

# THE LIVING CHURCH NEWS

LCG.org

July-August 2019

## Why a Council of Elders?

*Dear Brethren,*

Dr. Roderick C. Meredith wisely established a Council of Elders for the Living Church of God to discuss a variety of subjects that concern the Church. We often discuss how better to do the Work, how better to serve the members, and how to understand prophecy more clearly as we draw closer to the end of the age.

The tone of the council has always been the same. Dr. Meredith set an example of respecting the council members, and we respected him. I can happily report that the same mutual respect continues to the present. Does that mean that we all view every topic through the same eyes? The answer is found in a simple question: If everyone thought exactly the same on every topic, why would there be a need for a council? Or, as U.S. General George S. Patton put it, "If everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking."

Dr. Meredith was not the first to see the wisdom in having a council, as Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong had one before him. Gathering a multitude of counsel is a biblical admonition and an expression of God's very character. "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14). We also read that, "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22).

Our council is composed of members from different backgrounds with different talents. Some have greater technical knowledge, others have greater wisdom in how to use knowledge, and some are more familiar with ethnic customs that differ from those of Western culture. Concerning the importance of the last of those examples, if we discuss, say, proper attire for Sabbath services, it is critical to understand how "dressing up" is different in different cultures. "Anything

goes" is not the mind of Christ, and Matthew 22:11-12 shows that certain standards are expected to be upheld. Appropriate attire in America or Britain is not the same today as it was in Jesus' day, but every civilized culture has standards of decorum that must be maintained. Having men familiar with the different cultures within the Church today helps us communicate those standards with grace and clarity.

We discussed a wide range of topics during our May 2019 Council of Elders meetings, and there is one area of discussion that I particularly want to share with you. We talked with each other at length on the "70 Weeks Prophecy" of Daniel 9, a topic we have discussed numerous times over several years. We have traditionally understood the 70 weeks to begin with the decree of Artaxerxes in 457 B.C. From that time until the coming of the Messiah there would be a total of 69 weeks, meaning that Christ began His ministry in 27 A.D. (Each week has seven days, given the "day for a year" principle of prophecy—and remember that you must add one year when going from B.C. to A.D., as there is no year zero.)

The meaning of verse 27 is a bit more ambiguous. Is the subject here the Messiah or the Roman prince, both of whom are mentioned in verse 26? Or is this an example of prophetic duality?

One of the purposes of the 70th week was to fulfill the purposes stated in verse 24, including "mak[ing] reconciliation for iniquity." This was accomplished during the first half of the 70th week by Christ's sacrifice at the end of His three-and-a-half-year ministry, and this has been the teaching of God's Church for decades. The last three purposes of verse 24 were not fulfilled in the first half of the 70th week, but will be fulfilled during the second half (three-and-a-half years) of the

Volume 21, No. 4



### Inside This Issue...

*I Was Wrong!... p. 3*

*All Is Vanity... Or Is It?... p. 5*

*Jury Duty... p. 8*

*Reaching Out to a Troubled World... p. 12*

*Charlotte BRIC Weekend... p. 16*

*Living Education Graduation... p. 17*

*It's Not in the Database... p. 18*

*A Year of Togetherness... p. 20*

*How to Give Godly Offerings... p. 22*

*Local Church News... p. 24*

*It's Your Time... p. 28*

70th week, which begins with the Second Coming (Revelation 11:15). The purposes of the 70th week are clearly stated in Daniel 9:24. We recognize that there will be a transition period, during which the ruling Jesus Christ puts down His enemies and establishes the New Covenant with Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:8–13; Hebrews 10:16–17). In the Millennium, the Messiah will anoint the “Most Holy,” or—as the Hebrew indicates—the “Most Holy Place.”

Verse 26 introduces a “prince who is to come.” This is not the Messiah, but one who destroys “the city and the sanctuary.” So when verse 27 says that “he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering,” it is not clear whether this refers to Christ, who was cut off in the middle of the week, ending the need for animal sacrifices, or whether it refers to a prince who makes a seven-year

agreement with the Jews, which is broken after three-and-a-half years. Note that the capitalization of the pronouns—“he” and “He”—provide no clues; the original Hebrew did not possess capital letters, so those differences only reflect the interpretations of the translators.

A strong case can be made for either opinion, or for a combination of the two, which would be duality. The question has always been this: Is the Messiah or the prince the antecedent of “he” in verse 27? (An antecedent is an earlier word or phrase to which a pronoun refers.) Who is it that brings an end to sacrifice and offering?

We understand that Jesus’ ministry lasted about three-and-a-half years, half of a prophetic week. Jesus **was** cut off in the middle of the week—that is clear! However, the wording of Daniel 9:27 appears on the surface to refer to the prince, possibly referring to his cutting off of the sacrifices that are prophesied to be restarted and stopped before Christ’s return (Daniel 12:11; Mark 13:14). It is possible that both the prince and the Messiah are intended—a duality in prophecy—but this is far from certain.

We understand that Jesus’ ministry  
lasted about three-and-a-half years, half  
of a prophetic week. **Jesus was cut off in  
the middle of the week—that is clear!**

Determining which understanding is correct is not as simple as it appears. There are numerous examples in Scripture where the antecedent of a pronoun is not always clear without investigation.

Take Exodus 34:28 as one example. “So he [Moses] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he [Moses] neither ate bread nor drank water. And He [?] wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant.” Who wrote them—God or Moses? The immediate antecedent is clearly Moses, but the translators capitalized “He.” Why? Verse one of this chapter clarifies what otherwise would be an enigma. “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I [God] will write on [them]....’” Without this clarification, we could have a lively discussion about who wrote on the tablets!

Hebrews 12:17 contains a similar example: “For you know that afterward, when

he [Esau] wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” Some think the antecedent of “it” is “repentance,” indicating that poor Esau diligently and tearfully sought repentance—but that is not correct. The antecedent for “it” in this case is the *blessing*. How do we know? Read Genesis 27:32–38.

A full discussion of Daniel 9:27 would require more attention than I can give here, but this is the point the Council and I want to convey: Many in both the Church and the world look for the countdown to the return of Christ to begin with a seven-year peace treaty (though the scripture does not say “peace treaty” but “a covenant”). Bible commentaries and many evangelicals are looking for this, but Daniel tells us that only the wise (those who keep God’s law) will understand (Daniel 12:10). Those looking specifically for a seven-year treaty may be wrong. Jesus instructed us to *watch for the events He gave in the Olivet prophecy*, and one of those events is the abomination of desolation being set up, as spoken of by Daniel (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 12:11).

**WHY A COUNCIL OF ELDERS?** continues on page 27

**Editor in Chief:** Gerald E. Weston

**Editorial Director:** Richard F. Ames

**Managing Editor:** Wallace G. Smith

**Art Editor:** John Robinson

**Regional Editors:** Robert Tyler (Australasia)

Stuart Wachowicz (Canada)

Peter Nathan (Europe and Africa)

**Editorial Assistant:** William L. Williams

**Asst. Copy Editors:** Sandy Davis • Linda Ehman • Genie Ogwyn

**Business Manager:** Dexter B. Wakefield

The *Living Church News* is published bimonthly by the Living Church of God, 2301 Crown Centre Drive, Charlotte, NC 28227. Subscriptions are sent without charge to all members of the Living Church of God.

©2019 Living Church of God™. Printed in the USA. All rights reserved. Postage paid at Charlotte, NC.

**Postmaster: Send address changes to**

**The Living Church News • P.O. Box 3810 Charlotte, NC 28227**

The Living Church of God is not responsible for the return of unsolicited articles and photographs. Scriptures are quoted from the *New King James Version* (©Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Image(s) used under license from Shutterstock.com



## EDITORIAL By Gerald E. Weston

### I Was Wrong!

**M**ore than two decades ago, my wife and I went through a severe trial. It was the only time in my life that I lost weight because of stress—about eight pounds in three weeks, which was significant as I was lean and trim at the time. Sometime later, I heard with my own ears from a surgeon that stress was the source of the health problems my wife was experiencing at the time.

Ministers are used to abuse from some members. That may shock you, but it is true, and often it comes from the very people you spend the most time and energy trying to help. I remember the letter I received from one man whom I had made every effort to help that began something like this: “I never liked you. You never helped me or my family. You only did anything for us because you felt obligated.” And believe me, the letter went downhill from there!

On another occasion, I received a letter from a former associate pastor decades after we had worked together. He had various complaints against me, including instances that I couldn’t remember. Now, I could understand why he might be upset about some situations, even though I had offered him correction for legitimate reasons, but for the most part it was stuff he should have gotten over long ago. What was interesting was that he put no return address on the letter; he did not want a reply. He simply wanted to “get it off his chest,” perhaps as a form of therapy.

Frankly, I have made *many* mistakes over the years that I would like to forget, and I am thankful our Creator is full of mercy and quick to forgive. But in general, I have a clear conscience regarding the above-mentioned circumstances, knowing the facts as they were.

#### **We Are Not Alone**

In January 2014, the clergy in the United Church of Canada, a merger of Protestant denominations that dates to 1925, formed a union. The *Toronto Star*, the second-largest circulation newspaper in Canada as of 2017, reported the following:

The goal of the newly created professional association, called Unifaith, is to give faith workers, their family members, student ministers and retirees, a common voice. In addition to fighting

for job security for clergy and other paid employees, the new union plans to help combat the bullying, and in some cases physical assaults, of clergy by members of congregations or outsiders.... In addition, many United Church clergy have complained about being overworked, another issue the future union plans to address (“United Church of Canada clergy form their own union,” January 21, 2014).

This is rather shocking considering how hard the ministry works in the Living Church of God. Also, I do not consider that the criticism we sometimes encounter rises to the level of bullying or physical assaults. The point is that we all see matters from our own perspective, and life and work in the ministry is not always exactly what some members may imagine it is. Children often think a parent cannot understand them, but children have never experienced parenthood, whereas every parent has been a child. In the same way—though I am by no means comparing members with children—all of us in the ministry have been lay members. We also have those in authority over us, and all of us, members and ministers alike, must answer to the Supreme Authority in our lives.

So, where is this heading? Let me return to the opening paragraph of this editorial. While I had made many mistakes over the more than two decades I had been in the ministry at the time, I think I had a respectable reputation among most members and those over me. But then, after being transferred to a new assignment, my wife and I suddenly faced several accusations that were sent to the headquarters of the Church. One was that we “didn’t show enough love.” Whether true or not—and I assert that it was untrue—how does one defend himself against such an accusation? There were also three or four accusations that were totally false and could easily be proven so.

This was when the Worldwide Church of God was breaking down, and—as I have often said—when love is pitted against law, it is time to head for cover. The result of these accusations was that I was considered guilty regardless of the facts, at least those that could be verified one way or the other.

Some people look back on past events and learn, while others self-justify and frame their account of what happened to favor themselves. Enduring false accusa-

tions from members is something every minister must learn to accept, but when those “over you” carelessly pronounce you guilty when the clear evidence shows otherwise, it is another matter. I must confess it took both Carol and me a good three years to get past what happened, and only after we had left that organization due to the total apostasy taking place.

Even while talking to Dr. Meredith and Mr. Carl McNair about joining with them to do the Work, I mentioned briefly what happened and told them I would never again take such treatment sitting down. But I was wrong.

## Two Important Lessons

I was wrong—not because anything similar has occurred since, but because my attitude disagreed with scriptural instruction. Peter taught, “For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? **But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps**” (1 Peter 2:19–21).

Those are powerful words—words that are easy to read, easy to understand, yet difficult to practice on any level. How easily they roll off our tongues, but those words do not always reflect what comes out of our hearts! At that time, instead of comprehending what Peter instructed and what our Savior did, I discovered how many other men and women had similar experiences. Something Dr. Winnail recently said certainly applied in our case: “Disgruntled people find disgruntled people.”

That was one lesson I had to learn, and it came only after I had a change in direction. Once I was focused again on preaching the Gospel, the anger subsided, and I could see more clearly. Then I was able to forget those things which were behind and look to those things which are ahead.

The second lesson came as a result of learning the first. Only then was I able to evaluate what had happened with a fresh perspective. I know in my heart that most of the problem was not me, but I could finally admit to myself and to God that I could have handled the matter better. Yes, I was part of the problem. I cannot say whether my part was 10 percent, 15 percent, or 2 percent, but I at least had to take responsibility for my own shortcomings.

I drew several conclusions from this kind of situation. First, I needed to internalize Peter’s message about endur-

ing wrongful suffering. Second, I needed to commit myself to never becoming bitter over someone else’s wrongdoing. Perhaps I will be corrected wrongfully, but that does not mean the person doing so has evil intent. Yet even if he does, Peter instructs us in the way to handle these things. I had to conclude that as long as those over me are God’s true, if imperfect, servants, I must submit to that authority. After all, following baptism, I had hands laid upon me. I had voluntarily admitted, even if I did not fully understand it at the time, that I was placing myself under imperfect authority in the Church. God tells wives that they are to “submit to their husbands in everything.” What husband is perfect? What minister is perfect? Both husbands and ministers make many mistakes, and we must learn in both cases to be patient and to forgive.

A minister’s mistakes come in many forms. We sometimes speak unwisely, even offensively. See the third chapter of James’ letter, where he warns us not to covet becoming a teacher of the truth: “For we all stumble in many things. If

anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (vv. 1–2). Christ warns us about offending “little ones”—those who are new to the faith, lacking experience or wisdom (Matthew 18:6). Some are quick to quote this, but is this the scripture a longtime member should

apply to himself? Or rather, should he not look to another verse: “Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble,” or as it says in the *King James Version*, “and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165).

It is my hope, dear brethren, that you can learn from my experience. There is the easy way to learn and the hard way to learn. One leads to life and the other can ultimately lead to death. As Paul instructs us, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” (Hebrews 12:14–15).

## Dual Responsibility

Both those in authority and those under authority must learn to get along. This is not always possible, as Paul admits, but he shows that we must do our part from the heart. “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil.... If it is possible, **as**

**I WAS WRONG!** continues on page 27

Even while talking to Dr. Meredith and Mr. Carl McNair about joining with them to do the Work, I mentioned briefly what happened and told them I would never again take such treatment sitting down. **But I was wrong.**





# All Is Vanity... Or Is It?

---

By **Rod McNair**

---

**D**oes the book of Ecclesiastes say life is worthless? Some people think so. Perhaps *you* have thought that. After all, in just the second verse of the book, Solomon made this famous statement: “‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher; ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity’” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). It can appear that Solomon had given up any hope of finding real meaning in life. But is that the point of the book of Ecclesiastes?

It is worth asking and answering that question for ourselves, because we, too, struggle through life’s ups and downs. Are you sometimes troubled with discouragement and depression? Do you wrestle—maybe even as you read these words—with anxiety and even despair? If so, you need to take a second look at Ecclesiastes. It can give you more encouragement than you may have realized.

Solomon had much to say about the frustrations of life in the flesh, and the despair that can come when we focus too much on the physical. Frankly, Ecclesiastes is *ideally suited for our time*, for we live in an age and generation obsessed with material comforts, yet perplexed that real happiness seems always beyond our grasp.

Truly, without God at the center of everything we do, our lives do become meaningless and hopeless. But with *God at the center of our focus*, our lives become an exhilarating adventure preparing us for an awesome future. That is the meaning of the book of Ecclesiastes. Let’s look at several specific messages Ecclesiastes teaches us about finding value and purpose in our lives.

## **God Meant for Us to Be Happy**

Many of us suffer from depression or discouragement. Some torture themselves with questions: *Am I doing enough? Is God pleased with me? What does He think of me?*

Do we believe God wants us to be happy?

What does Ecclesiastes say about enjoying life? “Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:24).

Clearly, Solomon was explaining that when we have the right focus—pleasing God and walking with Him—real happiness and contentment are well within our reach! If we have the right perspective, then eating, drinking, and our daily labor are not ends in themselves, but only the *means* to an end. Physical life is the mechanism God uses to train us to be like Him. It is the laboratory He’s using to teach us to think beyond ourselves—to serve Him and serve our neighbor. That mindset brings joy and contentment, even in the midst of trials.

God wants us to be happy. Jesus Christ emphasized that in John 10:10: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” He wants us to inherit eternal life, but He also wants us to find joy in the process of getting there! When Jesus said this, He was echoing what He had inspired Solomon to write almost a thousand years earlier: “I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13).

Would you like to experience more joy in your life? Talk to God about it. Ask Him to pour out the “oil of gladness”

more fully in your life (Psalm 45:7). Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Even in trials, we can have deep contentment and joy when we sense that God is there and guiding our every step.

If we are chronically unhappy, we may need to meditate on and tap more deeply into what God is doing in our lives and submit ourselves to Him in every possible way. We must *decide that we want to think differently*. As former American President Abraham Lincoln famously said, “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

It is God’s desire for us to enjoy life. It is His will that we see life as a gift, an adventure, and a challenge we can brave with His help. With His help, we can optimistically choose to face life as an opportunity for learning and growth, even in the midst of troubles.

### Consumption Is Not the Goal in Life

One definition of consumerism is “the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods.” That really does describe the lives of many in our day. How much does that describe us?

The Life Squared website once estimated that each of us is exposed to 1,600 commercial messages of one sort or another each day, when one considers all of the brand-name labels, tag lines, billboards, Facebook ads, etc.—and that was a decade ago (“The problem with consumerism,” *lifesquared.org.uk*, 2009). Marketers have only gotten more ambitious since. No wonder our minds are so filled with thoughts of our “needs” for new or different clothes, phones, cars, furniture, or even homes. Advertisers fill our lives with never-ending messages, both subtle and explicit, about why we “need” all these items—and fast!

Frankly, our whole modern economy is built to encourage us to consume. And our consumption—buying new items and discarding the old—keeps the economy going. So, in a very literal sense, we have come to the point where many leaders of industry, business, and government only see ordinary citizens as cogs in the wheel that keep the cycle of production and consumption going. Why else would we be widely encouraged by the “system” around us to spend rather than save?

If we are not careful, we can begin to view our lives largely in terms of being a consumer, because consumption is what we spend so much of our time and focus on! But life is so much more than just becoming an expert at comparing products and relishing a good purchase.

Frankly, Solomon went through a similar exercise almost 3,000 years ago. He had practically unlimited resources and access to virtually whatever his heart desired. He became the ultimate consumer! He enjoyed alcohol and entertainment (Ecclesiastes 2:3), built houses and vineyards (v. 4), planted gardens and orchards (v. 5), installed pools (v. 6), acquired



servants and vast herds and flocks (v. 7), and sought after unusual artistic treasures (v. 8). He went so far as to say, “Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor” (v. 10).

But what was the result of his consumerism? “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity [i.e., pointlessly temporary] and grasping for the wind.... Therefore I hated life.... Then I hated all my labor...” (vv. 11, 17–18).

Let’s make sure consumption does not become an obsession in our lives. Instead, let’s use the blessings that God has given us to serve Him and serve each other. Otherwise, our work will be nothing more than a futile “grasping after wind.”

### One Generation Must Teach the Next

If getting off the consumption “merry-go-round” is hard for us, it is even harder for our children. They have less life experience and are less likely to see through societal manipulation and peer pressure. As parents and mentors to the next generation, it is up to us to show them how to master their surroundings and not let their surroundings master them! Author Katrina Kenison explained this in her book *Mitten Strings for God: Reflections for Mothers in a Hurry*: “We are living in a consumer society that revolves around instant gratification. We shop for recreation and spend and buy things we don’t really need. **But unless we want our children to perpetuate this kind of materialism, we must show them another way**” (p. 66, emphasis added).

Solomon definitely recognized his responsibility to pass on important lessons to the next generation. That’s why Ecclesiastes was written! And that’s why it contains an honest

and open account of the results of choices in life. Our youth need parents and mentors who also pass on life's lessons. They need someone to help them see beyond the advertisements and commercial messages. Notice what Solomon tells young people: "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity [temporary]" (Ecclesiastes 11:9–10).

Solomon encourages the young to have fun! Enjoy life! Set some goals and strive to accomplish them. See life as an adventure to relish and experience. *But always remember, this is not the end.* The first half of chapter 12 is devoted to exhorting young people to "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1) Why? Because youth is fleeting and old age will come soon enough! Before you know it, you'll be confronted by a time when "the keepers of the house tremble... the grinders [or teeth] cease because they are few, and those that look through the windows grow dim" (v. 3). And you'll also come face to face with having to give an account of how you spent your life.

Those of us who are older need to set the example. Are we living this way ourselves? Are we exercising self-restraint, learning from our mistakes, and growing to be more like Christ? Or are we just criticizing young people and not showing a different way ourselves? These lessons apply to all of us. Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). It's the same message as that of Ecclesiastes, and it applies to all of us, young and old.

### God's Plan Brings Meaning and Fulfillment to Our Lives

We live a carnal, fleshly existence. Our life is "here today and gone tomorrow." James explains that, asking, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). We will not live forever in the flesh. Physical life by itself is vain—it is temporary. But that doesn't mean it should be spiritually, mentally, or emotionally empty and worthless! If we are walking with God and embracing His plan for us, that makes all the difference.

Notice what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 7:1: "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death

than the day of one's birth." This scripture would be terribly depressing if it weren't for its underlying truth. What does Solomon mean? The day of death brings the end of our race. It represents finishing our course. It means our preparation and training are completed, and we are ready to graduate to glo-

rified spirit life! The day of one's death represents the day that God says, "You are ready to be in My family forever!" We rightly mourn when a friend or loved one dies. But at the same time, what Solomon is saying should greatly encourage us—he's talking about living for eternity!

In Ecclesiastes 3:11, Solomon wrote, "It is beautiful how God has done everything at the right time. He has put a sense of eternity in people's minds. Yet, mortals still can't grasp what God is doing from the beginning to the end of time" (*GOD'S WORD Translation*). God promises us something we cannot quite comprehend—eternal life in His Kingdom! And His timing as He leads us to that Kingdom is always perfect.

Is Ecclesiastes a bitter, desperate book about hopelessness? Absolutely not! It explains that after the end of physical life, we will have the opportunity to step into eternity. That is the message of the book of Ecclesiastes. In conveying that message, the book offers specific warnings of how not to get caught up in the traps of the material world. As Solomon concluded, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

We are given *this* life as an opportunity to prepare for *eternal* life, and every day is a new day. No matter what failures we had yesterday, we can try again today. No matter what failures we had last week, this can be the beginning of a new week. No matter what frustrations we had last year, the Holy Days can serve as times to reevaluate, recharge, refocus, and forge ahead.

Life wasn't created to be meaningless. We weren't made to be unhappy. We weren't made for the sum total of our life to be merely 70 years of consumption. God created us to relate to Him, walk with Him, talk with Him, and—at the end of physical life—to step into an eternal relationship with Him upon our resurrection and glorification.

Yes, this life is temporary. The flesh truly is *vanity*, meaning "here today and gone tomorrow." But there is a big purpose for each day we draw breath. Let's view every day as a gift to be cherished and valued. Let's impart that mindset to our children, so they know how important they are to God. He loves them and wants them to be happy. And let's make sure we are using this temporary life to prepare for our awesome, *eternal future* with God. (L<sup>N</sup>)

If we are chronically unhappy, we may  
need to meditate on and tap more deeply  
into what God is doing in our lives and  
submit ourselves to Him in every possible  
way. **We must decide that we want  
to think differently.**



# Jury Duty: The Church's Perspective

**Editor's Note:** *Here at Headquarters, we have recently received word from a number of members in the United States concerning jury duty service requests, and we thought it would be a wonderful time to reprint this helpful article written by the late John Ogwyn. Even apart from jury duty, Mr. Ogwyn's article covers material that is of spiritual benefit to anyone seeking to live God's way of life, and we hope you find it helpful! This article is included in the Living Church of God's information packet concerning jury duty—a collection of articles, legal cases, and instructions designed to help members navigate the challenges that come with handling a U.S. jury summons. The packet is available upon request, both from your pastor and from Headquarters.*

---

By **John H. Ogwyn** (1949–2005)

---

**M**y wife and I pulled into our driveway late one Sunday afternoon, coming home from a Church trip. I took our mail from the mailbox, and as I quickly sorted through it, a large yellow notice leaped out at me. With dismay, I realized that I had been summoned for jury duty. To make matters even worse, the summons date was Monday, June 3—the opening day of the Living Youth Preteen Camp in Texas, which I was directing.

Carefully, I scrutinized the notice to see if I could check some box that would give me an excuse or an exemption. No, I would not be able to get out of it that easily. “Why couldn’t it have been my wife?” I thought. My wife is a Canadian citizen, and therefore ineligible to sit on a jury in the United States. If she had received the notice, she could have simply checked the box indicating that she was a non-citizen and mailed it back for an automatic exemption.

Traditionally in the United States, each county's roster of those called for jury duty was selected from its rolls of registered voters. Because of lawsuits during the last couple of decades, this roster is now made up from those with driver's

licenses. Even so, most jurisdictions maintain a wide variety of categories of people who hold a valid driver's license but are exempt from jury duty. In the county where I live, for example, those over 70 years old, those with young children at home, and those who are full-time students may claim exemption. Non-citizens and convicted felons, too, are ineligible for jury duty. Everyone who does not fit into one of the court-approved exemptions is required to appear in court at the appointed time. The jury duty notice is a legal summons, and failure to appear could potentially result in arrest.

At this point, I had two concerns. One was my general objection to jury service based on religious convictions. The other was that I was required to appear in court at the same time I needed to be at a Church camp, about 200 miles south of the court where I was to appear. After praying about the matter and thinking it over for a couple of days, I decided to call the District Clerk's office at the phone number listed on the summons and request a later date for jury duty. I talked to a secretary, and after explaining that we had a Church youth camp going on that week, I asked if it would be possible to change the date of my jury summons. She was quick to accommodate, and offered me a choice of several alternative



dates, one of which I selected. I would need to appear in about six weeks.

This brings to mind the first important lesson I have learned in dealing with a jury summons: Talking to the secretary was not the time to discuss my religious objections to jury duty. She could do nothing about that, but she could handle routine excuses or time changes. If you have a routine excuse for an exemption, you may find it best simply to use it, even though you also have a religious objection. In Texas, only the judge can grant an excuse for religious reasons, so I concluded that there was no point in confusing the secretary in the Clerk's office and perhaps risking having my routine request for a later date sidelined.

Of course, the later date only postponed the inevitable. I was still required to appear in court and explain why I could not sit on a jury. During the ensuing month, I gave a lot of thought to the reasons why I should not sit on a jury and pass judgment. I did not know how much explanation I would be asked to give, or what kind of attitude to expect from the judge. Church members over the years have sought exemption from jury service based upon their religious beliefs, even though most states' statutes do not recognize religious belief as a valid cause for exemption. Federal courts, however, have upheld religious exemptions as valid, and the Church Legal Affairs Office can provide you with its "Jury Duty Exemption Request" form, including details of how to substantiate your claim of religious exemption and the steps to follow. Area Pastors also have access to these forms from the "Church Administration" area of the Member Resources website.

While many have been excused from jury service for religious reasons over the years, I wonder how many members have really understood what the "big deal" is regarding jury duty. Is it wrong to serve on a jury? If so, why? Can you prove your reasons from the Bible? Scripture enjoins us to be ready to give an answer to those who ask concerning the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15).

### **We Are Ambassadors for Christ**

Members of the Church of God have traditionally avoided participation in the military and political affairs of society. This has not only been an issue in our day, but has also been the historic position of the Church, traced back to the first century. What are some of the reasons for this?

When Jesus Christ was on trial for His life before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, He told Pilate that His Kingdom was not "of this world." Christ went on to add that if it were, His servants would fight to deliver Him from the Jews (John 18:36). Jesus came as the advance emissary of a coming world-ruling government. Because of that, neither He nor His disciples took part in the political and military affairs of this world's governments. Jesus would not stir His followers to

form an army to fight for His Kingdom, as did so-called "messiahs" that arose among the Jews from time to time. Those false messiahs represented political factions among the Jewish community, though factions with very strong religious overtones. The coming government that Jesus proclaimed is far different. It will not depend on the success of human efforts, but rather it will be established by the supreme power of the God of Heaven, and it will sweep away all puny human governments when the time comes (cf. Daniel 7:14).

The Apostle Paul explained in Philippians 3:20 that a Christian's citizenship is in Heaven. Our primary allegiance and devotion must be to the Kingdom of God, not to the earthly government under whose rule we temporarily reside. We are, in fact, ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador is an official emissary of one government to another. We are, in that sense, to represent God's coming Kingdom properly in the midst of whatever human society we live in. It is proper that we should love our native land, and if we are living a Christian life, we will be productive, law-abiding inhabitants of the land in which we reside. In addition, we should show respect and honor to our government and pray for its officials. We must obey the laws of society—unless, of course, they directly contradict God's law—and pay our taxes (Romans 13:1–7). However, all of this being said, we cannot be part of this world and its ways. This includes not being a part of its political and judicial systems. Jesus Christ refused to judge a secular matter, and He is our example (Luke 12:13–14).

Notice the record preserved by the noted historian Edward Gibbon. Writing of the early Christians, he observed that "Christians felt and confessed that such institutions [worldly governments] might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But, while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defense of the empire" (*The Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire*, p. 41).

### **Judging with Righteous Judgment**

While Christians are not to take part in the military and political affairs of this world's governments, the question of jury duty raises other issues as well. Some have pointed to the Apostle Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 6:2: "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" Does this verse prove that Christians should sit on juries and render judgment in certain secular disputes here and now? No. Notice the context of this verse. Paul is addressing the issue of Christians taking other Christians to worldly courts in order to resolve disputes. He points out the utter absurdity of those who are preparing to judge the world under Christ not being able to resolve disputes with one an-

other within the Church. It holds Christianity up to ridicule from the outside when fellow believers are “slugging it out” in worldly courts. In context, this has nothing to do with believers sitting in judgment of unbelievers.

There is another very important but often overlooked aspect of this issue. After the first resurrection, when true Christians sit on thrones exercising judgment as part of God’s government, what criteria for judgment will they use? The Bible is very clear that our judgment in those days will be based upon the same standard that should guide Christians’ hearts and minds right now—God’s laws as revealed in the Bible (Isaiah 2:3–4).

Isaiah 11 gives further information about judgment in God’s Kingdom, telling us that the Messiah will not make His decisions based only upon what things look like or what He has heard. Rather, Isaiah tells us that He will judge the whole world with righteousness (v. 4). What is righteousness? Psalm 119:172 thunders that all of God’s commandments are righteousness. Righteous judgment must be based upon the revealed word of God. When we judge the world under Jesus Christ, we will judge the world in righteousness! When we make judgments in our personal lives, or are involved in seeking to settle disputes between brethren, we are to use exactly the same criteria. God’s word defines right and wrong, and tells us how to draw proper distinctions.

Righteousness and faithfulness will be hallmarks of the way that God will administer His government. Decisions will be made with equity—utter fairness (Isaiah 11:4). As Christians, we need to be developing this understanding and approach as part of our character. Serving on a jury in a worldly court will bring us into conflict with these principles.

“How can that possibly be?” you may wonder. “Don’t mankind’s courts seek jurors who strive to be fair and just?” Certainly, most judges would say that they want jurors who can be fair and impartial and can render a just verdict. That sounds good, but we need to realize that there is more involved than what might appear at first glance. For instance, when I found myself sitting in a courtroom as part of the jury pool and receiving instructions from the judge about what was required of us, most of it sounded good on the surface. As court officials explained the procedures, we were told that our decision was to be made based on what we heard in court. The court expected us to render our decision based upon the

instructions the judge would give us regarding the law. We were admonished that we must only consider as facts those matters admitted into evidence in court.

There are problems with this procedure, however. To begin with, a juror will not be privy to all of the facts of a case. In many instances, the opposing lawyers will have already made efforts to have the judge disallow some information the other side seeks to present. Both sides are seeking to win the case for their clients, so each will only emphasize those points that support their side’s case. If, using some legal technicality, they are able to prevent the other side from revealing to the

jury certain facts that would damage their case, “so much the better”! In most cases, jurors will never even be aware of this backstage maneuvering. Even after truthful information is presented to jurors in court, the judge will sometimes instruct jurors to disregard that information when rendering their verdict.

When true Christians sit on thrones exercising judgment as part of God’s government, what criteria for judgment will they use? **The Bible is very clear that our judgment in those days will be based upon the same standard that should guide Christians’ hearts and minds right now—God’s laws as revealed in the Bible.**

The *Texas Uniform Jury Handbook*, which we were given at the start of the jury selection process, instructs, “The verdict must be based *solely* on the evidence presented by the parties, the Charge of the Court, and rules of law provided by the Judge” (emphasis mine). Notice the contrast with the instructions of Scripture, inspired by God, regarding circumstances requiring decisions of guilt or innocence. Those involved in determining guilt or innocence were required not to rely only on what they had heard, but also to make diligent inquiry into the facts (Deuteronomy 13:14). Those judging were only to proceed after they were sure that the facts of the matter had been fully established.

Deuteronomy 19:15 provides important instruction regarding decisions made in judicial matters. “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.” In the particular case that I would have heard as a juror, the guilt or innocence of the accused turned on the testimony of only one witness. Under the laws of the State of Texas, this is permissible, and jurors are to make their decision based upon how they weigh the credibility of the witness. However, if I were to judge according to God’s instructions, I would be forbidden by Deuteronomy 19:15 to render a verdict of guilty upon the testimony of one alone—no matter how credible he or she seemed.



To serve as a juror, I would need to agree to use only the rules of evidence acknowledged by the court. I would need to agree to be guided by the laws of Texas as explained by the presiding judge, whether or not they conformed to biblical injunctions. I could not make such an agreement as a Christian—one who is obligated to follow Christ's example and make all decisions based upon the word of God.

### **Mercy and Judgment**

We have not yet examined another very important issue. Scripture continually joins mercy with judgment. Jesus Christ instructed His followers in Luke 6:36–37 to “be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.” Righteous judgment includes not only the standard of God's law, but also justice mixed with mercy. You cannot follow Jesus Christ and disregard the importance of mercy.

In John 8, we read of a woman caught committing adultery and brought before Jesus Christ by religious leaders in Jerusalem. They asked Jesus to render a verdict and assess punishment. The facts of the case were not in dispute, nor was the penalty that the law required. How did Jesus respond? He considered an additional aspect of the case: the motives of the woman's accusers. He stooped down and wrote in the dust for a while, seemingly ignoring the clamor of the crowd. Finally, He stood up—at this point, what He had written must have become visible—and acknowledged both the woman's guilt and the prescribed penalty of stoning, adding the caveat that the one among the group who was without sin should throw the first stone. Christ knew that the woman's accusers were hypocrites, and He would neither play their

game nor fall into their trap. When her accusers melted away, He offered the woman a fresh chance, coupled with the admonition to “go and sin no more” (v. 11). God allows for repentance and forgiveness.

As Christians, our decisions are to be guided by God's word. To agree to be guided solely by man's law would be to do something that Jesus Christ would never do! Now is not the time for us to be engaged in judging the world. That time will come, however, after Jesus Christ returns to this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords. As Christians, we prepare for that future by learning to make all of our choices upon the basis of God's revealed will.

While we may need to make judgments in settling disputes among ourselves, and Church discipline may sometimes be imposed upon brethren who persist in sin (1 Corinthians 5), we cannot impose God's way on the world around us. That will not be accomplished until God sends Jesus Christ back to Earth. Ultimately, the governments of this world will have to answer to the Creator regarding the extent to which they applied—or failed to apply—His standards of right judgment. As Christians, our responsibility is to love the people of the world (Matthew 22:39), to set an example for the world, to take God's message of good news and of warning to the world, and to pray for the world—but not to become part of this world (1 John 2:15).

As I sat with other potential jurors in that Texas courtroom, I knew that I could not in good conscience agree to make the kind of judgment they wanted me to make. While the judge and the attorneys examined the potential jurors, asking us various questions, I kept waiting for a question that would apply to me. None of their questions dealt with religious objection, though I had explained my religious objection in writing on the questionnaire we had each submitted to the court. Finally, we were instructed to go wait in the hallway while a jury was picked. As we rose to file out of the room, I asked the judge if I could approach the bench. She invited me to do so. I then told her that I needed to bring something to her attention, and to the attention of the attorneys involved in selecting the jury. I then simply explained that, based upon my religious convictions, I would not be able to render a verdict in the case. In less time than it takes me to write about it, the judge excused me and turned her attention to other matters.

As I walked away from the courtroom to my car, I reflected on the three hours spent at the courthouse. I had watched man's flawed legal system in action and had realized afresh the truth of Jeremiah 10:23: “O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” The time is coming in the years immediately ahead when we will be able to assist Jesus Christ in implementing God's government on this earth. Then, we will truly have a part in judging the world in righteousness! (LW)

# REACHING OUT TO A TROUBLED WORLD



---

By **J. Davy Crockett, III**

---

**A**s Jesus walked the dusty roads of the Roman Empire during His ministry in Judea, the religious establishment resented His presence and His message. At every turn, they questioned His motives and challenged His authority. When Jesus went to Matthew's home for dinner, His detractors found fault. "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, **'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."**' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:11-13).

Christ's expression of compassion for those who had need of healing, both physically and spiritually, acknowledged their need for meaningful change in their lives. His profound, proactive approach to the problems of mankind came to my mind during a presentation by a renowned physician to a professional group that administered workers' compensation benefits for employees affected by on-the-job accidents, injuries, and diseases. These injured employees certainly needed a physician and other services.

This highly regarded specialist had a phenomenal record of returning people to gainful employment. He was an excellent speaker, and he gave valuable insights into the basis for his success in helping people recover. Beyond covering technical medical information, he revealed his perspective, explaining that he treated people who were "disabled, disallowed, disaffected, and disavowed." He then detailed his approach toward trying to

restore them to productive lives. As I listened, I realized that he had also described a major part of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

## **A World in Need**

Looking at history and the conditions under which major segments of the world's population live today, we see many people who are "disabled, disallowed, disaffected, and disavowed." There are poignant examples in many parts of the world. Along the southern border of the United States, the influx of people demanding to be allowed into the country overwhelms immigration authorities. Other countries deal with issues that are just as intractable and overwhelming.

"Well," one might say, "these are tragic conditions, but they are not new. We are not directly affected. We're doing okay." For a reality check, visit some veteran's hospitals, children's hospitals, nursing homes, or prisons. Go to the court house on Monday mornings and see the parade of humanity coming before the courts, straining the judicial system to the breaking point.

While most people in Western societies do have food, clothing, shelter, and at least a degree of medical care, a large segment of the world's population does not fare well. Just as in Jesus Christ's day, multitudes of people know that they need help, healing, and deliverance. Hardship, difficulty, and suffering have been the story of mankind apart from God, cut off from the ways that bring peace, happiness, and prosperity.

Down through the ages, there have been prophecies that God would send a Messiah to bring light to these dark, gloomy circumstances. For example, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land



of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2). Going on, verses 6–7 state,

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;  
and the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of  
the increase of His government and peace there will  
be no end, upon the throne of David and over His  
kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment  
and justice from that time forward, even forever. The  
zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

So, “when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4), and the ministry of Jesus began. “Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.... From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (Matthew 4:12, 17).

When people heard of His miracles, especially miraculous healings, those who were “disabled, disallowed, disaffected, and disavowed” thronged to hear Him (Luke 5:15; 8:42).

Analyzing these four descriptive terms brings the importance of Christ’s actions and example into sharp focus.

### The Disabled

The word “**disabled**” refers to those who are at least partially incapacitated, unable to function. It can mean crippled physically or mentally.

How did Jesus respond to this problem? The Bible tells us.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people**. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and **He healed them**. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (Matthew 4:23–25).

He had compassion and the power to heal them. Everywhere that He went, Jesus was pressed by those with physical illness and disease. “And great multitudes followed Him, and **He healed them all**” (Matthew 12:15).

John the Baptist, a man of God and Jesus’ cousin, did no miracles. When he heard about the miraculous things that Jesus was doing, he sent two of his disciples to inquire of Him, asking, “‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’” Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things

which you hear and see: **The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear.... And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me**” (Matthew 11:2–6).

When Jesus sent out seventy men in pairs, He instructed them to “heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:9).

As Jesus was preparing for His departure, He promised the Apostles that they would receive the Holy Spirit, and added this exciting prophecy: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12). Did these promised “greater works” actually occur? Yes! Acts 3 gives the inspiring account of Peter and John encountering a man lame from birth who was begging for alms at the gate of the temple. “And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, ‘Look at us.’ So, he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk’” (vv. 4–10). The man was healed instantly.

Later, as the apostles spoke at the temple, the Bible states,

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.... And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also, a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and **they were all healed** (Acts 5:12–16).

Phillip, who had been ordained as a deacon, later went down to Samaria and God did mighty works of healing through him as well (Acts 8:5–8).

What about us today? What should we be doing for the “disabled”? Paul put it this way: “Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed” (Hebrews 12:12–13). James, the Lord’s brother, gave these instructions:

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your

trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:13–16).

Will everyone be healed in this life? Probably not, but **all** will be healed in the Kingdom of God (Revelation 21:1, 3–5). **No one** will be disabled in the Kingdom of God.

### The Disallowed

The **disallowed** are those who are prohibited, restrained, or hampered—those refused and not accepted.

Many problems in the world are the result of discrimination based on race, ethnicity or national origin. God anticipated this problem and gave specific instructions for dealing with it. “One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you” (Exodus 12:49). The stranger or foreigner had to obey the rules, but there was only “one law.” God did not want the Israelites ever to forget that they had been oppressed in Egypt for centuries. “You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21).

God knew the human proclivity to “disallow” or discriminate against others, so He emphasized His instruction on the subject. There is no misunderstanding this plain statement: “And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:33–34). The Israelites were not merely to *tolerate* foreigners—they were to *love* them. There was also instruction to remember the “stranger” during the Festival seasons (Deuteronomy 16:11, 14), as well as to be fair in employment practices and to remember the poor (Deuteronomy 24:14, 17–22).

Foreigners or strangers have their part to do, but they are to be given an opportunity. The core of the message was that no one should be left out. “Gather the people together, **men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates**, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 31:12).

God’s instructions make it clear that we should not scheme against those who are vulnerable. He inspired Zechariah to write, “Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother” (Zechariah 7:9–10).

James gave a stinging rebuke to those who showed partiality to the wealthy but showed disdain for the poor, whose clothing revealed their poverty. He summed up his rebuke with these words: “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, **‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’** you do

well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (James 2:8–9). Paul put it succinctly, “For there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).

We do well to remember the “disallowed,” assisting them, including them, and meeting their needs as we are able. No one will be disallowed in the Kingdom.

### The Disaffected

To be **disaffected** means to be estranged or no longer friendly—to be discontented or disloyal.

In difficult and confusing times, some lose their way and wander from the tenets of the Bible and the Church. Feeling hurt and betrayed, they may become hostile. It happened anciently and in the time of Christ and the Apostles. It still occurs today, and it will probably continue.

God sent a message through the prophet Ezekiel to false shepherds who caused confusion, abusing and neglecting the flock:

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them’” (Ezekiel 34:2–6).

Jesus was constantly upbraided by the religious establishment, to whom He responded, “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7).

Luke 15:11–32 gives the account of the “lost son” who foolishly squandered the inheritance generously given to him by his father, and in time found himself in a pigpen in a foreign country, hungry and alone. Defeated and humiliated, he returned home and was warmly accepted by his father, who had thought he had lost his son forever. James gives us a Godly perspective on such cases: “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19–20).

God is concerned for the “disaffected” and we should be as well. No one will be disaffected in the Kingdom.

### The Disavowed

The “**disavowed**” refers to those for whom society denies any responsibility—those turned away because they are perceived as unworthy. These individuals have been repudiated, rejected, or disowned, mostly for reasons beyond their control. For example, a physical deformity or medical condition that renders one “unsightly” or “grotesque” may cause a person to be isolated, deprived of healthy relationships and friends. Stigma from one’s past such as a criminal record, acknowledged former addictions, bizarre tattoos, or other aberrant characteristics may cause a person to be ostracized until these off-putting factors are overshadowed or forgotten.

Tragically, widows, orphans, and the elderly may find themselves in such straits, without the emotional, financial, and spiritual support that they desperately need. Families are often scattered or dysfunctional to the extent that support for them is simply not provided. Neglect of these vulnerable individuals is a serious problem that occurs at every level of society.

Sadly, some still harbor disdain for certain cultures or ethnic groups outside their own.

Jesus and the Apostles in the early Church often encountered the disavowed. The Jews avoided the Samaritans and looked down on them. Jesus went through Samaria on His way to Galilee, though other Jews avoided that route. At noon, He stopped at Jacob’s well and asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. Surprised, she responded, “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?” (John 4:9). Jesus used the opportunity to explain to her who He was and about truly worshipping God. Rather than ignoring or deriding the Samaritan woman, Jesus accepted and instructed her.

As Jesus had dinner at the home of a ruler of the Pharisees, He used the occasion to answer the questions of His host. As He concluded a parable illustrating the need for humility, He added this lesson: “Then He also said to him who invited Him, ‘When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just’”

(Luke 14:12–14). In doing this, He showed that we should have concern for the disavowed, who are often overlooked.

Many places in Scripture make it obvious that God is very concerned about widows, orphans, and immigrants (“strangers” or “aliens” in the Bible’s language). In the Old Testament, the instruction is clear—speaking of God, it states, “He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:17–19).

This theme is continued in the New Testament. Paul instructed Timothy to honor widows (1 Timothy 5:3). James, Jesus’ brother, expressed the importance of providing for widows and the fatherless: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

The Church takes this responsibility seriously. By following the biblical instruction to pay a third tithe every third year, we manage a program that assists widows, orphans, and newcomers with needs that are not being met for reasons beyond their control. Our help is usually not the primary means of their support, but we provide a supplemental amount to make up for what

Just as in Jesus Christ’s day, multitudes of people know that they need help, healing, and deliverance. **Hardship, difficulty, and suffering have been the story of mankind apart from God, cut off from the ways that bring peace, happiness, and prosperity.**

they lack. It is important that we follow the instruction of Jesus Christ in being aware of and providing for the needs of the disavowed to the extent that we can.

As the collective Church of God and as individuals, we should take every opportunity to:

- **Remember the disabled** and help them in any way that we can.
- **Accept the disallowed** and guard against discrimination or partiality.
- **Reach out to the disaffected**, who might respond and return.
- **Acknowledge the disavowed**, providing encouragement and assistance.

In doing these things, we demonstrate our love for our fellow man, and we will be continuing the work of Jesus Christ and the apostles as we look forward to the Kingdom of God. At that time, these problems of mankind will finally and forever be solved. (LN)

# Staying on Target with the Charlotte BRiC Weekend

By **William Williams**

Over Memorial Day Weekend, May 24–27, the Charlotte congregation hosted its tenth annual Singles' Weekend, the fifth since adopting the guiding idea of “Building Relationships in Christ”—abbreviated as “BRiC.” Sixty-one singles from around the continental United States joined us this year for the event and enjoyed warm and pleasant weather throughout.

This year's theme was “Staying in the Center of God's Will,” and the planners, under the guidance of Mr. Jacob Hall, went to work weeks in advance to prepare activities that reinforced it. The hallmark of the BRiC Weekend—the TED Talk-inspired “BRiC Talks”—most strongly emphasized this theme, but every activity was carefully planned to reflect some aspect of making God's ways and principles part of our daily lives.

Regarding the BRiC Talks themselves, we heard from Dr. Scott Winnail, Mr. Wallace Smith, and Mr. Mike DeSimone—all ministers serving at LCG's Charlotte, North Carolina Headquarters office. Each speaker gave advice and stirring personal examples about how to remain in the center of God's will.

Dr. Winnail gave strategies involving prayer, emphasizing three ways to use this powerful tool as a means to seek God's will: prayerfully seeking wise counsel, praying for a greater desire for and recognition of God's will, and praying more specifically for the things God wants us to experience.

Mr. Smith spoke about how “seeking God's will” isn't meant to be a substitute for applying the principles He's already given us and using them to make the best decisions we can. He said that seeking God's will shouldn't be like looking for answers from a toy “Magic 8-Ball” and reminded his audience that God has spoken to us through His word.

Mr. DeSimone provided the capstone personal example when he shared a lesson about “driving” against God's will. He recounted a day in his life when he chose to go against all advice and warning signs by making an unnecessary and dangerous road trip through terrible weather conditions to see his future wife.

Following the BRiC Talks, the singles sat down to a Greek-inspired catered meal, followed by the Saturday-evening dance. On Sunday morning came the Charlotte Uptown Challenge, in which multiple teams of participants took to the streets of the Queen City in search of scavenger hunt items and “challenge stations.” Challenges this year

included Bible Charades, cooperative physical activities, and a run through the First Ward playground water fountain. All the challenges reflected different aspects of the theme of the weekend, which helped to keep the teams focused on a larger goal than simply winning the Uptown Challenge.

After a long day in the sun, all made their way to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rod McNair for an out-on-the-farm cookout and bonfire sing-along, which many have described as their favorite part of the weekend.

Finally, on Monday morning, the tired but still enthusiastic singles gathered to hear an address from the pastor of the Charlotte congregation, Mr. John Strain. He spoke about the crucial differences that distinguish data, information, and knowledge from each other, and the importance of holding on to the true knowledge we have been given. His lesson: Obeying the truth of God is fundamental to staying in the center of His will in a troubled world. After this, a number of attendees went to a local park for some Ultimate Frisbee before saying their goodbyes.

The Charlotte congregation would like to thank everyone who came for helping to make this year's BRiC weekend such an enjoyable and positive experience. As some participants happily observed, the BRiC weekend created a wonderful atmosphere for meeting new people and reconnecting with old friends, which so fittingly follows the overall purpose of “Building Relationships in Christ.” The final takeaway from the weekend is to keep our eyes on the goal and keep aiming for the center of the target—God's will and our place in His glorified family! (LN)





# Living Education–Charlotte: Our First Graduation

By **Thomas White**

**F**riday, May 17, 2019, saw the first Living Education–Charlotte graduation ceremony. The staff meeting room of the Living Church of God’s international headquarters building was filled with the students’ families and friends. The excitement of the graduates and those present to support them was palpable, as the students, seated at the front of the room, awaited their certificates. Dr. Scott Winnail, the Living Education Assistant Director and instructor of three of its courses, presided over the ceremony.

As the graduation proceedings began, Mr. Roderick McNair, the Assistant Director of Church Administration, asked God’s blessing upon the event. Dr. Winnail then introduced the Director of Living Education, Mr. Jonathan McNair, as the first to speak. Mr. McNair plainly stated the focus of the Living Education–Charlotte program: to support the leadership of God’s Church in its efforts to spiritually feed the flock that comprises the Bride of Jesus Christ, and to ensure that the next generation of the Church’s leaders are educated in biblical foundations. Following Mr. McNair’s address, Dr. Winnail introduced evangelist Mr. Richard Ames, Director of Media Operations for the Living Church of God. Mr. Ames detailed the

history and legacy of education in God’s Church, from the Ambassador College institutions and Imperial Schools of the Worldwide Church of God, to Living Education’s direct predecessor, Living University.

Dr. Scott Winnail then had the pleasure of introducing his father, evangelist Dr. Douglas Winnail, Director of Church Administration. The elder Dr. Winnail also addressed the purpose of Living Education as he offered reflections and thoughts to the graduates and clarified the ultimate purpose of true education: To enable all of us to serve God and serve other people. This inspiring message served to invigorate the assembled students and motivate them to apply their knowledge of the true God in lives of heartfelt service.

After Dr. Douglas Winnail’s address, Dr. Scott Winnail directed the students to rise. One by one, as their names and hometowns were read, the students were each given a hard-earned Certificate in Biblical Foundations, framed and ready for display on office walls or living room mantels. Each student was also given an officially-marked Living Education binder, which was, by one student’s description, “swanky.”

Finally, Mr. Gerald Weston, Presiding Evangelist of the Living Church of God, gave an empowering graduation address. Mr. Weston reminded everyone of this world’s increasing hostility toward God’s way of life, and assured the students that they have a “rendezvous with destiny” as the end of the age

draws ever closer. Students were encouraged to move forward boldly in Christ’s name and to strive to grow in His grace and knowledge, not because such a task is easy, but because it is right.

As theology faculty member Mr. Kenneth Frank closed the ceremony with prayer, the students digested the spiritual food they had been served not only throughout the morning’s proceedings, but over the course of their nine-month Living Education experience. Living Education–Charlotte’s inaugural year having come to an end, the students prepared to once again step back into the world, grateful for the training they’d received in becoming greater ambassadors for Christ. <sup>(LN)</sup>



Front Row (L to R): Ashton Young, Emily Crockett, Francesca Rodino, Yudith Lomas, Katie Webb, Tressie McNair, Nathalie McNair. Back Row (L to R): Dr. Douglas Winnail, Jonathan Smith, Cobi Mann, Collin Winnail, Thomas White, Geoffrey Ruddlesden, Andy Casey, Jacob Frederick, Mr. Richard Ames, Mr. Gerald Weston.



# It's Not in the Database

---

By **Dexter Wakefield**

---

**H**ere at our Charlotte, North Carolina, headquarters, we have something very exciting—*our Living Church of God database!* Well, at least our database architect thinks it is exciting, and in many ways, he is right. This database contains contact information, literature requests, the Church's accounting records, and other helpful information. And it is regularly backed up securely. Every time we publish a new issue of the *Tomorrow's World* magazine or the *Living Church News*, we do a query—or “pull”—of the up-to-date mailing list. If you are a subscriber or member, you are in the database, and that is how you receive your magazine. We also use the database to run statistical analyses of our operations. We cannot do the Work without it. Our operation depends on the database!

However, I would like to tell you about something that is *not* in the database.

When I was pastoring in South Florida, the Ft. Lauderdale congregation was perhaps 40 percent Hispanic, 20 percent of African descent (Jamaican, American, Haitian, and others), and maybe 40 percent Anglo (like me). How did I know that? The only way I could know was by looking around the congregation—*not* by asking to look at the database. That is because your ethnicity is *not in the database*, and never has been.

The United States government records a lot of information about its citizens' ethnicities, and so do many other governments and organizations. However, the Church headquarters office has never kept track of *anyone's* ethnicities—neither our members' nor our subscribers'. *I think that is very appropriate, and I'll tell you why.*

## **Different Countries, Same Spirit**

First, a story: My wife and I had the privilege of taking a long trip for the Fall Holy Days in 2015 to serve the congregations in Australasia. We left Charlotte on a Tuesday, and following a layover in Los Angeles, arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, the following Friday—after losing a day crossing the International Date Line. Although our bodies were a half-day off schedule, seeing the brethren of the Auckland church for Sabbath services and the Feast of Trumpets was invigorating!

The majority of the congregation in Auckland is ethnically Pacific Islander, from such places as Vanuatu, Tonga, and Fiji. Some indigenous Maori also attend there, while most of the other brethren are of European descent. The entire congregation gave us a wonderful, warm welcome, which made us feel right at home from the moment we arrived at services.

From New Zealand, we traveled to Melbourne and Brisbane, Australia, for the Sabbath and Day of Atonement,

respectively. Such beautiful cities! As always, our Aussie brethren welcomed us like family.

We went to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for our next Sabbath, and then spent the first half of the Feast of Tabernacles in Melaka, Malaysia. The ethnic Malays are Muslim, and since Malaysia is officially a Muslim country, there are serious penalties for Muslims who convert to other faiths. Non-Muslims may freely convert to Islam, and the Malaysian government actively promotes this, while enforcing a variety of other laws and statutes that limit what members of other faiths may do.

As a result, the Malaysian members living there are mostly of Tamil Indian descent, part of a non-Muslim minority. The women wore beautiful, colorful *saris* to services—usually a different one each day (and my wife, Marcia, looks *great* in a *sari*!). Although we were strangers in the country and far from home, when we walked into the room for services, we immediately knew we were with Church brethren. It was that way in every congregation that we visited.

The second half of our Feast was spent in Baguio, Philippines. The wonderful brethren there received us as their brother and sister, just as we had experienced elsewhere.

In total, I gave ten sermons in four countries during that Holy Day season of 2015. In each location, the brethren expressed love and support for Dr. Meredith, appreciation for the Work, and love for and unity with their brethren in the U.S. and in other parts of the world. And they wanted me to convey their love to the rest of their brethren!

Throughout the world, the Living Church of God had more than 50 Feast sites that year—many quite small. God is calling out small groups of people all over the planet—some in remote places. For instance, one year, Mr. Gaylyn Bonjour, head of the Mail Processing Department at Headquarters, went to a small village in a remote region of northeast Brazil, very near the equator. There, he held the Feast for 147 people who have been keeping it as members of LCG for 13 years. The village is too small to find on a map, *but God knows where His people are*. He is calling out small groups in remote areas all around the world, giving them eyes to see and ears to hear the same things all His other begotten children see and hear. Their faith and practices are the same as those of other brethren around the world.

You can go to the Feast in Kenya, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Sri Lanka, and many other places and immediately know that you are with God's people. That is because the Spirit we have in common is quickly recognizable!

### “You Are Abraham’s Seed”

During the first century, Paul wrote to the Galatian Church in what is modern-day Turkey, telling them, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there

is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26–29).

We are all joint heirs *together*! Of course, God is completely aware of our different ethnicities and can trace our genealogies all the way back to Adam—no detail about us escapes the knowledge of the One who loves us (Luke 12:6–7)! The brethren I met were often different from me in appearance, customs, dress, speech, and culture. Moreover, God knows that our ethnic differences can be important to us in this age. *God created ethnic diversity, God loves the ethnic diversity in the world, and so should we*. Of course, every culture in the world also finds creative ways to sin, and God certainly doesn't approve of that. Yet, so much of what we do in our multitude of cultures is well within the loving boundaries of His divine law—all expressing ways to act on the principles in that law! However, in the most important sense—that concerning who will be in the Kingdom of God—our ethnicity is “*not in the database*.” When you travel and meet so many diverse brethren, you realize this. God identifies His begotten children in a different way—**by His indwelling Spirit**, by Christ living in us. **That** identifies His holy people.

Dr. Meredith and Mr. Weston have both said that there is a great sense of unity among God's ministry. As I traveled, I also saw a *great unity of purpose among the brethren* around the world. I saw firsthand their love for their fellow brethren, their support for the Work, and their excitement about God's truth. And they greatly appreciated being able to fellowship with members from other parts of the world.

Speaking to Christians in Ephesus, Paul wrote,

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring **to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:1–6).

As my wife and I traveled, we experienced that scriptural truth *firsthand* all over the Australasian region. However, the time will come—and now is—when there will be increasing ethnic tension in the world—“*ethnos* against *ethnos*” (Matthew 24:7). But may we *never let it come into God's Church*! Let us commit ourselves to doing as Paul instructed us: **Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** (LN)

# Living Education–Charlotte: A Year of Togetherness



---

By **Jonathan McNair**

---

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

—Psalm 133:1

There is a lot of talk about “togetherness” today. A recent television series, aptly named “Togetherness,” attempted to define the word as its characters tried to work out their personal differences in humorous ways. Sometimes, the word is applied to an activity. At other times, it reflects a feeling of warmth, intimacy, and fellowship. In reality, “togetherness” can actually be a bit hard to define. Yet togetherness may be the best way to describe the experience that our Living Education–Charlotte students enjoyed this year, as we kicked off our new program.

## **Together in the Classroom**

The Living Education experience is anchored in our Bible classes, as the students learn from God’s word together. The classes review and rehearse the basic doctrines of the Church, focusing on topics such as “Who and What Is God?,” “What Is the Destiny of Man?,” and “What Is the Gospel?” Other classes include topics concerning Christian living, such as “Biblical Health Laws,” “Family Finances,” and “Keys to

Godly Success.” Yet others involve surveying the books of the Bible. Students learn about the themes, story flow, and background of each book of the Bible as they study it. As students listen in class and tackle their homework and projects, they learn about the Bible together.

And if they have questions, there is always someone to ask. “What did the instructor say about the Red Sea crossing?” “What was the date that Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem?” If you didn’t catch the answer in class, one of the other students is sure to have caught it! “When is that essay due?” “What topic are we supposed to focus our video project on?” When you are together in the classroom, someone has the answer and is there to help.

Spending a full nine months studying God’s word alongside other young people who are also passionate about learning God’s way of life is a special experience—and it certainly brings the group closer together.

## **Together in the Dormitories**

This year’s students came from all corners of the United States. One student was from Florida, another from Mississippi, and yet another from Oregon. For one young man, California was home—and the best state of all! For one of the ladies, home would always be Texas. Yet for this year, they were all together in Charlotte, North Carolina, and glad to be here! Studying



online is a great way for many of our students to be linked to a common program. However, living side-by-side enhanced the learning experience for these young men and women.

In the men's accommodations, the guys share a kitchen, though most have their own bedrooms. They have to learn to live with one another's peculiarities and get along. At first, living with a person you've never met can seem awkward, but as the year goes on, bonds of brotherhood form and cement. And did I say peculiarities? To a young man who savors the flavor of scrambled eggs with only salt and pepper, the habit of putting ketchup on everything, including scrambled eggs, seems pretty strange! Yet, learning to tolerate and even appreciate the different preferences and habits of those around you is a great step toward the patience, kindness, and forbearance required in marriage.

The girls also live in a beautiful home, sharing the kitchen and common spaces with one another. The opportunity to have six instant sisters can be overwhelming! But as the months go by, all the "sisters" develop a special place in the fabric of daily life with one another. They laugh together, cry together, share meals, and share challenges.

Such circumstances bring special meaning to "togetherness."

### Together in Student Life

At the end of each hectic week filled with classes, homework assignments, and work duties, the Sabbath provides an anchor. Students gather together on Friday evenings and enjoy a meal as the Sabbath begins. One of the young ladies has the special duty of creating the meal for everyone, and one of the men acts as the host for the evening. Each week, they invite a few of the local brethren to join the meal, extending the idea of "togetherness" by bringing others into the home. Together, everyone talks and fellowships—and together, the men wash the dishes! Other activities, both official and unofficial, fill the

calendar, including trips to the seaport city of Charleston, the Columbia Zoo, and the Great Smoky Mountains. In our activities, an important emphasis is placed upon the need to *avoid leaving people out*. Since all the Living Education–Charlotte students are individuals, possessing varying mixes of interests and preferences, it would be easy to fall into cliques of like-minded students—but that would defeat the purpose of being together in the first place.

Learning to dwell together harmoniously is one of the most important lessons that our Living Education–Charlotte program teaches. It's important that the students who come to Charlotte understand and desire that kind of experience. With that mindset, living together makes for an enjoyable learning experience.

### Together in a Spirit of Fellowship

Living Education–Charlotte gives young adults in God's Church an opportunity to experience a year of togetherness.

At the same time, God is giving all of us in His Church the same opportunity. In a very real and practical way, God is cementing us **together** into His body. In Ephesians 2, we read,

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted **together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built **together** for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (vv. 19–22).

As members of the Church of God, we are being fitted together, fashioned together, and built together into a body, a building, a team, and a family. We are learning to focus our

efforts so that we work together in God's own Work. We learn to work together harmoniously as we gather together each Sabbath to worship God. Just being acquainted with each other and interacting from time to time is not enough. Our challenge is to function together as one body, led by Jesus Christ and fulfilling the desire of Christ as reflected in His prayer to His Father in John 17:21. He prayed "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (LN)



Several speakers at the Living Education–Charlotte graduation. From left to right: Dr. Douglas Winnail, Mr. Richard Ames, Mr. Ken Frank, Mr. Gerald Weston, and Mr. Rod McNair.



# How to Give Godly Offerings

---

By **Scott D. Winnail**

---

**S**even times a year, over the course of three Festival seasons, we are blessed with the privilege of coming before God on His Holy Days and presenting Him with a *gift*—an offering. And often, we give additional monetary offerings to God throughout the year. As God’s people, we realize that He commands us to give tithes and offerings (Deuteronomy 16:16–17). In fact, God makes clear that if we are unfaithful in giving, we are actually “robbing” Him (Malachi 3:8). Yet, if we are not careful, it is easy to become indifferent concerning God’s commanded offerings—simply “going through the motions” and failing to see those offerings for what they are. What are some things we can do in order to give truly *godly* offerings—in particular, Holy Day offerings?

## **Give from the Heart**

Giving offerings in a truly godly way requires giving wholeheartedly. God wants us to give and to obey Him from the heart (Romans 6:17). In fact, God states that He “loves a cheerful giver” who gives “as he purposes in his heart” (2 Corinthians 9:7). God does not want us to give *just because we feel we have to* or *begrudgingly*. God wants us to give offerings to Him because *we want to*, and He wants us to do this “with [our] might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The example of the “widow’s mite” highlights a woman who, although poor, truly gave from her heart (Luke 21:1–4). This woman may have given very little in comparison to the offerings of others, but Christ noted that “she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had” (v. 4). Recall, too, how God invited the ancient Israelites to give offerings for the creation of the Tabernacle: “Whoever is of a **willing heart**, let him bring it as an offering to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze...” (Exodus 35:5). We later read that the Israelites were so moved by the opportunity that they gave far beyond what was needed and had to be restrained from giving more (Exodus 36:6–7)! It is hard not to imagine that God was delighted with their heartfelt response. Do we see giving an offering as an opportunity to delight God and to demonstrate that we care about the things *He* cares about? Giving offerings is one of those special actions that God loves to see us take—especially when we give from the heart!

## **Remember: It Belongs to God Anyway**

How do we make sure we always give cheerfully and in a heartfelt way? How can we avoid falling prey to Satan’s “fiery darts” of greed and feeling *forced* to give? Our own context and perspective are vital in making this happen. As we prepare our offerings, we can remind ourselves of whose money this is in the first place. The Bible warns us about being de-

ceived regarding our blessings, and we should instead recall that “Every good gift and every perfect gift” is from God (James 1:16–17). The money, the resources—everything we have is a gift from Almighty God! Everything belongs to God, and the things we enjoy actually represent a portion of His own possessions.

From what God gives to us, He expects only a small portion in return. After all, if tithes and offerings were *not* God’s to begin with, how could we rob Him (Malachi 3:8)? It is only possible to rob someone if he or she owns the item in question. When we remember that our tithes and offerings were never ours to begin with—they have belonged to God from the start—it is easier to set our minds upon giving them *back* to Him. When we give an offering, we are *returning to God* a fraction of the blessings He has poured out on us.

### **Praise and Honor God!**

Tithes are a commanded amount—ten percent—of our increase (cf. Genesis 28:22). However, offerings are different. With offerings, God directs each of us to “give as he is able” and “according to the blessing of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 16:17). Although God does *command* offerings to be given, especially on the annual Holy Days, *the amount* of the offering is a personal decision. In order to determine the amount of our offerings, God wants us first to consider our blessings: How much are we able to give, and how has He blessed us lately? As we consider these questions, we should also remember that blessings come in many different forms—including monetary blessings, to be sure, but also spiritual blessings, blessings of friends and family, blessings of safety, healing, and God-given endurance, blessings of being released from trials, and the blessing of being a firstfruit. The list goes on and on. God’s people, no matter their financial situation, experi-

ence an abundance of blessings that must be considered as they plan their Holy Day offerings.

Ultimately, offerings are a powerful way to show praise and honor to the great God (Jeremiah 17:26). Yes, God and His Church certainly use our monetary offerings to do God’s Work. But if God can create bread from stones (Matthew 4:3), He can, obviously, create money from stones as well. The money itself is far less important to God than the heart and attitude that motivate our offerings. The monetary amount is simply a *reflection* of our heart. A stingy offering when we have abundant resources shows God our hesitance and reluctance to commit to and honor Him. However, a generous offering that truly reflects our many blessings is indeed an act of honor and praise to God and something He loves to see us give!

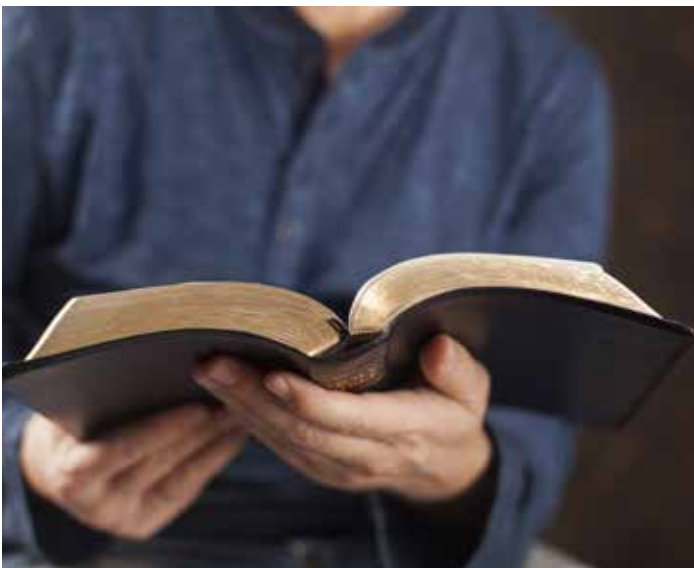
### **Prepare and Pray**

With Holy Day offerings, we are always able to plan ahead. With the Holy Day calendar provided by the Church, we can know years in advance the dates of these special days. Because of this, none of us should ever be *caught off guard* by Holy Day offerings. We should take care to prepare for them well in advance.

One way to prepare for Holy Day offerings is to *set aside* a monetary amount from each paycheck we receive, based on the total amount we have in mind for our offerings. Smaller amounts of money set aside over weeks and months add up over time, avoiding the circumstance of burdening our budget with a large donation for which we are unprepared. The *New International Version* translates Proverbs 4:26 in the following, helpful way: “Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.” Planning our offerings and steadfastly setting aside small sums from each paycheck enables us to consistently give more abundant offerings to God than we otherwise would.

Another essential action to take in preparation for Holy Day offerings is to pray about them throughout the year. As we pray, we should ask God to give us the ability and the resources to honor and give to Him according to how He has blessed us. We should also pray about our own attitudes and motivation. We need to pray that God will help us desire, even more wholeheartedly, to give offerings of praise and honor to Him.

Holy Day offerings are a wonderful opportunity to give a special, heartfelt gift to Almighty God—the One responsible for calling us and giving us His precious truth! For those who have been in God’s Church for years and who have given dozens of Holy Day offerings, this privilege can easily become a rote or thoughtless habit if we are not careful. God wants us to give truly godly offerings to Him every time we give. As we approach another Festival season, let us all pray about and prepare for this upcoming opportunity to give truly godly offerings! (LN)





## In Loving Memory

### **Mr. Rodney King**

1949–2019

Mr. Rodney Gillies King died peacefully on May 7 in Melbourne, Australia, after battling cancer for several years. He is survived by his beloved family, including his wife, four children and their spouses, and six grandchildren.

Mr. King's life began in a beachside town near Wollongong, New South Wales, as the youngest of three children, all of whom loved the beach and the sea. From an early age, he showed a zest for life and a love of singing. He had a larger-than-life personality and very much loved engaging with people. He also had an unquenchable optimism that stayed with him throughout his life. He didn't just see the glass as half full—for him, the glass was filled to the brim.

In 1969, Mr. King entered Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, United Kingdom, a young and zealous student. After graduating in 1973, he returned to Australia and married Shayne Cox, who had graduated from Bricket Wood with him. Together, they raised four children. Ordained into the ministry of God's Church, he served diligently and faithfully for 45 years. Some highlights of his ministry include pastoring churches across Australia and New Zealand, serving as Area Pastor for Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, and serving later as Regional Director for the U.K., Europe, and Africa. He was a Founding Regent of Living University and a member of the Council of Elders, and he wrote articles and presented telecasts for *Tomorrow's World*. He also oversaw youth camps in Australia, the U.K., Europe, and South Africa, and travelled extensively to serve God's people in many congregations around the U.K., Ireland, Europe, and Africa. In 2014, Mr. and Mrs. King returned to Australia to be with their growing family after eight years abroad.

Throughout his years of ministry, Mr. King's heartfelt desire was to share God's truth, and he did that with God's people in almost every corner of the world. He drew on his love



of general history, his extensive knowledge of Church history, his sense of humour, and his talent for imitating speaking accents in order to reach his audience. He inspired people in a special way to strive toward the wonderful Kingdom of God, which he now awaits.

Mr. King's family would like to thank the brethren for their prayers and cards throughout the time of his illness. This support was a special source of comfort to them all.

**Mr. Alan Cornefert, 69**, of the London, England, congregation, died peacefully on February 5 after suffering from serious health problems, especially for the last few years. He first came in contact with God's Church through Radio London in 1965. Baptized in 1990, he "gave his life unconditionally to the Lord," as he stated. A loyal, steadfast, and service-minded man, and a true soldier of Jesus Christ, he was ordained a deacon in 2011. Mr. Cornefert was dearly loved by his brethren, family, and friends, and he will be greatly missed.

**Ms. Jennifer Dunlop**, of the Belfast, Northern Ireland, congregation, died peacefully on February 6. Her funeral was held in the home of her sister, Mrs. Valerie Burrows, also of the Belfast congregation, on February 8. She is survived by two sisters and other relatives.

**Mrs. Genevie (Jenny) Engle, 94**, of the Washington, D.C. congregation, died on May 15. She and her husband Don, who predeceased her in 2015, were baptized together in 1971, and as the years passed, they served the congregation in various capacities. Jenny was a devoted wife, and the couple's love for each other was evident to all. They traveled the world, danced, ate chocolate, and were happy together. Mrs. Engle was hospitable and generous, and you did not leave empty-handed if you visited their home. She was strong of will and in faith. Many times when her husband was hospitalized, she was heard encouraging him: "We trust God, Don, we trust God." Mrs. Engle is survived by a son and two grandsons. Elder Ray Clore conducted the funeral service.

**Mr. William Thomas "Tom" Ferrell, 84**, of the Temple, Texas, congregation, died on May 13. He had suffered with Alzheimer's for many years. Mr. Ferrell served in the U.S.

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)).



Army in Germany for two years before being baptized in November 1963. He was a longtime elder in God's Church. Mr. Ferrell was beloved as a warm and friendly person with a good sense of humor. He is survived by his wife Susie of 24 years, four children, two stepchildren, nine grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

**Mr. Robert Harrison, 79**, of the Jacksonville, North Carolina, congregation, died on April 1 after complications from a heart attack. He was baptized on January 31, 2004. He was the youngest of thirteen children and is survived by an older sister and a son. Before health problems kept him from attending services, Robert loved to give special music and sing in the Feast choirs. Despite many health problems during the last years of his life, he often expressed his commitment to remain faithful to his calling and the Work of God.

**Mr. Bryan Ivy, 81**, of Russellville, Arkansas, died April 30. Reared in south Texas along the Mexican border, he was a colorful character and fluent in Spanish. He was baptized into the Church of God in 1967. Mr. Ivy moved to Arkansas in 1974 and served as an inspector for the Arkansas Health Department for 35 years. A studious man, he read widely and loved history and studying the Bible. He was also an enthusiastic gardener who loved to share his produce. He is survived by his wife Peggy Reid Ivy, one daughter, and one son. Area Pastor Phil West and Elder Davy Crockett conducted his graveside service on May 6.

**Mrs. Nancy Knight, 74**, of the Terre Haute, Indiana, congregation, died peacefully on March 22. She was born on December 18, 1944 in Lawrence County, Indiana, and worked

as a certified nursing assistant for many years. Her baptism in 1992 marked the beginning of a relationship with God that lasted for 27 years. All will remember her as a delight to be around and a private person who was eager to listen and lend quiet encouragement. Her fondness for humor and laughter was rivaled only by her love for chocolate. She was preceded in death by her parents, a son, a half-brother, and a nephew. She is survived by two sisters and many other relatives. She often spoke of learning patience through her trials, and she placed her hope in the resurrection and in the reality of God's coming Kingdom. Mr. Floyd Spencer gave a brief memorial message at Sabbath services.

**Mrs. Donna Knowles, 67**, of the London, Ontario, congregation, died suddenly on the Sabbath of March 23. She had battled cancer for a few years, and it seems that God was merciful and allowed her to go peacefully. Mrs. Knowles was a lovely lady, loved by all, and always happy and positive. She knew her life was in God's hands. A memorial service was held on May 21, conducted by Mr. Shane Kruse.

**Mrs. Bonnie Aline Woodward, 95**, of the St. Louis, Missouri, congregation, died on May 4. She was a longtime devoted member of God's Church, baptized more than 60 years ago. Although she was unable to attend Sabbath services for some time, she often expressed love and concern for the brethren. She enjoyed crocheting, quilting, working crossword and jigsaw puzzles, and taking care of her flower and vegetable garden. She also loved to read, and her favorite book was the Holy Bible. Mrs. Woodward leaves behind two sons, two daughters, numerous grandchildren, and a wonderful legacy of walking with Christ.

---

## Births

**Jacob John-Arthur Darryl Greene** was born March 27 to Mr. and Mrs. Darryl (Elva) Greene of the Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada, congregation. He weighed 9 pounds, 14 ounces, and was 22 inches long. Jacob's arrival brings joy to the whole family, including sister Alianna and brother Jeremiah.

Ryan and Kristine Ksiezopolski, of the Tannersville, Pennsylvania, congregation, are excited to announce the birth of their first child, **Sarah Nicole Ksiezopolski**. Sarah was born

on March 31 weighing 7 pounds, 10 ounces, and measuring 21 inches long. Mother and baby are doing well.

Hemi and Brenna Marrero, of the Dallas, Texas, congregation, would like to announce their newborn bundle of joy, **Jolie Lorisa-Cae Marrero**, born on May 14 weighing 5 pounds, 15 ounces. Jolie Lorisa-Cae and new mommy Brenna are doing exceptionally well.

Joe and Jess Matherly, of the Indianapolis, Indiana, congregation, are pleased to announce the arrival of

their son, **Lincoln Bear Matherly**. Lincoln was born on April 6—definitely a wonderful Sabbath blessing to his family! His two older brothers are thrilled to welcome him home.

Ryan and Lisa Patterson, of the Dallas, Texas, congregation, celebrated the arrival of their second daughter, **Rachel Nicole Patterson**, on March 23. She weighed 8 pounds, 14 ounces, and was 20 inches long. Rachel is a very alert and happy baby. Big sister Ava loves giving her kisses and tickling her toes!

## Weddings & Anniversaries

**Mr. and Mrs. William (Barbara) Oswald**, of the Columbia, Missouri, congregation, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on February 21. Mr. Oswald serves as the associate pastor of the Columbia congregation, which recognized this milestone with a congregational meal—presenting them with a card and gifts from their Church family.

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

danced down the aisle to the tune of “Happy”! The couple resides in Merrill.

**Mr. Shawn Jacob Plagenza and Miss Lillie Lanell Crowson** were united in marriage on May 26 at five o'clock in the afternoon at the Civic Center in Mineola, Texas, by Pastor Gary Stein. More than 240 family members and friends from all around Texas and other parts of the country were in attendance. At the reception following the ceremony, all enjoyed a Texas-style feast of beef brisket, chicken tacos and all the “fixings,” as well as a wonderful evening of dancing and fellowship.

## ORDINATIONS

**Mr. David Isaac Mungaian** was ordained an elder on September 21, 2017 by Regional Director Robert Tyler and Area Pastor Rajan Moses. Mr. Mungaian serves the brethren in Bahau, Malaysia.

**Mr. Paul Rempel** was ordained a deacon on March 3, 2018, by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz and Area Pastor Marc Arseneault. Mr. Rempel serves in the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, congregation.

**Mr. John Wall** was ordained a deacon on March 24, 2018 by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz and Area Pastor Marc Arseneault. Mr. Wall serves in the Winnipeg, Manitoba, congregation.

**Mr. and Mrs. John (Barbara) Gibbs** were ordained deacon and deaconess on June 9, 2018 by Presiding Evangelist Gerald Weston, Canadian Regional

Director Stuart Wachowicz, and Area Pastor Barry Walker. Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs serve in the Kelowna, British Columbia, congregation.

**Mr. Clifton Newman** was ordained a deacon on September 24 by Caribbean Regional Director Rick Stafford. Mr. Newman serves in the Kingston, Jamaica, congregation.

**Ms. Tembra Way** was ordained a deaconess on February 2. She serves in the Pleasant Hill, California, congregation. Ms. Way was ordained by Regional Pastor Jeffrey Fall and Associate Pastor Jonathan Bueno.

**Mr. and Mrs. Donald (Pauline) Carson** were ordained deacon and deaconess on March 30 by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz and Area Pastor Barry Walker. Mr. and Mrs. Carson serve in the Surrey, British Columbia, congregation.

**Mr. Lance Blankers** was ordained an elder on March 30 by Canadian Regional Director Stuart Wachowicz and Area Pastor Barry Walker. Mr. Blankers serves in the Surrey, British Columbia, congregation.

**Mr. Michael Walsh** was ordained an elder on April 26 by Area Pastor Phil Sena. Mr. Walsh serves in the Columbus, Ohio, congregation.

**Mr. Jacob Kidney** was ordained a deacon on April 26 by Area Pastor Phil Sena. Mr. Kidney serves in the Akron, Ohio, congregation.

**Mr. and Mrs. Glen (Linda) Clarke** were ordained deacon and deaconess on May 18 by Area Pastor Barry Walker. Mr. and Mrs. Clarke serve in the Coombs and Victoria, British Columbia, congregations.

**WHY A COUNCIL OF ELDERS?** continued from page 2

It is evident that the full meaning of Daniel 9:26–27 is not completely clear at this time. We understand Jesus appeared at the end of 69 prophetic weeks, and that three-and-a-half years later—in the middle of a prophetic week—He was cut off and we no longer need to make animal sacrifices. Whether there is a duality to these verses, we do not know. If there is a duality, this means we have the seventieth week fulfilled by Christ and a totally separate week referring to what the Roman prince does.

To restate clearly, the Council of Elders upholds the traditional and longstanding teaching of the Church that Christ did fulfill the purposes of the first half of the seventieth week (see Daniel 9:24), and that the second half of the seventieth

week begins with the Second Coming of Christ (Revelation 11:15). Concerning the question of a seven-year treaty (covenant) by a Roman prince, the Council feels it prudent to state we do not want to be dogmatic about it at this time.

Daniel points us to the fact that animal sacrifices will be stopped when the abomination of desolation occurs three years and seven months prior to the end of the age (Daniel 12:11). And Jesus tells us the abomination of desolation is a sign that it is time to flee. Therefore, we believe it is wise not to focus on a seven-year *treaty*, but on the clear statement of Scripture that the abomination of desolation and cessation of sacrifices begins the countdown of 1290 days to the end.


**I WAS WRONG!** continued from page 4

**much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men”** (Romans 12:16–18).

There are many scriptures on this subject, and they are all easy to read, but they are also easy to dismiss, claiming, “That does not apply in *my* case.” Is Christ really living in you, or is this a meaningless mantra? I speak here not as one trying to browbeat anyone, but as one who also continually needs to grow in Christ. Meditate on the scriptures. Think about how they apply to you, especially when you feel wronged and know you are right.

From time to time, complaints come to my attention about a minister who is thought to be mistreating someone or teaching something not quite right. Brethren, I have been guilty of each of those mistakes on some occasions. Yes, over a period of nearly 50 years, I have missed the mark more than once or twice—mostly through ignorance, never through intention to do so. I am not talking about doing away with the Sabbath or the law of God, but sometimes I have, without wrong intent, spoken incorrectly about a scripture or prophecy that I misunderstood. I have also overreacted in dealing with certain situa-

tions, but again, it was not with malice or evil intent. I’m human. So is your minister, and so are you.

I love Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, where he speaks about keeping the unity of the faith. “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1–3). “Bearing”—or forbearing, as some versions render it—implies tolerating or “putting up with.” True Christianity involves putting up with the foibles and weaknesses of other human beings.

Marriages often fail because one or both fail this test. Some individuals drop out of one Church of God to attend a different Church of God because they find that easier than putting up with their minister or other members. Some people stay within a Church of God group, but physically move to be near their favorite minister, one who “understands” or promotes them. Yet, Paul tells us that there are different “gifts,” “ministries” (“administrations,” *KJV*), and “activities” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6). No two ministers are the same. This is one reason we try to train min-

isters under more than one man. We learn different lessons from different individuals. Focus on what is good and do not look for the bad. We should be able to discern between a moment when someone’s particular weakness is on display and times when someone is clearly falling into rank apostasy. There is a difference!

Brethren, we must learn to get along together. Pride and oversensitivity are often at the heart of our problems. Sometimes ministers are insecure and overreact when challenged with a question they cannot answer, or when being told they are wrong about something. Both ministers and members must put aside pride and vanity. We must all learn to speak openly but respectfully with one another, and we must stop looking for the faults in others. Remember Jesus’ admonition: “Judge [condemn] not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:1–2).

Brethren, let us all, members and ministers alike, drink in of these and so many other admonitions. Let us meditate on how they apply to us. And let us allow Christ to live His life within and through us! (LW)

## COMMENTARY

### It's Your Time

**I**n the human experience, there is a great equalizer. No matter who we are—rich, poor, or somewhere in between—everyone has the same amount of it. It is what your life is made of.

I'm referring to time. Each of us has 24 hours a day, no more, no less.

Each day comes and each day goes, and that time is gone. Time goes by whether you use it well or poorly. Most people will tell you that they feel pressured by time, as they manage their many activities and all the demands made upon them. And they will say they have real difficulty getting it all done. Business pursuits, family obligations, and personal activities outstrip the time to accomplish everything. Many people suffer from sleep deprivation because they simply can't get to bed due to the demands on their time.

Time is so precious that it should come as no surprise that the Bible has much to say about the subject.

In Genesis 1:14 we see that God created the lights in the firmament "for signs and seasons and for days and years." We also see that on the seventh day of creation God rested and set apart the Sabbath as special, holy time (Genesis 2:2–3).

King Solomon of ancient Israel—given special wisdom by God—was inspired to write the classic scripture about time in Ecclesiastes 3:1: "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."

So, we see that timing is important in all our human activities, and that we should set right priorities if we are to be in harmony with God's will.

As Christians, we become even more cognizant of time and how we should use it. We realize that time is short, as the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:29. Paul also emphasized this theme and had a sense of urgency in his letter to the church at Rome: "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy" (Romans 13:11–13).

James, the Lord's brother, put it this way: "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). Ask elderly persons about their lives and they will usually tell you that life is short and that time goes by very quickly in the human experience.

The Apostle Paul really made it clear in his letter to the church at Ephesus when he said, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15–16).

How then does one redeem the time? Part of the answer is by observing the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, looking for opportunities to serve others, and not spending time on foolish, wasteful pursuits. Now, that doesn't mean that you can't take some time to relax, enjoy a good book, or pursue a productive hobby. As human beings, we need an outlet; we need a change of pace from time to time. But *all* of our activities should glorify God.

It's your time—how will you use it?

—J. Davy Crockett III

---

The above is adapted from one of the many commentaries discussing vital topics facing our world, available at the [lcg.org](http://lcg.org) and [TomorrowsWorld.org](http://TomorrowsWorld.org) websites.