, but, as Abraham’s wife, Sarah would have been a part of the covenants God made with him.

Abraham was the leader of his family, the protector of Sarah, and the one who supported her. When Abraham left

Ur, Sarah had to be willing, otherwise she would have stayed behind or would have likely been removed from the story. Peter reveals the mind of Christ by telling us that men and women are heirs together, receiving the same promise (1 Peter 3:7). It is not unreasonable to conclude that Sarah, too, believed in the promises God held out to her and her husband, as he did. Reading 1 Peter 3:7, I would think that she believed not only in the physical blessings God had promised, but also in whatever details of the full plan of God that He had shared with Abraham, as well. We, too, along with our believing husbands, trust the promises God holds out for us.

What about that “submit” thing, though? Especially submitting when our husbands make decisions with which we don’t agree. Does Sarah teach us anything about how wives should respond?

Well, in Genesis 12 and Genesis 20, we see two occasions in which Abraham makes a decision where—each time—Sarah is placed in danger when he allows her to be taken from his protection and into the house of a foreign king who does not know she is married and intends to make her his own. If you haven’t read the accounts in those chapters of Genesis, they are worth the time, and, as you read them, place yourself in her shoes. Imagine what living through those situations would have been like for Sarah and how vulnerable and exposed she would have felt. Talk about “unwise” decisions! Abraham knew what God had promised him, yet, in these instances, he feared for his life and made unwise choices that did not reflect the powerful faith for which he would eventually be known. Like our husbands, Abraham was still human, and made a poor decision to allow Sarah to be taken from him.

### **Can We See God in Those Moments?**

What did she do? She did not brandish a sword and fight her way to freedom or otherwise take matters into her own hands, as many of today’s movies might depict her doing. She did not seek to shame Abraham into doing the right thing. No, she submitted to Abraham and went. Now it happened in both cases that God intervened and saved her. The text does not tell us any details of her reaction, but it is not hard to imagine that Sarah was praying, possibly even fasting and begging



God for deliverance from the potential consequences of the decision her husband had made. Perhaps she pleaded with Abraham about the foolhardiness of the decision he was making—if not the first time he made it, then perhaps the second! We do not know.

What we *do* know is that she submitted to her husband and let herself be taken. I have always admired her for this, even from my childhood.

You see, when I read the story of Abraham and Sarah, I see a woman who was able to look past her husband and see God. To see her real protector. Her real deliverer. The One who was really in charge of her family. Peter praises Sarah for the fearless obedience she gave her husband (1 Peter 3:5–6). She was able to submit to Abraham in every decision, even the ones that could possibly endanger her, because she had the ability to see God behind her man. Not that God necessarily agreed with Abraham's decisions, and, as we know, after these two failures Abraham would eventually have to pass an even greater test of faith. However, God had Abraham's back—and, thus, had her back, too. Sarah, I suspect, realized this. In her submission to Abraham, she was able to get out of the way to let God direct and lead her husband, and thereby herself, to the land He promised to them.

When our husbands make decisions we don't agree with, what is our response? Do we criticize or nag? Do we undermine the decision, biding our time till it falls apart? Do we take what we feel is the high road, and run to God in prayer and fasting—but then corrupt that high road by do-

ing nothing to support our husband's decision, waiting for God to show him we were right? Or do we pray and tell God our concerns, reminding Him we are on the journey, too, alongside our husband, and then do all we can to make the decision work?

### Doing Our Part and Letting God Do His

My husband has had the opportunity to serve on the Living Church of God's Council of Elders under both Dr. Roderick Meredith and Mr. Gerald Weston, and he has commented on the men they have chosen to surround themselves with for counsel. He is quick to say that the men are *not* "yes" men—that is, the sort of men who simply say what they think the Presiding Evangelist wants to hear. They give *real* counsel, even if it means disagreeing with the boss. But he says that they *are* what he calls "yes, sir" men—meaning that after giving their honest opinions, counsel, and input, they still recognize that the Presiding Evangelist is the leader God has appointed in the Church. When he makes a decision, whether it matches their counsel or not, they rally behind him to make that decision work the best they can. In other words, they, too, understand the lesson of Sarah.

Our families are no different. As wives and mothers, we have to recognize that families are tiny kingdoms—individual governments learning God's way. The husband is the king and the leader (under Christ), and wives are to submit to their own husbands. We are to give our input and our advice, and then, when the decision is made, we are to do all we can to make the decision succeed, whether it matches our own counsel or not. When we feel a bad decision has been made, we can pray about it, or fast about it.

We can even, if necessary, talk to our pastor about it if we are truly concerned. In the end, our command is to submit to our husband and to strive to see God behind our man.

If we do this, God will not fail us. He will rescue us if need be. Who knows, maybe the "stupid" decision may succeed. Maybe He will change the mind of our husband. Or maybe we were wrong, and time will help us to see it. Or, even if we were right, He may miraculously intervene if necessary, to make things work out. Who knows? We are simply to do our part, and let God do His part. We must remember that we are not only the wives of our husbands, we are also the daughters of the Ever-Living One. That Ever-Living One is not only working with us, but with our husbands as well. (LN)

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or take matters into her own hands, as  
many of today's movies might depict  
her doing. She did not seek to shame  
Abraham into doing the right thing.  
**No, she submitted to Abraham and went.**

## Weddings & Anniversaries

**Mr. Dustin Christal** and **Miss Holly Sheffield** were united in marriage on November 18 in Joplin, Missouri. The ceremony, conducted by Mr. Davy Crockett, was followed by an elegant reception of food, dancing, and joyous celebration. Mr. and Mrs. Christal attend the Little Rock, Arkansas congregation.

**Mr. and Mrs. Dale (Yolanda) Bailey** of the Big Sandy, Texas congregation, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on March 14, and the congregation honored them with a reception on March 23. All shared in a potluck meal, which included a cake. They were married in 1959 on Catalina Island, California.

In 1967, Mr. and Mrs. Bailey first heard *The World Tomorrow* radio program from the Radio Church of God,

and they were both baptized in February of 1968. In 1969, Mr. Bailey attended Ambassador College in Pasadena, California as a married student. He was then asked to manage the campus building program, utilizing his California State Contractor's License. In 1981, the Baileys were transferred to the Ambassador College campus in Big Sandy, Texas, where Mr. Bailey served as the Director of Facilities.

Mr. and Mrs. Bailey have always been very active in their local church congregations. He was ordained an elder in February 2016 and currently serves in the Big Sandy congregation. The Baileys have two children, three grandchildren, and one great-granddaughter.

The Monroe, Louisiana congregation honored **Mr. and Mrs. Gary**

**(Sharon) Hartley** after Sabbath services on June 2, 2018, as they celebrated 50 years of marriage. Cake, punch, and gifts were presented to them in commemoration of the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Hartley have served the brethren in Monroe for many years, and the brethren were happy to help them celebrate. Their actual anniversary was June 8, so this event just started the celebration.

On December 16, 2018, **Mr. Jacob Stevens** and **Miss Dominique Gagnon** were united in marriage in Merrill, Wisconsin. The ceremony was conducted by Mr. Sheldon Monson. Afterward, weather was beautiful and the cake was exceptional, as the bride and groom celebrated with friends and family at a reception featuring a dinner and dance.

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## Births

On March 21, 2019, **Olivia Rose Blake** was born to happy parents Bradley and Karla Blake of the Edmonton, Alberta congregation. She weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces, and measured 19 inches in length. A little sister for Laurie-Lynn, Olivia is also a new joy for grandparents Perry Blake and Harold and Melvina Bussey.

Matthew and Sarah (Hilgenberg) Kreis, of the Joplin, Missouri congregation, announce the birth of their daughter,

**Emma Isabelle.** She was born on January 7, weighing 7 pounds, 7 ounces.

Levi and Cerena McNiel, of the Fayetteville, Arkansas congregation, announce the birth of their daughter, **Karolina Jeanette.** She was born on January 7, weighing 8 pounds, 7 ounces, and measuring 19.5 inches long. Dad, Mom, brothers, and Karolina are all doing fine.

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



# In Loving Memory

**Mrs. Shirley Ann Nash Apartian**, widow of Evangelist Dibar Apartian, died on February 1 at the age of 83 years. Mrs. Apartian was reared in El Dorado Arkansas. She graduated as valedictorian of her high school class and then was accepted to attend Ambassador College in Pasadena, California, where she was baptized in 1955. She and Mr. Apartian were married in 1959, and the adventures began. Through the years, they traveled widely as he oversaw the French-language Work of God's Church around the world. Mrs. Apartian was an interesting, resourceful person, and a wonderful hostess. She always set an elegant table, often with limited resources. She sought excellence and good quality in all that she did, including developing many homemaking skills. A fine seamstress, she made her own classic clothing and was known for dressing well. She was a dedicated student of the Bible, and read widely, including history. Later in life, she sharpened her business acumen by reading *The Wall Street Journal* daily. She touched many lives, setting a good example for all, and she will be greatly missed and fondly remembered. She was predeceased by one son, Phillip in 1983, and her husband in 2010. She is survived by one son, Daniel, and one grandson. Mr. Davy Crockett conducted her funeral service, with eulogies by her nephew and son, on February 10.

**Mr. Ewald Hammermeister, 87**, of the Edmonton, Alberta congregation, died suddenly of heart failure on March 7. He was born in Poland on October 4, 1931 to German parents. With his family, he suffered through the Depression, the Second World War, and deportation to Germany in 1945 as the war ended. Mr. Hammermeister immigrated to Canada in 1951 and lived a very full life. A longtime member of the Church, he was baptized in 1964 and recently joined our fellowship in the Living Church of God. The congregation in Edmonton will miss his sense of humor, his skill as a conversationalist, and his cheerful demeanor. Mr. Hammermeister

had five children, eight grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, and several great-great-grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife Bertha. The memorial service was conducted by Messrs. Lawrence Hartshorne and Lenard Hine.

**Mrs. Marla Hay, 65**, of the Edmonton, Alberta congregation, died peacefully with her family by her side on March 5, after a brave battle with cancer. Mrs. Hay was a cheerful, enthusiastic lady who, despite her own severe trials, persevered with determination, and uplifted those around her. She enjoyed spending time with her family and the brethren. Remembering her lovingly are her son Shayne (Shannon), daughters Amber (Kevin) and Nadine (Mike), stepdaughter Sheena, seven grandchildren, and six siblings. Marla was predeceased by her husband Garnet in 2018. Messrs. Lawrence Hartshorne and Lenard Hine conducted the memorial service.

**Mr. Gordon Hill, 83**, of the Sevenoaks, England congregation, died in his home on February 3 after a short treatment for cancer. He is survived by his wife, Margaret. They had celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in October.

**Mr. Richard Oakley, 87**, a deacon in the Caspar, Wyoming area, died on February 20. He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Marieanna Oakley. He died in the faith, and was known for his willingness to help others, friends and brethren alike. No one was a stranger to the Oakleys, and many who knew Richard as a child remember his fun-loving approach to life. He enjoyed testing others' knowledge by asking questions like, "How old was Methuselah when he died?"

**Mrs. Marion Pearce, 89**, a deaconess in the Dallas, Texas congregation, died on December 13. She was a faithful member of the Church of God for 48 years. She was known by the brethren for her warm and friendly smile and greetings, including "Hi, Boo."

Mrs. Pearce will be missed by all who knew and loved her. She was preceded in death by her husband, John, and leaves to cherish her memory four children, eleven grandchildren, and ten great-grandchildren, as well as other family and many friends.

**Mr. Bruce Reynolds, 68**, of the Indianapolis, Indiana congregation, died on March 10 following a brief illness. He was born on August 21, 1950 in Springfield, Missouri. On June 11, 1972 he married the love of his life, Barbara, who remained faithfully by his side until his Christian journey was finished. An avid reader, he became a self-taught engineer and spent most of his working years employed in that field. He also enjoyed woodworking and became a luthier, making guitars and dulcimers, as well as flutes. He was baptized on July 21, 1984 and spent the rest of his life quietly serving God and His people. All who knew him will remember his quick wit, care for widows, and love for God's way of life. He is survived by his wife, nephew, mother, three brothers, a half-sister, great-nephews, and many friends. Mr. James Henderson, Sr., a local deacon, conducted a brief memorial at Sabbath services.

**Mrs. Lois Darlene Sponaule, 74**, of the Knox, Indiana congregation, died peacefully on February 22 after a long and productive life of service to her family and God's Church. She was born on August 16, 1944 in Valparaiso, Indiana and worked for many years as a waitress. On March 7, 1961 she married her husband, Ralph, who faithfully stood by her side until the end of her race. She was baptized in 1965 and began a walk with God that spanned more than half a century. Many will remember her love for dancing, good music, and family. She truly possessed the heart of a Christian warrior, evidenced by her example of faithfully attending services, even while her health deteriorated. She leaves behind her husband, five children, one brother, three sisters, fourteen grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Area Pastor Yancy Taber conducted her funeral.

## ORDINATIONS

**Mrs. Debbie Flowers** was ordained a deaconess on the Sabbath of February 9 by Area Pastor Phil West and Elders Dennis Shipley and David Stiffler. Mrs. Flowers serves in the Russellville, Arkansas congregation.

**Mr. Adam Jennings** was ordained an elder on February 16 by Evangelist Douglas Winnail, Australasian Regional Director Rob Tyler, and Area Pastor Michael Gill. He serves in the Adelaide, Australia congregation.

**Mr. Htoowah Laybeh** was ordained an elder on February 23 by Australasian Regional Director Rob Tyler, Pastor Rajan Moses, and Elder Thomas Tial Hoe. Mr. Laybeh serves in Thailand.

## 2018 Festival Correction

*In our January-February 2019 Living Church News, we featured reports from many of our 2018 Festival sites all over the world. However, two reports were lost during the work of publishing that issue. We would like to make up for that oversight by publishing these two reports from those sites, along with our apologies. Our thanks to all of those who work so hard behind the scenes to run our Feast of Tabernacles sites and to share their experiences with the rest of us! —Editorial Staff*

### La Quinta, California

More than 300 came together in La Quinta, California, for the 2018 Feast of Tabernacles. This relaxing desert location—with its beautiful blue skies, puffy white clouds, and hills jutting from the rugged desert landscape—was a truly inspiring setting, as brethren from as far away as Canada and Barbados enjoyed a foretaste of the wonderful world tomorrow!

All the messages were inspiring and encouraging, focusing on the importance of having a truly spiritual Feast, the restoration of all things at Christ's return, and what we need to do now to prepare for our coming responsibilities as the rulers and teachers under Christ. We were also blessed to have a number of great activities, including a "Hummer" tour of Joshua Tree National Park and a stop at a real-life desert oasis, a "Havana Nights" themed Dinner/Dance with a live band, Family Day bowling, and a dinner, movie and game night.

The enthusiastic attitudes, active participation, and a spirit of unity, warmth, and brotherly love all helped make this an exceptional Feast to remember. It was truly a foretaste of the millennial rule of Jesus Christ on earth!



### Panama City, Florida

Sunny skies and hot weather greeted those attending the Feast in Panama City Beach, Florida. This was the third year in a row that this city of 13,000 people has played host to us for the Feast of Tabernacles, and the community greeted us warmly. Services were conducted at the Boardwalk Hotel and Convention Center with about 980 brethren lodging at the adjacent or nearby facilities. Panama City offers many area attractions, such as the beautiful beaches, local museums, a zoo, and many options for shopping, which were enjoyed by many who attended there.

On Tuesday, at the Young Singles Mixer Luncheon, Mr. Mike Kreyer, associate pastor of the Minneapolis church area, spoke to 39 young singles as they enjoyed a Lasagna meal. That evening, families enjoyed the Dinner/Dance, where meals of flat iron steak, broiled salmon, and Chicken Florentine were served and guests danced to music for all generations.

The next day was Family Day, held at Rock-It Lanes, where everyone enjoyed bowling, skating, and an arcade room. A luncheon to honor our seniors, a day at the beach for our teens, and team-building activities followed on Thursday.

It was a memorable Feast with God's Spirit evident in acts of service, attentive audiences, and loving fellowship.

**UNIVERSITY OR SKILLED TRADE?** continued from page 2

child. I want to warn them.... The nurse teaching your daughter about herpes, the social worker reassuring your son about his homosexual thoughts—these people may have a vision for social change that you don't share. They may see their jobs as an avenue for activism, and one of their goals is to influence your child.... Their goal is an androgynous culture, where the differences between male and female are discounted or denied, and the bond between them robbed of singularity" (pp. xx-xxi).

This only scratches the surface of the kind of thinking that a young student will encounter. University life has always had its challenges. UC Berkeley had riots in my day. Campuses spawned the public revolt against the Vietnam War. Illicit sex was rampant then, as it is now. But it has gotten worse. Today's institutions are not the universities that those of us among the older generations attended. We did not need "safe zones" or stuffed animals to comfort us when we were presented with opinions that were unpopular. We never heard of, or even thought of, "micro-aggressions." And speech was not stifled, as it is today when it disagrees with political agendas.

Does this mean a university education must be abandoned? Certainly not, but as I've pointed out, careful planning, wise choices of schools and courses, and considering where to live are all vital. One also needs to evaluate carefully one's talents and aptitudes. University is not for everyone. The Apostle Paul and the prophet Daniel had formal educations, and it is evident that they were not without their challenges. Several apostles were fishermen with family businesses. Jesus Christ was a skilled carpenter. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong chose to learn on his own, with mentoring by experienced advertising men, yet he went on to found three colleges of higher learning.

Too often, we think only in terms of "either/or." A careful study of the Bible shows that this is not always the mind of Christ. Throughout the centuries, God has called individuals with a wide variety of talents, and He does the same today. The Church needs young men and women who are formally educated, but it also needs skilled tradesmen and entrepreneurs who run their own businesses. Consider all the facts, make wise choices, and always put God first.


**FRUIT OF JOY** continued from page 4

most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (vv. 9-10).

Paul also wrote, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7). Heartfelt prayer, with thanksgiving for what God provides, and truly being able to share our needs and concerns with God, gives us something the world as a whole does not have. We can have peace even during the most severe

trials. As Isaiah informs us, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

Not all handle trials so well, not even in the Church. In fact, not all handle minor inconveniences with grace, and these passages should cause us to take a serious look at our relationship with our Creator. We must look in the mirror and ask ourselves the sobering question, "Do I have joy, peace, and contentment?" If not, why not?

We understand that each of us, due to background and natural inclinations, develops some of the individual fruits of the Spirit with greater difficulty than we do the others. Some people have better training growing up and are taught the godly traits of being thankful and content with what they have. Others grow up in homes where self-

ishness, anger, and unhappiness are the rule. This presents a challenge. Even God's Spirit does not instantaneously reverse that which was learned during our formative years.

Each of us must examine ourselves, whether we see each element of the fruit of God's Spirit within us. Only then can we evaluate why we lack a particular trait and begin to cry out to God to help us overcome that lack. We must do our part to recognize the problem. Only then are we able to strive with the help of Christ living in us to develop godly cheerfulness, calm delight, peace, and joy. God promises to give us His Spirit, but we must ask, seek, and knock on His door through heartfelt supplication and prayer (Luke 11:9-13). As we meditate on the gift of God's Spirit this Pentecost season, may all of us be filled with lasting joy! <sup>(LH)</sup>

## COMMENTARY

### The Weight of the Bible

**W**hat is the difference between most of modern “Christianity” and the teachings of the Bible? The answer may be very surprising, but a short analogy comparing the Bible to a real conundrum concerning weights and measurements may help us understand.

“In a vault in suburban Paris sits a little lump of metal that is the official kilo, the sanctioned yardstick from which numerous other measurements are derived. The problem is, it’s getting heavier” (“A weighty problem: The official kilo is getting heavier,” *Globe & Mail*). This article addresses how the scientific community has gone about correcting the issue. The analogy comparing this problem to mainstream Christian doctrines today is an interesting exercise.

The challenge is that, from the moment it was fabricated in 1879, the kilogram “lump” accumulated contaminants, which increased its mass above that of the actual required standard kilogram. Since this is the standard to which all other items of mass are compared, the lump cannot exceed one kilogram to the microgram (one-millionth of a gram) if it is to provide an accurate measure.

What if the Bible—a standard for Christian living and doctrine—has suffered similar “changes”?

The Apostle John completed the final book of the Bible at the end of the first century. Although to many today this standard has become a “heavy burden,” the very same apostle who completed the assembly of the New Testament tells us, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Jesus

the Christ, in His own words, gives us this wonderful truth: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:29–30).

Scientists developed a 30-hour procedure to restore the kilogram to its original mass while making sure that no part of the original was removed. Similarly, God, who inspired the words written in the Bible, sternly warns, “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32).

Yet, so many today think that the Bible does not need all of its parts—offering claims such as “The law is done away,” or “The Old Testament is not necessary.” Jesus Himself, however, admonishes, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17–19).

The Bible cannot be “increased” or “decreased” and still be an accurate representation of God’s teachings—it’s a complete book!

Consider that scientists will spend 30 hours carefully cleaning the kilogram to maintain the standard. Does our Bible, a major key to our relationship with God, command such a considerable commitment from us? Are we willing to spend that same amount of energy to preserve and maintain the whole “weight” or “mass” of the Bible?

—Marc Arseneault