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Prager and Porn

Dear Brethren,

Let me begin by saying that I like Dennis Prager. He is intelligent, articulate, and—much of the time—on target. So, when he explained his views regarding pornography at a roundtable discussion with *The Daily Wire's* Jordan Peterson, he shocked and outraged many. What did he say that set off a firestorm?

Prager told Peterson and the others at the table that, in his opinion, Judaism is “a behaviorist law-based religion. We care how you act. That’s why we don’t have a claim that if you look at another woman with lust, it’s as if you’ve committed adultery with her.... Looking with lust is not a sin in Judaism,” he says.

When Peterson asked how pornography fit into this view, Prager responded, “I always ask, if a wife calls me and says, ‘My husband looks at pornography, I found it on his computer,’ I have one question: ‘How is your life of intimacy with your husband? Is it good? In other words, is the pornography in lieu of you, or in addition to you?’... I know this is not a religious answer.... I’m not even giving a religious answer. I’m giving what I think is a moral and realistic answer. Men want variety. And if pornography is a substitute for one’s wife, it’s awful. If it’s a substitute for adultery, it’s not awful.”

Someone addicted to porn might feel justified by this rationalization, seeing it as permission to engage in the behavior, but that sense of justification is misplaced. Prager’s explanation misses the mark on multiple fronts. The most obvious is Christ’s statement in the Sermon on the Mount: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘*You shall not commit adultery.*’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28). But what if one rejects Jesus as Savior and therefore dismisses His words and the New Testament?

Many people equate Judaism with the Old Testament, thinking that Judaism reflects the mind of God under the Old Covenant. But even a casual reading of the New Testament shows how far many in Judaism had strayed from God’s original intent for His people, even long ago. We find that the Pharisees of Jesus’ day had instituted many man-made traditions and regulations, meanwhile rejecting the law of God (Mark 7:6–9). And in a confrontation with the Pharisees and scribes, what law was it that Jesus said they were breaking? “For Moses said, ‘*Honor your father and your mother*’; and, ‘*He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.*’ But you say...” (vv. 10–11).

If the Pharisees reasoned around the Ten Commandments in the first century, it should not surprise us that many in modern Judaism do the same. The God who thundered the commandments from Mount Sinai is interested in more than “a behaviorist law-based religion.” He not only cares how we act; He cares how we think! This is evident from His command not to covet: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Deuteronomy 5:21).

How is it that someone of great intellect and normally rational thought can state that looking with lust is not a sin in Judaism? We must wonder what kind of mental gymnastics one must go through to discount the clear teaching of the Decalogue.

Sinful Thoughts, Sinful Actions

The prophet Jeremiah speaks to our self-deceiving nature. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon also warned against

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self-deception. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

The Apostle Paul came to understand, whether as one of the Pharisees or after conversion, that what one thinks is just as much a sin as what one does. “Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known *lust*, except the law had said, thou shalt not *covet*” (Romans 7:7, *King James Version*).

The half-brother of Jesus understood the connection between thought and behavior—how the latter follows the former. “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren” (James 1:13–16).

Does this mean that lustful thinking always progresses to physical adultery? Many people have violated the Tenth Commandment and not progressed to violating the letter of the Seventh, but this may simply be a matter of opportunity. What we know from Jesus, James, and life experience is that sinful actions follow unrestrained sinful thoughts.

Crucial Lessons for Us

There are other lessons we can learn from this interview. One lesson is what Prager correctly stated: “Obviously, Christianity and Judaism are not identical religions.” Yet how many today try to blend Judaism and Christianity, wrongly thinking that the Jews practice the religion of the Old Testament? We keep the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and laws of clean and unclean meats *not* because the Jews do, but because these are spelled out in *both* Testaments by command and example. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). He kept the Sabbath and Holy Days, not paganized days (Luke 4:16). The Apostles and first-century Church followed suit (Acts 17:2; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8). Peter refused to eat unclean meats (Acts 10:13–17, 28) and we see that God still views certain birds as unclean (Revelation 18:2).

Another lesson we can learn from Prager’s mistake is that we must view all ideas through the lens of the Bible. It is

human nature to follow heroes, celebrities, and those more articulate than we are. The late Rush Limbaugh articulated conservative values with a healthy dose of humor, making him an icon for many. On the liberal side of things, some watch the daytime American women’s discussion group *The View* and see Joy Behar as their heroine. And the list goes on: Bill O’Reilly, Rachel Maddow, Tucker Carlson, and more. Some people view Donald Trump as a near-messiah who does nothing wrong. Such a view is terribly flawed. You may like some of his policies, but he will not save the United States.

Prager is not the only one failing to condemn pornography for the sin it is. The Internet is filled with articles promoting its acceptance as long as one does not “take it too far.” But Jesus Christ was not ambiguous on the subject, and for good reason.

While the world debates whether it is harmful, those of us in the ministry have no doubts. We have seen its destructive work in the lives of children and adults, men and women. We’ve met those addicted to it, counseled married couples, and worked with tormented teens coming to us for help. For us, it is not debatable: Pornography destroys marriages and lives.

Dennis Prager uses human logic to articulate cultural and religious values. Some of his ideas agree with God’s revelation in Scripture. Others do not. A danger in identifying with strong personalities is failing to challenge their ideas in light of the mind of God as found in the Bible, His instruction book on life. We must not accept human reasonings just because they sound good or agree with our own thinking. Subtle deception is far more dangerous than deception that is clearly recognized.

We must not be naïve; “though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).



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Are We Courageous?

The moral landscape of our world has changed drastically in the last few years. It is not that mankind has ever been morally upright, but our world—especially in the Israelite-descended nations—has ceased to exhibit any pretense of biblically defined moral integrity.

Most in God’s Church are good and decent people who try to live according to the higher standards of God’s law, and we are not totally alone. There are people, albeit deceived by false Christianity, who are good neighbors and who strive to live by most of the Ten Commandments. But how diligently do we strive? The question for all of us is, “Do we display courage in this corrupt world?”

Western nations have been taken over today by radical social engineers who are at war with God and biblical values. They seek to create a world unfettered by moral restraint, and they use vicious tactics. Make no mistake: What we see in our world is a well-conceived agenda, planned by Satan-inspired leaders, to obliterate biblical values. Society casting off all cords of restraint was foretold millennia ago. “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us’” (Psalm 2:1–3). The remainder of the psalm clearly indicates that this is referring to the end-time.

And is this not an accurate description of modern man? “By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed” (Hosea 4:2). As mankind sets aside the law of God, the result is boundless misery: “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18, *American Standard Version*).

A Bulge in a High Wall

Please forgive me if I again quote from Hemingway’s novel *The Sun Also Rises*, where Bill asks Mike, “How did you go bankrupt?” Mike replies, “Two ways. Gradually and then suddenly.” The prophet Isaiah attests that the gradually-then-suddenly principle applies to the way the Israelite nations will suddenly be broken. “Therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach ready to fall, a bulge

in a high wall, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant” (Isaiah 30:13).

The battle against the Bible has been going on for decades, gradually progressing, but for many it arrived suddenly about five years ago. Indecent behaviors and “lifestyles” that took decades to legalize and find popular acceptance became a part of daily media. Once homosexuality was accepted as normal, so-called “same-sex marriage” immediately followed. The floodgates were opened. Before we knew it, the “trans” movement had begun. How bad it will become before complete disaster strikes is difficult to imagine, but this article challenges you to be courageous in the face of this moral cesspool. Here is why—and how.

Much of the Western world, as you well know, has been taken over by radicals who are no longer hiding out in academic buildings on liberal university campuses. These social engineers are now everywhere. They seek to transform our world into a society unfettered by godly restraints. They have taken over academia, the mainstream media, social media, corporations, Hollywood, sports teams, and political parties. We see this in the LGBTQIA+ movement. We see it in the drive for abortion. We see it, especially now in Canada and the Netherlands, in the drive to lessen restrictions on so-called “assisted suicide.” And all of this is aided by a culture that constantly attempts to silence those who oppose its agendas. The “woke” movement, as it is so often labeled, has even infiltrated military services, where social engineering appears to be more important than defending one’s country.

Anyone with eyes to see can recognize the direction our world is heading, and it is becoming more difficult to survive in the corporate world. Even hockey player Ivan Provorov, defenseman for the Philadelphia Flyers of the National Hockey League, found himself at the center of controversy when he refused to don a pride-themed jersey and carry a hockey stick wrapped in rainbow tape during a pre-game warmup for the team’s annual “Pride Night” celebration. One wonders: Was he the only one with moral standards and the courage to take a stand? Did all those other players support the pride movement, or were those tough men too timid to resist their employers and the mob? What would you do under the same circumstances?

Many of you already face such decisions under equally stressful circumstances, but with less national publicity.

We know of Church members being forced out of work over their religious convictions. Others have chosen to find a new job rather than face the daily hassle of a hostile work environment, and this is understandable. This is a reason why our young people must carefully consider their future career options. Even if one survives the indoctrination and peer pressure of university life, surviving future employment may be equally difficult. Corporate culture is turning decidedly against godly values as human resource departments are increasingly filled with personnel who have allied themselves with the anti-God agenda.

This battle against the Bible—using dishonest discourse, suppression of truth, and intimidation—was expressly predicted by the prophet Isaiah. “Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey” (Isaiah 59:14–15). Yes, it takes courage to stand for justice, equity, and truth against anti-God bullies. Former UCLA psychiatrist Dr. Miriam Grossman points out how hypocritical these social engineers are:

Yes, the university, and my department, were committed to the principles of diversity and multiculturalism. This commitment was plastered all over our policy statements. But somehow, through the years, I got the sense that the diversity that *I* represented wasn't the same type to which they were so profoundly committed [sic] (Grossman, *Unprotected*, p. xix).

Kirsten Powers, a self-proclaimed liberal, describes this intolerant bullying in *The Silencing: How the Left is Killing Free Speech*, and rightly separates liberal from illiberal.

The illiberal left... believes that people who express ideological, philosophical, or political views that don't line up with their preferences should be completely silenced. Instead of using persuasion and rhetoric to make a positive case for their causes and views, they work to delegitimize the person making the argument through character assassination, demonization and dehumanizing tactics. These are the self-appointed overlords—activists, university administrators, journalists, and politicians—who have determined what views are acceptable to express. So, shut up—or else (p. 4).

Quite true, and “or else” is no idle threat. So, the question is: What to do about it?

If you haven't already been confronted by these social forces, be prepared, as they *will* come knocking at your proverbial door. We do not seek confrontation, but it is becoming more difficult to *avoid* confrontation. Those who consider us enemies are our teachers and university professors. They are human

resource departments, supervisors, employers, and coworkers. They may even be our neighbors or relatives. Even though we strive to live peaceably with all, being confronted with evil is becoming unavoidable. This requires wisdom and courage. This storm is not what we want, but it *will* be what we face!

Courage to Stand Alone

In 1966, Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the former President, spoke the following words to young people in South Africa: “Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence” (“Day of Affirmation Address, University of Capetown, South Africa, June 6, 1966,” *JFKLibrary.org*). And Dennis Prager, in his commentary on the book of Exodus, makes this observation: “Courage is the rarest of all the good traits. There are far more kind and honest people than there are courageous people” (*The Rational Bible: Exodus*, p. 14).

Moses' brother Aaron seems to be in the category of kind and generally righteous, but he occasionally came up short on courage. Take, for example, the golden calf incident. When Moses saw the calf and the people dancing around it, he understood that this was out of character for Aaron, who had given in to pressure from the people. And Aaron was only too quick to place the blame on them.

“What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?” So Aaron said, “Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. For they said to me, ‘Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out” (Exodus 32:21–24).

The idea of the golden calf jumping out of the fire put Aaron in the *most-of-the-time-honest* category. He must have winced upon hearing his own ridiculous explanation come tumbling out of his mouth! But Aaron was probably little different from the rest of us under normal circumstances. And who among us would be comfortable standing against several million carnal Israelites?

The Bible tells us of another man who gave in to the mob. God chose Saul to be king over Israel. We read of him being a head taller than the average man (1 Samuel 10:23). He was also a strong fighter who led the armies of Israel into battle. Three times we are told that “Saul has slain his thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7; 21:11; 29:5). However, he possessed a critical flaw—he feared people more than God. “Then Saul said to

Samuel, ‘I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice’” (1 Samuel 15:24).

Fear of God Is the Key to Courage

Any student of the Bible knows of Daniel and his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. The story begins with these young men as captives in Babylon, but it is easy to overlook the years prior to this time. Biblical history shows that Judah had fallen into idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, and sexual immorality (2 Chronicles 36:14–16; Ezekiel 16). Consider what that means—the peer pressure and influences on young people. Perhaps the best way to understand their culture is to understand ours. Yes, they dressed differently and ate differently, their language was different, and some of the games they played were likely different, but the conditions of their culture, the moral degradation surrounding them, and the peer pressure were sadly the same as they are today. It is with this background that we begin their story.

These were strong young men of character. This is why King Nebuchadnezzar had chosen them. Note his requirements for those whom he chose to work in his palace: “Young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 1:4). We see their strength and character right away in their polite request for a different diet, lest they be defiled with the king’s food. The picture that emerges is one of young men who feared God.

When we read of the three thrown into a fiery furnace and of Daniel thrown into a lion’s den, it is easy to think we would be as brave—but we know the end of the story. They did not! When Nebuchadnezzar challenged the three with the question, “And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?,” they responded, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:15–18). If today we cannot stand up to a professor or a corporate boss, how can we think we would be able to stand up to Nebuchadnezzar?

Courage and cowardice often show up unexpectedly for a variety of reasons. We read of Elijah taking on the prophets of Baal but then running away from Jezebel. And we read of Peter denying Christ three times but then boldly standing before the Sanhedrin. Courage is not always static. It ebbs and flows for reasons we may not always understand. However, there is a powerful key to courage that we must all strive to possess, and one that Daniel and his three friends possessed: the fear of God.

Jesus tells us that He must come first in our lives—above the closest family relationships, above friends, and above our own lives as well (Luke 14:26). Unless we are willing to put Him first, we might as well hang it up. It is that simple.

Overcoming Powerful People

Dennis Prager understands the Bible from his Jewish perspective—which can be seductive, coming from someone of his persuasive ability, so we must be careful not to accept everything he says. However, in reference to the midwives who refused Pharaoh’s command to drown Israelite babies, he makes this astute comment:

People fear those who are more powerful than they are. Therefore, the only way not to fear powerful people is to fear God. Thus, in the instance recorded here, those who feared God saved Hebrew babies, while those who feared Pharaoh helped drown Hebrew babies.... It was the midwives’ fear of God that liberated them from fear of the Egyptian tyrant. This point is often overlooked: Fear of God is a liberating emotion, freeing one from a disabling fear of evil, powerful people (*The Rational Bible: Exodus*, p. 14).

We will all be tested as to whom we fear the most—man or God. There was a time, decades ago, when it was difficult to understand how those of us who know and practice the truth could be persecuted. Would someone tell us to eat pork or die? Hardly. Yes, we might lose a job over the Sabbath or Holy Days, and some of us have, but what we face today is different from anything we could imagine even a decade ago.

Many of us passed a major test when we left our former fellowship because we could see that it had left God. Essentially, we launched into space, not always knowing where we would land. For some of us, our jobs were on the line. For others, family, friends—even spouses—were on the line. It is good that we were tested in this matter, but there are many tests ahead. Difficult decisions must be made—and, when the time comes, what we value the most will determine what we do. Robert Townsend, the late CEO of Avis Car Rental, gave us this insightful thought: “Values are critical guides for making decisions. When in doubt, they cut through the fog like a beacon in the night.”

Courage in the face of danger is a hallmark of true Christianity. No one ought to imagine that Daniel or his friends had no fear of Nebuchadnezzar; for good reason we all fear fire and lions. But the greater fear of God shone through the fog and took away any doubt as to what they needed to do. When we value God and His commandments, many decisions in life become clear. They may not be easy to carry out, but when we fear God above all else, it diminishes our fear of powerful—and not so powerful—men and women. (LM)

The Greatest Mission on Earth

By **Richard F. Ames**

Many of you reading this article are familiar with the old television series *Mission: Impossible*. Since then, several *Mission: Impossible* movies have been made. The ongoing theme is that special agents overcome what seem to be impossible obstacles, using their wits, creativity, and strategy—and often exotic technology—to make sure they accomplish their mission.

We as Christians called in this age also have a mission to accomplish, and at times it may seem impossible. We are a small group of believers given *the greatest mission on earth*. But what exactly is that mission? Most people who call themselves “Christian” have no understanding of the true Christian mission.

Most of you reading this article will be familiar with these important verses from Scripture: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Notice—Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me.” The *King James Version* reads that “all power has been given” to Christ. This explains how we can accomplish that greatest mission—how it isn’t impossible if we are under Christ’s authority and allow His power to work through us. And what will happen when we do so? “Look among the nations and watch—be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you” (Habakkuk 1:5).

Habakkuk here, in context, is talking about the Chaldeans coming against the nation of Judah. God proclaims, in essence, *I’m going to work a Work in your days that you won’t even believe if I tell it to you!*

How important is that promise? It’s important enough that the Apostle Paul repeated it in Antioch to apply to a Work being done in the first century AD, after Jesus’ death and resurrection: “Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you” (Acts 13:41).

The Work is of utmost importance to us as Christians—and we each have our part in it. But we must never forget that *God* is doing that Work through fallible, human instruments. And in order to be usable, we must remain strong: “‘Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ says the LORD; ‘and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,’ says the LORD, ‘and work; for I am with you,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:4).

God gives us the encouragement that the mission is *not* impossible. He tells us to work, but reassures us that He is with us and that He will accomplish that Work.

Dedicated to Our Mission

About 120 ministers, wives, and widows attended the Eastern Ministerial Conference in Charlotte in August 2022. Mr. Weston began the conference by asking the attendees the same question we’re covering in this article: *What is our mission?* He emphasized that we must be doing the Work to the very end, and he reminded us, *We are preparing for the greatest event in all history*, ending his message by reminding us of Jesus’ words, recorded by the Apostle John: “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work’” (John 4:34).

So, how important is this Work to you? How important is it on the world scene? And how dedicated are you to this mission? I remember one scene from the movie *Hacksaw Ridge*. It featured a noncombatant military medic named Dawson Dobbs who was a Seventh-Day Adventist serving in World War II. He received the Medal of Honor for his heroism in saving 75 lives under enemy fire. He had to lower each injured soldier 400 feet from a cliff. Though he also was shot and injured, he still worked so those 75 injured soldiers would not be left behind. The whole regiment had already abandoned the fight against the Japanese in Okinawa, but Dawson stayed there. Though he was injured and had to crawl more than 300 feet, he still risked his life to save others.

As Christians, we are engaged in a different kind of war. Although not a worldly war, we can take inspiration from the example of those who have served with great dedication under fire, even with obstacles and injuries, still wanting to fulfill their mission. Jesus Christ gave us a purpose, a Work,

and a mission, but how do you apply this to your life *personally*? Do you have a personal mission statement? Are you on a committed mission?

We see that, over the millennia, the greatest victories have been accomplished by leaders who were dedicated and committed. Of course, we must practice servant leadership, and God is the greatest Servant of all; He serves everything in the universe. The Father and Jesus Christ have used faithful servants throughout history in the accomplishment of God's Work, throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. God has an organized team working in the Living Church of God, led by the Presiding Evangelist and Council of Elders, supporting so many congregations—the body of Christ—connected together all over the world. And the Living Church of God has stated its mission.

That mission is stated in our Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. If you don't have a copy of the *Living Church of God Official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs*, you can find it on *LCG.org* in the "Members" area. It states the fundamental elements of our mission to go to the world. And for those of you who think every Church of God is basically the same, I urge you to read carefully—I am not saying that there aren't Philadelphia Christians in some other groups, but our mission is distinct.

What Is Your Attitude?

Brethren, we are called to fulfill the greatest mission on Earth. What is your attitude toward that mission? What is your attitude toward the mission Christ has given us? In Jesus' parable of the talents, we see the attitude of the person who was not very committed, the one who hid his talent.

Then he who had received the one talent came and said, "Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours." But his lord answered and said to him, "You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:24–29).

That's the example of the unprofitable servant, and we don't want to fall into that particular category: the lazy servant

who was not committed. The Apostles, on the other hand, were committed to their mission. And what was their mission?

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:4–8).

In the Living Church of God today, we are striving to fulfill that very mission. We are following the example of the first apostles, who went out into all the world. Mr. Rod King, one of our *Tomorrow's World* presenters some years ago, recorded a telecast titled "The Apostles' Prophetic Journeys." They went out into all the world, as we are doing today—but without the benefit of television and the Internet. They were committed to their mission.

Passion for Our Mission

Even worldly leaders demonstrate passion for their missions. Sometimes it's a reaction against an injustice. In the United States, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave an impassioned speech before Congress when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. President George W. Bush roused Congress with his speech on September 20, 2001, nine days after the World Trade Center buildings were destroyed by terrorists and thousands were killed:

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom—the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time—now depends on us. Our nation—this generation—will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.

Of course, the advance of human freedom doesn't depend on Americans or on defeating terrorists. And while we should pray for our leaders and obey their lawful commands,

we should not get involved in their political and military pursuits. We as Christians may admire our leaders for doing the best they can with what they know, but we know that they have been blinded and cannot see what God has allowed us to see. True freedom depends on God, who will soon bring His Kingdom to the earth.

During the Korean War, U.S. General MacArthur wanted to go to every length to defeat the enemy who was holding on to the northern parts of Korea. MacArthur objected to limited war—an objection that led to him being fired by President Harry Truman. In MacArthur’s farewell address to a joint session of the United States Congress, he proclaimed, “In war there can be no substitute for victory.”

We, brethren, are in a spiritual war—and for us there certainly is no substitute for victory. And it is God who *gives us* the victory. We have our part, of course, in overcoming self, Satan, and society. What promises do we have for victory? Consider a few scriptures that give us the encouragement that God *does* and *will* give us the victory.

- What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31).
- But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57).
- These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Yes, God promises us victory and success in our mission. But do we really trust God to give us the victory in accomplishing our mission? We can do our part in various ways, but our attitude is vital. And of course, we need to *know* our mission. If we are going to accomplish the mission, we need to know our mission—and know how we can accomplish the greatest mission on earth.

The Value of a Mission Statement

One way we can be reminded of our mission is to have a mission statement. I gave a sermon several years ago titled “What Is Your Mission Statement?” You can find it online at the *LCG.org* website.

So, what is your *personal* mission statement? I am inspired by the mission statements I’ve heard from our Church programs for younger people. Mr. Jonathan McNair shared with me the mission statement of Living Education as a whole: “The purpose of Living Education is to provide systematic training for members, youth, and ministry of the Living Church of God in the knowledge and understanding of the way of God.”

And the Living Youth Program has a mission statement, which Mr. Weston shared with me: “To bring teams together in a living, learning environment for the purpose of recap-

turing true values and furthering the creation of a culture of purity, honor, and respect among the youth within the Living Church of God and society as a whole.”

Those are simple statements, but if the participants keep them in mind, they will be able to gauge whether or not their activities are supporting the mission. A mission statement holds us accountable for our actions and our choices.

Consider the conflict between Bayer Chemical and the National Resources Defense Council. Bayer’s mission statement is, “Science for a Better Life.” The NRDC used that statement to hold Bayer accountable for its chemicals’ responsibility in the destruction of honeybee colonies where Bayer chemicals are used. The NRDC’s director challenged Bayer in a letter to its CEO: “Bayer has continued to ignore, hide or attack the mounting scientific evidence that ‘neonic’ pesticides are a key factor in the alarming collapse of bee colonies.... Bayer’s stated mission is ‘Science for a Better Life.’ Please heed the science now because there will be no better life without bees. I call on you to stop selling bee-killing neonics immediately” (“Tell Bayer: Stop Killing Our Bees,” *ThePetitionSite.com*).

Is your life fulfilling your personal mission statement? Or could an observer call you out as the NRDC called out Bayer Chemical? Or do you even have a personal mission statement? If you don’t have an answer, perhaps you are not committed to a mission in life.

Citizens with a Mission

Students of American history know that the signers of the Declaration of Independence were committed. Whether they were right or wrong in their rebellion has been debated, but God used that rebellion—and the rebels were committed to their political cause, even seeing it in spiritual terms when they agreed, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

We have a spiritual mission, not a political one. So we should be even more committed to our God and our cause than worldly political leaders are to their own. We can admire them in a way, but we should do even better. Earlier, I mentioned General MacArthur. In his farewell speech at West Point, on May 12, 1962, he reflected on his mission, concluding with these words: “In the evening of my memory always I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes: Duty, Honor, Country. Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps. I bid you farewell.”

No, MacArthur didn’t get it entirely right. “Cross the river”? He didn’t understand his destiny—his future. But he understood duty, honor, and country. We as Christians must carry out our mission with honor, knowing that our citizenship is in a

far better country than can currently be found on planet Earth. Scripture reminds us that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20–21).

Living Sacrifices

Some of you brethren who aren’t old enough to remember MacArthur may remember the March 30, 1981 assassination attempt on U.S. President Ronald Reagan as he was leaving a Washington D.C. hotel after a speech, about to enter his limousine. John Hinckley Jr. fired six shots within 1.7 seconds, with bullets hitting the President, White House Press Secretary James Brady, D.C. police officer Thomas Delahanty, and Secret Service agent Tim McCarthy—who was shot in the abdomen while guarding the President.

What an example of dedication to a mission! And we all have missions—or should. When the President was about to go into surgery to remove the bullet that had lodged within one inch of his heart, he quipped to the doctors, “Please tell me you’re Republicans.” The lead surgeon answered, “Today, Mr. President, we’re all Republicans.” Those doctors had a mission—and their faithfulness to that mission saved the President’s life, giving him health enough to serve for two full terms as President.

The “two-fold” mission statement of the United States Secret Service is “protection of the president, vice president and others; and investigations into crimes against the financial infrastructure of the United States.” Agent McCarthy, along with other agents such as Jerry Parr, who by pushing the President into his limousine prevented him from being shot in the head, carried out this mission. They saved the life of a prominent man.

But we, as Christians, have a mission that involves saving all of humanity. Agents McCarthy and Parr were willing to risk their lives to carry out their mission. Remember what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman brethren: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1–2).

Our Mission as a Church

We can describe our mission individually in many ways. When Jesus was asked which commandment is the greatest, he gave the two “Great Commandments” that summarize the Ten Commandments—and, indeed, the whole law of God: “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love

your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40).

Along with the “Great Commission” that I mentioned at the start of this article, we can meditate on the Work that our Savior has given us to do. We can reflect on how the different aspects of our mission relate to these commands our Savior gave to us. And we should be mindful of the “Sevenfold Commission,” as Dr. Meredith sometimes defined our mission as God’s Church. He wrote about that in his article “The Purpose of God’s Church,” in the May–June 2009 *Living Church News*. Here are those seven points:

- Preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the true name of Jesus Christ.
- Preach the end-time prophecies and the Ezekiel warning to the Israelitish people.
- Feed the flock and build all the members to the stature of Jesus Christ, as best we can.
- Be examples to the Church of God and to the world of Christ’s way of life.
- Learn and practice servant leadership in all our dealings with others.
- Restore original Christianity and all that this implies.
- Build an atmosphere of radiant faith within God’s Church.

Each of those seven points could be a mission statement by itself. Yet we as Christians are called to do all of these and more. Different members of Christ’s body have different strengths and may excel at some of these points more than they do at others, yet they are each vital for God’s Church to carry out its overall mission.

What About You?

The world is full of fools and fanatics with terrible mission statements of terrorism and evil. God has given us the greatest mission statement of all. We are to be peacemakers and to build the faith within God’s Church. God is calling dedicated, committed servants. He is looking for servant leaders who know their mission and who are zealous to fulfill that mission. And thank God that He promises, *I will do this Work*—a promise He is carrying out using fallible human beings like you and me.

So, are you on a mission? Remember that God has called you into the body of Christ to fulfill His Work and to do His will. With His help—and with the indwelling Holy Spirit—we can fulfill that mission, as Scripture confirms. We can say, like Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

Brethren, let us all have the attitude of our Savior: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). Let us be mindful of our incredible mission—and fulfill it with zeal. LN

Why the New King James Version?

While no translation of the Bible is perfect, the main translation used by the Living Church of God has long been the New King James Version. If you've ever wondered why, here's your answer!

By **Wallace G. Smith**

One of the great privileges of being in God's Church is our shared mission to preach the Kingdom of God to the world. And proving the truth of what we say by quoting God's inspired word—the Bible—is a major facet of that mission.

But which Bible?

Careful readers may notice that while the Living Church of God uses many different Bible translations in its articles and publications, we most commonly use the *New King James Version (NKJV)*. Occasionally we receive questions about why this is so and why we do not use other popular versions, such as the *New International Version (NIV)*, beyond occasional references.

A look into the history of Bible translations in English and the inherent challenges of translating the Bible from its original languages helps to illuminate the answer to those questions.

The Challenge of Translating the Bible

Jesus Christ explicitly promised that His words would not pass away (Matthew 24:35), and such promises apply to the entirety of God's inspired word (Isaiah 40:8). So we in the Living Church of God believe that, in their original writing (often called the *autograph*) the words recorded by the biblical authors were perfect and inerrant—written under God's inspiration through the Holy Spirit and completely true and reliable (2 Peter 1:20–21; Proverbs 30:5; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

Yet studying that word in the modern day—many centuries after the original words were written—involves multiple challenges. One is the human chain of transmission; as copies multiplied over the centuries, errors and omissions crept in. A great deal of scholarship has been devoted to determining the true words among the different variations that have been passed on through the years. Thankfully, those “variations” change very little of the meaning—so the vast majority of the Bible's message is utterly untouched by the small differences in the various copies. For more information on the faithfulness of the Bible's transmission, see our booklet *The Bible: Fact or Fiction?*, by Dr. Douglas Winnail. God's word has, indeed, been faithfully preserved.

Still, the small differences that do exist require translators to make certain decisions. For example, which collections of ancient texts should be preferred over others? Should the oldest known copies be trusted more, even though there may be very few such sources—sometimes only one? Or should the more common readings be trusted more, since the texts reflected in a small number of copies are more likely to have originated later in the history of copy-making? Or are the rare, older texts more likely to be correct in some cases, and the majority of texts more likely correct in others?

And then there is the problem of translation itself. Setting aside the fact that the Bible's original languages—mostly Hebrew and Greek—have changed over the centuries, most of us read Bibles translated into our own languages: English, Spanish, French, German, and many others.

God does not promise anywhere that later translations of His inspired original words would be perfect—in fact, perfect translation is an impossible task. Languages are rich and complex, and it is generally impossible to translate perfectly all the words of one language into the words of another. And the different cultures behind the languages have great effect as well. A phrase that made perfect sense in first-century Judea may be utter nonsense in twenty-first-century Europe. (To see why, reverse the timing and consider how the modern English phrase “It's raining cats and dogs,” or the modern Spanish idiom “*Hablar sin pelos en la lengua*”—“To speak without hairs on your tongue”—would seem to a first-century reader.) So, even when clear words can be found, translators must sometimes make judgment calls between communicating the words or the meaning of the original text.

The Benefits of the “Old” King James Version

Early in the modern era of God's Work, the Church used the tried-and-true *King James Version (KJV)* of the Bible, sometimes called the “Authorized Version.” Completed in 1611 and revised in the 1700s, the *KJV* is still one of the most popular Bibles in the English-speaking world today. It is *not* perfect—indeed, as mentioned, no translation is—but it was a remarkable work for its time. Understanding a bit about the “old” *King James Version* will help illustrate some of the reasons why we tend to use the *New King James Version*.

Working more than 400 years ago, the researchers and translators of the *King James Version* took an admirable approach. First, they sought “formal equivalence” in their translation. That is, while some seek to paraphrase the ancient languages in a manner that seeks to communicate the *meaning* but greatly changes the words to do so, the *KJV* translators sought to create as close to a word-for-word translation as they could. While this might make some of the statements confusing in English, they valued the idea that God inspired the words He did for a reason, and that the reader is best served by a translation as close as possible to the original words, rather than the translator’s interpretation of the words’ meaning—though, of course, some level of interpretation is often unavoidable.

Second, the translators went back to the most authoritative and trustworthy copies of the original Greek and Hebrew resources they could reference: Erasmus’ sixteenth-century Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Old Testament. While they often kept the language of older English versions (the *Bishop’s Bible*, the *Geneva Bible*, and others), they diligently compared those works to the Greek and Hebrew resources they had—as well as to their copies of the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint, and their copies of the Latin Vulgate, a fourth-century translation of the Bible into Latin. Faithfulness to the original languages was a driving goal.

Finally, the translators also sought to create a *beautiful* work. They recognized that the words under their stewardship were God’s own words, so they strove to ensure that the English-language translation they were creating conveyed an appropriate majesty. The level of artistic craftsmanship the translators achieved is readily experienced in the psalms, where the poetic rendering of passages such as Psalm 23 stand as timeless expressions of praise, piety, and emotion, undiminished by the passage of centuries. Some have even suggested that Shakespeare was consulted in the translation of the psalms, though proof remains elusive.

While many believe that the *thee’s*, *thou’s*, and *ye’s* of the *KJV* are remnants from the days of its translation, those words were, in fact, *already* old and archaic by 1611. Yet, the translators saw not only that they added a sense of majesty and “high language” to the text, but also that they helped make a grammatical distinction no longer present in English. “You” in English can be singular or plural, unlike, say, in Greek, which uses different words for the singular and plural versions of “you.” But by using words such as “thee” for the singular and reserving “you” for the plural, the *KJV* translators craftily killed two birds with one stone: added elegance and increased grammatical clarity. (Read Luke 22:31–32 in the *KJV* to see the difference.)

This is why, in the early years of the Work, both its accuracy and its widespread availability made the *KJV* a wise choice for the Church.

Not Without Its Problems

Yet the *KJV* is not without its problems. There are some regrettable mistakes in its text that have confused many over the years. As just one example, it translates the Greek word for “Passover” as “Easter” in Acts 12:4—an error corrected in many later translations.

Other mistakes are not the fault of the translators and editors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and have only been revealed by later archaeological discoveries that have shed new light on the ancient languages. For example, 1 Kings 10:22 in the *KJV* mentions “peacocks,” translated from the Hebrew word *tūkkîy*. Since then, more has been learned about ancient Hebrew and other Semitic languages, and we now know that the word means “monkeys.”

While the *KJV* translation was remarkable, and continues to be helpful to many today, we simply have the benefit of an additional 400 years of research and discovery that the translators in 1611, and later editors, did not have. Also, in those 400 years, the English language has changed in many ways, causing some words to disappear from usage, and—even more challenging—causing other words to change meaning.

Consider that you might pick up a *KJV* translation and read John 2:6, where you will see a reference to pots big enough to contain “two or three firkins” of water. But who today knows how large a “firkin” is? Similarly, 2 Chronicles 11:12 speaks of “every several city” and 2 Chronicles 26:21 says King Uzziah lives “in a several house.” But how many people today would know that these mean “every individual city” and “an isolated house”? And while the *KJV* may speak of “ouches of gold” (which sounds painful), a modern reader may not realize that it is speaking of “settings of gold.”

The more challenging case of words remaining in English but changing in meaning can be illustrated by 1 Thessalonians 4:15. There, in the *KJV*, we are told that those who are alive at Christ’s return shall not “prevent” those who are asleep from rising. Is Paul saying that the living won’t somehow “stop” the dead from being resurrected? No. The meaning of the word “prevent” has shifted in 400 years. In modern English, we would say that those are alive will not “precede” or “come before” them.

These are only a few examples, but they should be enough to illustrate that as remarkable as the “old” *King James Version* is, the passage of centuries meant it could benefit from an update.

Enter the New King James Version

The translators and editors of the *New King James Version*, published in full in 1982 with a handful of revisions in later years, sought to maintain the accuracy, beauty, and clarity of the “old” *King James Version* while updating it based on the latest scholarship and modern language usage.

As a result, readers familiar with the *KJV* will often recognize wording in the *NKJV*, yet they will also find the *NKJV*

easier to read while also reflecting newer research and discoveries. And in their work to update the *KJV* text and take advantage of the best of modern scholarship, the translators and editors of the *NKJV* actively sought to avoid some of the mistaken philosophies that tend to cause issues in other modern translations, such as the *New International Version*.

For example, many modern translations tend to lean very heavily on ancient Greek texts often called the “Alexandrian texts,” such as the *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*. While these manuscripts—dating back to the fourth century—are among the oldest large collections of New Testament text, they are also problematic. They show signs of errors and editing, for example. The *Codex Vaticanus* even attests to the frustration some of its scribes felt toward their fellow workers who were apparently not following older texts, with a note in its margin next to Hebrews 1:3 in which a scribe admonishes one of his coworkers, “Fool and knave, leave the old reading and do not change it!”

Another example of the faulty nature of these texts is the complete omission of the ending of Mark in the *Codex Vaticanus*, which ends the gospel at Mark 16:8 and includes none of Jesus’ resurrection appearances. Some modern scholars take this to mean that verses 9–20 of Mark 16 were not originally part of the Bible. Yet if one looks closely at the pages on which the *Codex Vaticanus* was written, one will see that

God does not promise anywhere that later translations of His inspired original words would be perfect—in fact, perfect translation is an impossible task. Languages are rich and complex, and it is generally impossible to translate perfectly all the words of one language into the words of another.

there is a completely blank column where those verses are supposed to be—in fact, the only blank column in the entire codex—at a time when vellum, the material on which these ancient works were written, was expensive and never wasted. Many have concluded that the scribe intended to write the rest of Mark there, but never did.

Even so, while most of the more modern translations lean too heavily on Alexandrian texts, they are still significant texts. Sometimes they may get something right that the *Textus Receptus* or the Byzantine texts, which were the primary sources for the *KJV*, get wrong.

The *NKJV* considers this possibility by providing detailed notes on its pages, pointing out when different ancient

texts give different readings. This helps to provide the Bible student with *more* information, not less.

And the *NKJV* also avoids the tendency of many modern translations to over-interpret the ancient text. Like the “old” *KJV*, the *NKJV* leans more toward a “word for word” approach instead of a “paraphrase” approach, which helps to protect against introducing translator bias into the translation.

Still, we must always remember that there is *no* perfect translation—not the *KJV*, and neither the *NKJV*. While the *NKJV* fixes some errors of the *KJV*, it retains others such as the *Comma Johanneum*, words inserted by ancient writers into 1 John 5:7–8 that are often used to support the Trinity heresy. Both the *KJV* and the *NKJV* continue to retain those uninspired words (though the *NKJV*, to its credit, footnotes them as problematic), while the *New International Version*, for instance, does not. And the *NKJV* introduces a few of its own new mistakes or confusions. For instance, Galatians 2:20 in the *KJV* plainly notes that it is “by the faith of the Son of God” that we live—that is, the very faith Christ had within Him—while the *NKJV* says it is “by faith in the Son of God.” A subtle but important difference!

One Inspired Word, Many Translations

As long as it is a solid translation, relying on one main version for our publications—whether the *New King James Version* in English, the *Reina Valera* in Spanish, or the *Louis Segond Le Sainte Bible* in French—helps to ensure that our teachings are consistently communicated, orderly, and easy for our readers to investigate and verify. And the *New King James Version* is certainly a solid translation in English: readable, highly accurate, based on sound translation principles and scholarship, and offering additional notes and comments to help students get the most out of their study.

Yet, because there is no perfect translation, the Church will occasionally quote from a different version that either translates the original language of a particular verse more accurately than the *NKJV* or better communicates the sense of a passage to make it clearer. In doing so, not only do we follow the pattern of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong—who occasionally referred to translations such as *Moffatt* or *Fenton* to help make his points clear—but also the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament. Careful research shows that those writers, when quoting the Old Testament, would sometimes use Hebrew-language copies of their day, sometimes use the Greek Septuagint, and sometimes even paraphrase the Old Testament in their own way as they were led by the Holy Spirit.

Regardless of the translation we use in our materials—whether the *NKJV* or any other—our goal is always the same: to make the truth of God plainly understood. (LN)



How to Pray

This is the second of four articles in our ongoing “how to” series, expounding on basic approaches to one of the spiritual disciplines: Bible study, prayer, fasting, and meditation. We hope that, whether you are new to the faith or have been walking in the way of God for some time, you will find these articles beneficial.

By **Jonathan McNair**

“**N**ow it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1).

It may seem surprising that Jesus Christ’s disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. They knew what prayer was—the Law, Prophets, and Writings include many examples of prayer, and they saw people at prayer in their daily lives. We read, for example, that Jesus used the illustration of two men going up to the temple to pray to teach a lesson (Luke 18:10).

Clearly, the concept of prayer was not new to them. But perhaps they recognized that they needed to hear directly from their Teacher how and why prayer should be practiced. Perhaps they saw that, for so many people around them, the practice of prayer seemed empty and even vainglorious.

Many could say the same, couldn’t they?

Prayer is part of our culture, at least for those who adhere to one religion or another. But when we are called to understand the real God, it becomes clear that most of humanity, throughout most of history, has been praying to a false god—or gods. Yet here we are, called by God just like Christ’s disciples. And as they were convicted of the reality of Christ, believing the truth that He was the Son of God, they wanted to communicate with God the Father just as He did.

This is our starting point. We know the true God. We are convicted of His existence and of His plan for our salvation through His son Jesus Christ. And that inspires us to acknowledge Him and communicate with Him.

But, as the disciples of Christ asked, how should we pray?

What Is Prayer?

Very simply, prayer is communication with God. We read God’s words for guidance and instruction, for inspiration and encouragement, for reproof and correction (2 Timothy 3:16). In response, we take the time to humbly approach Him and communicate with Him. We talk to Him about what we’ve learned, what’s on our minds, and what concerns us, just as followers of Christ have always done.

For example, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6–7). Paul coached the brethren at Philippi, giving them guidance as to what to say to God and how it would benefit them. By mentioning supplication and thanksgiving, Paul added two more nuances that we would do well to notice.

Some examples of prayer in the Bible reflect especially strong urgency and emotion. For example, as he dedicated his brand-new temple to God, King Solomon implored God to hear the supplications of His people in times of adversity or distress. “Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God.... And may You hear the supplications of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive” (2 Chronicles 6:19–21). There are times when we go before God in prayer to entreat His mercy and His help.

Daniel prayed for his people because of the national sins leading to their captivity. We read, “Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:3). He was praying to God for mercy, compassion, and forgiveness.

In the New Testament, supplication is often paired with prayer. In Ephesians 6, Paul compares the physical armor of a soldier to different aspects of a Christian's spiritual defenses. He concludes the picture by emphasizing the part that prayer and supplication play in the spiritual battle we wage. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the

Recommended Resources on Prayer

- *Twelve Keys to Answered Prayer*, booklet
- "Teach Us to Pray," sermon by Mr. Rod McNair
- "Seven Keys to Answered Prayer," sermon by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith
- "How to Pray When You Are Discouraged," March-April 2003 LCN
- "Power in Prayer," November-December 2015 LCN

word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:17-18).

While we should go to God with our concerns, our worries, and our pleading for mercy and help, our communication with Him should also include another component—giving thanks. Many of the psalms that we sing at Sabbath services reflect that spirit of thankfulness to God. For example, Psalm 92 is subtitled, "A Song for the Sabbath day," and reads, "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High" (Psalm 92:1). We sing songs of praise and thanksgiving at Sabbath services for the same reason that we express thankfulness in our prayers to God; focusing our mind on the God who gave us life and breath and is guiding our life toward success elevates our thoughts beyond the trials and tribulations that can so easily consume us.

When we spend time on our knees in thanksgiving to God, we open our hearts and minds to Him, allowing Him to encourage and strengthen us. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote the following:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:15-17).

As we do this, we're reflecting the same mind as the 24 elders, who in the future will say, "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned" (Revelation 11:17).

Up to this point, we've focused on the "why" and the "what" of prayer. Next, let's focus on the "how."

Key #1—Pray with Faith

Hebrews 11 is well known for its focus on the importance of faith. In its first verse, we read, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In the next verses, we read, "For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (v. 2-3). Then we come to the key: "But without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is" (v. 6).

Earlier, we acknowledged that believing in the true God is paramount to having meaningful prayers. If we are not striving for genuine faith in God, our prayers are simply an exercise without conviction.

Key #2—Pray with Sincerity and Fervency

When we begin to read Psalm 5, we can clearly sense David's sincerity: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry" (vv. 1-2).

We must strive to have that same sincerity. Do we believe in what we're doing when we pray? Do we believe in God? Do we believe in the way of life that we read about in His word? Do we believe in the Work that He is doing through His Church today? If not, praying with sincerity will be a real challenge.

Christ taught His disciples the importance of private prayer. He said, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:6). Though on occasion we may pray in the presence of several people or more—at meals or at Sabbath services, for example—most of our time in prayer should be in private. When we are alone with God, we don't need to worry about how we look or sound to others. We can completely focus on God and approach Him with humble sincerity.

Yet another key to effective prayer and how to go about it hinges on our attention to Bible study.

Key #3—Pray with an Understanding of the Bible

When we make new acquaintances, it can be difficult to have a meaningful conversation. So, we engage in "small talk" to get

to know them better. Little by little, we learn about issues that are important to them. The more we get to know them, the easier it is to have deeper and more satisfying conversations. The same could be said about our communication with God. The way we come to know Him better is by studying His mind in print, the Bible.

The more we are familiar with God's word, His purpose for mankind, and His will for us, the more depth is added to our prayers to Him. And when we properly fear Him, keep His laws, and seek His will, we come into harmony with His mind. We read, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever" (Psalm 111:10). We can talk with God about what is important to Him and about what is important to us, just as we would with a friend.

Key #4—Pray with a Repentant and Forgiving Heart

Another component stands out in the instruction Christ gave to His disciples about prayer. He said, "And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4). You'll notice that this presents a two-part challenge. On the one hand, we are reminded of our shortcomings and the need for God's forgiveness. On the other hand, we must not forget the importance of forgiving others. In other words, we pray with a repentant and forgiving heart.

We can see how that mindset shapes our prayers. Our awareness of our own shortcomings engenders humility. And God's insistence on approaching Him with a mindset toward our neighbors that mirrors His toward us helps us inculcate that aspect of His character.

Key #5—Pray with Persistence

Christ wants His followers to pray with persistence, not losing heart. And He gave an example with a parable: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me'" (Luke 18:2–5). And then Christ arrived at the key to the parable: "Then the Lord said, 'Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?'" (Luke 18:6–7).

Just like the widow, we are often dogged by personal trials that seem to drag on. And we can and should bring these trials to God, asking Him for help. But including a problem or even a request for help in a prayer to God is

not like waving a magic wand. God is not our "genie" who is subject to our demands. He wants to hear us express our hopes and dreams, and also our concerns and questions. Our prayer should be consistent and persistent—regular, and truly involving God in life's challenges that confront us—in faith, but also in the conviction that God knows what is in our best interest. As Paul wrote to the brethren in Rome,

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:26–28).

God's Stamp of Approval

Prayer is a vital component of our relationship with God. It is a companion to Bible study, fasting, meditation, and active obedience, completing the process of learning. A teacher can know that a student understands when he or she responds. And student responses rehearse the lessons knowing that they have learned, putting the instruction in their own words and applying it to their lives. We can come before God knowing that He is not only the One who brought us into existence, but also the One who called us, opening our minds to the reality of His existence and His plan, which is unknown to most of humanity.

But let us not forget the One whose sacrifice allows us to come before God the Father. At the Father's right hand, Christ hears us, knows us, and deeply desires us to be one with Him and the Father. Each time we pray, we acknowledge this inspiring and encouraging fact.

As the time of Christ's crucifixion was approaching, He said to His disciples, "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23–24).

How thankful we can be that Jesus Christ gives us the honor of coming before His Father, the Almighty God, in His own name—with His own stamp of approval. With that knowledge firmly in mind, we hearken to Paul's words in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

To that, we can sincerely say, "Amen." ^(LH)

From Living Education: The Work/Study Program

By **Kaleb Johnson**, 2022–23 Living Education Student

The Living Church of God Headquarters employs Living Education students each year, giving them an opportunity to serve in God’s Work and offering them unique experiences. Both first- and second-year students work at Headquarters in many different departments. Have you ever wondered just what the students in Charlotte do in the Work/Study Program? This article will answer that question by describing some student roles available at LCG Headquarters.

The Living Education Department

This past year, Nathan Kroon served as the LE Department’s Media Associate. He was the Living Education Department’s



Nathan Kroon

primary video editor, official event photographer, and much more. His roles included creating LE’s social media posts, producing LE podcasts (“Digging Deeper” and “Brother to Brother”), formatting LE’s weekly newsletter, writing

and posting summaries of LE forums, editing lecture videos for LE’s online courses, creating surveys and quizzes, and taking photos.

“A bunch of different things get thrown at you,” Nathan said. “Mr. McNair is sometimes unpredictable with what he’ll throw at you next—keeps it exciting, but it also can be challenging. I think video editing has been most fun, especially when I am able to be more creative with it. But that requires having a lot of material to work with.”

Alongside Nathan, I served as the LE Department’s Staff Assistant. I performed many support tasks for projects in the Living Education purview, such as creating videos and slide-shows for events and making scripture and quote indexes for



Kaleb Johnson

new study courses. I also wrote and posted forum summaries and posts describing student life, created LE’s weekly online quiz, used Google Analytics to “Google analyze” things, provided support in video editing, and assisted with other ongoing projects. It is

a lot of creative work—I’ve had the chance to write, create storyboards for videos, and brainstorm ideas. It is quite different from the experiences I’ve had in engineering—almost more challenging, as I had to be creative and think outside the box.

The Mail Processing Department

The Mail Processing Department forms a vital part of God’s Work. MPD sends out booklets, semi-annual letters, *Bible Study Course* lessons, and *Tomorrow’s World* magazines to thousands of people worldwide. The department ensures that everyone receives their literature in a timely manner and reduces cost wherever possible to help God’s Work be efficient and effective. This year, two students worked in MPD.

Jontavius Mincey worked as a Mail Clerk Assistant, helping MPD to meet its daily goals. His tasks included stuffing envelopes by hand, operating a mail-inserter machine, and delivering mail to employees in the office. Recently, those in MPD worked tirelessly to send out semi-annual letters. While he’d already gained experience doing similar things, Jontavius learned some unique skills, like how to operate a mail-inserter—which apparently involves a lot of unjamming. Jontavius’ main roles in MPD were inserting certain mail items by hand, organizing pallets of outgoing mail, operating the mail-inserter, sorting and delivering incoming mail, and assisting with loading and unloading deliveries.

Working in MPD is both fun and challenging. “If you make a mistake with the mail,” Jontavius said, “you have to go back and redo a lot. That is a lot of extra work and irritating.”



Jontavius Mincey

According to Jontavius, the most fun aspect of the job is “probably being around Mr. Bonjour,” MPD’s Director. “He makes everything a lot funnier and more enjoyable to be around.”

Dawn Rude worked as a Mail Assistant in the Mail Processing Department, helping to perform labor-intensive

tasks like stuffing envelopes, packaging literature, sorting literature requests, burning DVDs for delivery, and assisting with the labeling machine—all of which allows the department to run smoothly. She also operated the mail inserter, though she “didn’t like the fact that it jammed so much.”

For Dawn, the most challenging aspect of her job was probably “staying focused when you don’t have anyone to



Dawn Rude

talk to or headphones to listen to something. It can be a little repetitive, and that can get to you.” She most appreciated the social opportunities that working in MPD affords. “Sometimes,” she says, “we’ll just be sitting there, stuffing envelopes with booklets or DVDs with someone next to you, and we’ll

just have some pretty crazy conversations. It’s nice.”

The Mail Processing Department operates just like a high-functioning business: it is about getting results in a cost-effective and fast way. Students gain experience working in a fast-paced environment, operating machinery, meeting deadlines, and simply performing manual labor like inserting envelopes. All of this experience can directly translate into countless warehouse and production-related jobs. There is, essentially, an endless amount of work students could do in MPD, and every bit of it is valuable.

The Maintenance Department

Andrew McNair and David Smith both worked as Maintenance Assistants, maintaining the Headquarters building and grounds and assisting on renovation projects. Their roles included loading the equipment truck for Charlotte Sabbath services every week, inspecting fire extinguishers and emergency exit signs every month, removing trash from



Andrew McNair

the office grounds, and much more.

Prior to accepting this position, Andrew had experience with carpentry and renovation, but he learned many new skills in this position and developed greater proficiency with skills he already had. He appreciated the opportunity to learn more about painting and carpentry projects in this position. David did not have a great deal of experience with carpentry or electrical work before working with the Maintenance Department, but now he has developed skills in both of these areas and is confident in his ability to “build a wall with two-by-fours and drywall.”

Andrew and David agreed that the most challenging part of the job was the lack of consistency. “Some days it’s non-stop work,” David said, “and then others you jump from one task to another. What you’re doing one day may or may not be completely separate from what you’re doing the next day.” Andrew added that it was difficult “not really knowing how long we’ll be doing a project or what the next step will be. Who knows? It could be a week-long project or twenty minutes. It can be all over the place.”

But there were certainly fun parts of the job, too. “Sometimes, you get to hit things out with hammers,” David said. “That’s really lowbrow, but it’s the most fun part. One time there was a piece of furniture that we needed to fit in the dumpster, so we got to hit it with a sledgehammer to make it smaller.” Seeing the fruits of their labor was also gratifying, as Andrew noted when he recounted “organizing the tools and stuff [in the maintenance corner of the warehouse storage

area], because there are a lot of random things back there. It was great to finally see it all sorted out. There was a lot of chaos back there.”



David Smith

But their renovation projects took Andrew and David beyond the Headquarters grounds, as well. For example, “we went to the girls’ dorm and fixed

random things,” David said. “We fixed the alarm by doing the high-skill labor of replacing some batteries. We fixed a leak in the roof that was causing water damage. We tried to fix the

downstairs bathroom, but that's a problem that needs actual plumbers."

As Maintenance Assistants, both David and Andrew spent time learning new skills and honing those they already possessed. Working in the Maintenance Department involves a variety of projects and tasks, but all of those projects are worthwhile experiences in a hands-on type of job.

The Accounting Department

The Living Education program aims to provide students with valuable work experience and also assist the Church in doing God's Work. Part of doing God's Work involves accounting, which is very complex in modern times. Thus, having stu-



Kezia Ciesielka

dents work part-time is a great benefit to the Accounting Department, and it also gives students valuable experience that is in high demand in the working world.

Over the past year, students Kezia Ciesielka and Rachel Price worked in the Accounting Department. Kezia

served as an Accounting Clerk; she is considering studying accounting and used this opportunity to experience the field, learning the ins and outs of business and accounting systems and using software like Great Plains and Kwiktag.

Kezia's main roles as an Accounting Clerk involved processing invoices, ensuring that expenditures came from correct accounts, reviewing reimbursement requests, and classifying expenses. Sometimes, it gets stressful, Kezia says, "when we are coming up on a deadline and I think, *There is no way I can do all this*, and it all has to be done exactly correctly, because if I mess up, this is money we're talking about. I can't mess up. But then I just tell myself, *I can only do what I can do*." At other times, though, it can be therapeutic. "Getting to sit down," she says, "with a good bit of things to go through, when you're not super stressed out because it doesn't need to be done super quick, with your cup of tea, making sure everything is in the right spot—it is very satisfying, because everything goes where it belongs."

Rachel Price also served in Accounting, working as an archivist to, among other things, create digital copies of legal documents. She worked on a multi-year project that involves taking old paper documents, scanning them, and organizing them so that they can be readily accessed. She has worked primarily in her office, with "Scanly"—that's what she's named the scanner—and Patrick, a possum hide she purchased for a



Rachel Price

Renaissance Fair. For Rachel, the most challenging part of the job was "not shutting your brain off," she said, "because you are scanning and that's a very mundane activity, but you really can't just shut off your brain while you're doing it, because you are naming these files, and if you name one wrong,

it'll be really hard to find. That'll just bring issues in the future if it's ever needed."

The TV Department

Madeline McNair worked as a Technical and Administrative Assistant for the Television Department as a first-year student, though she worked in the television studio prior to her enrollment in LE.

Madeline primarily cleaned the audio of the telecast recordings using Adobe Audition, removing intrusive background sounds picked up by the high-quality microphones. This requires a very attuned ear to pick up even the smallest clicks and rustles in an audio track. She also began making the closed captioning for telecasts, backing up video files and removing extraneous copies to save storage on hard drives, and finding wartime videos and images for the telecasts to use.

Audio correction can be time consuming, Madeline says. "It is kind of hard doing repetitive work like that—it takes a



Madeline McNair

while to go through. It's a 30-minute program, and it takes longer than that to go through each one." However, she truly appreciates being a part of telecast production, "because the TV studio is a separate building than the office is, so it is a different experience. You really see a lot of the actual telecast pro-

duction; I've seen them film a couple of them, which is interesting. It is interesting to see how much work goes into the production process."

When asked if she'd like to share a story from her job, Madeline gave a heartwarming "candid camera" account. "One time we were waiting for a telecast to start because

there was some delay,” she remembered, “and Mr. Ames was going to be filming. And he was just sitting, just waiting, and he started singing a hymn, just to himself. But he was mic’d, so everyone was hearing him just sing a hymn to himself.”

The Records & Information Services Department

In addition to serving in custodial work around the building, Lauren Sena also served in the Records & Information Services Department as Assistant Receptionist in the Headquarters lobby, taking calls and managing the front desk while the primary Receptionist was unavailable. This gave her a wealth of experience in leading conversations that often



Lauren Sena

took considerable patience and maturity to manage.

The most challenging part of her job as Assistant Receptionist, Lauren said, was “the unpredictable aspect of not knowing if the person who’s calling is going to be nice—not knowing if they’re going to take whatever they’re going through out on you—and then knowing how to respond to that, having this very professional persona and reaction to everything. I’d never had a job before, so, this was my first experience with that. That was very interesting and very challenging to work with.”

On the other hand, “you also get little old ladies who call and are just so thankful that we’re preaching,” Lauren said fondly. “They thank you a million times, even though you only picked up the phone. They’re so nice, and they’re like, *We love you so much. We’re always praying for you.* Having those interactions is really valuable.”

Along with the irate and the thankful, there were callers who could only be described as strange. “I got this caller one time,” Lauren remembered, “who was telling me that he was a prophet and could predict the future, and that when he’s riding his bicycle on the highway, the birds just start singing to him specifically, and the entire creation acknowledges his presence. He said, *You need to tell Mr. Weston that the earth is going to shake from this date to this date.* And I was like, *OK, well, you have a great day.* The dates have passed—the earth did not shake. That was a very entertaining call. I have to wonder if he even remembers that he said that.”

The Library and the Editorial Department

Rachel White worked as a librarian for the Living Education Department and as a transcriber for the Editorial Depart-



Rachel White

ment. Rachel also helped with Living Education projects, such as the “Germany in Prophecy” course. As librarian, Rachel’s duties included checking books in and out, keeping the library in order, and finding books and music for the library’s visitors. She also assisted the LE Department by trans-

cribing videos and finding resources—such as quotations and photos—for *LCGEducation.org* and periodically updating LE’s bulletin boards and schedules.

Rachel’s Editorial work mainly involved transcribing different sermons and sermonettes to be distributed, and this was uniquely challenging: “One of the things I’ve had the most trouble with is the transcribing and trying to get what the speakers say to make sense in writing,” she said. “Everything they say makes sense, but it doesn’t always translate to paper. Trying to get what they say to work on paper is much more challenging than you would think.”

For Rachel, the most fun part of being HQ’s librarian has been setting up book displays at the library’s front desk. “I like setting up displays, especially when there is nothing specifically that needs to go up there,” she says, “because I get to decide what category of book I want to display. I did displays on the Psalms and Acts. We have a bunch of different books on the brain and how being religious affects your brain, and I’d like to do a display for that, too.”

Rachel also performed the duties of an archivist as part of an ongoing project to archive artifacts of recent Church history. “I found a folder in the archives that said, ‘Heresy Version,’” she said, relating her most memorable experience in that role. “I was like, ‘What is this?’ And so I opened it up and it had letters between Mr. Tkach and other ministers, and different stuff Worldwide was putting out during the apostasy. It was really interesting. The way it was worded was very confusing—changing doctrines and changing the mindset. So, yeah—I found the ‘Heresy Version’ folder.”

In going through all these departments, it seems remarkable how the Church integrates a different number of students every year so fluidly. No one sits around; no one is unused. Every department has basic work that students are able to accomplish, freeing up the more experienced employees to work on longer-term and more complicated or demanding projects. Living Education’s Work/Study program is quite extraordinary—and the more students help and contribute, the more God’s Work can do! (LN)



TITUS 2:3-5

Woman to Woman

A Woman's Rights

By **Janth B. English**

We often hear cries from today's media about women's rights. Certainly, women do have rights, but of what rights is the media speaking? Many want women to take their "rightful" place as military combatants, police officers, construction workers, chief executive officers, governors, and all other previously male-dominated positions. The media has been most vocal about a "woman's right to choose," which is a sanitized way to say that a woman should have the right to kill her unborn child. As a Christian woman, I do not want these "rights" that society is trying to bestow upon me.

From a historical perspective, society has jumped from one ditch into another with respect to the rights of women. God made the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, to be lifelong companions as husband and wife. He created Adam before Eve, but Eve was not an afterthought. God knew before He made the man that He would also create a female counterpart for the procreation of mankind (Genesis 1:27-28). Eve was to be a helper for Adam, and she was comparable to him in every way. Biblically, women are not inferior, as characterized by some cultures, nor superior, as portrayed by so many Hollywood movies. God intended women to be treated with love and respect by their fathers and husbands; however, history witnesses that this did not happen very often.

Now, it seems that Western society is trying to right the past evils of mistreatment of women by pushing women to be more like men. Perhaps the thinking is that being male is more advantageous than being female, so in order to be more equal, women should be more male. Whatever the case, women are expected to pursue careers and share the role of breadwinner, which takes them away from their families. This, of course, means that men are seen as equally responsible for tasks that were traditionally done by women.

Just as we see the masculinization of women, we also see the feminization of men. The reversal of male and female roles is all around us; it is just another example of mankind discarding God's way of life. All types of modern media are replete with men at home caring for the children and women on the job managing men. Young people are growing up thinking

that this is the natural order of things. No wonder there are so many broken homes—no wonder there is such confusion about gender!

The Power of Homemakers

Even the word "rights" now has a negative and combative connotation, so in this article we will talk about God-given roles and responsibilities that should shape a woman's expectations. Society has painted the traditional roles of wife and mother—with all the responsibilities they entail—as menial, beneath the dignity and intelligence of most women. They want women to share equally in providing for and leading the family. They promised fulfillment and happiness through careers, but this *has not happened*. According to research published in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, homemakers are generally happier than women who work full time (D. Hamplová, "Does Work Make Mothers Happy?" 2018, vol. 20, pp. 471-497). No, thank you, society. I prefer God's way.

Western society would have women in the workplace earning a wage, but God says women should expect to be financially supported by their husbands and to become homemakers (1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 2:4-5). A homemaker is a vitally important role in the family, in the community, and in society at large. Far from being mundane and unskilled, it requires all the expertise of a manager, purser, administrative assistant, personnel director, arbiter, teacher, and nurse's aide, to name a few. Women should never allow themselves to feel put down or apologetic about being homemaker; it is a most noble profession. Being a homemaker provides women with the perfect environment in which to build godly character and wisdom. By managing their own households well, women are preparing to rule nations and manage angels, just as God intends (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

One of the main reasons for marriage and family is that God desires godly offspring (Malachi 2:15) and teaching the next generation is a huge responsibility. Parents have a godly responsibility to rear their children in the admonition of God and teach them His way of life (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 22:6). Much of the day-to-day instruction and application of God's law has been the mother's domain because, as a homemaker, she has naturally spent more time with the children. Women can expect to play an important role as teacher and guide of their

children. However, many women spend most of their waking hours outside the home, and this vital responsibility to teach and train the next generation does not receive the attention it deserves. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 57.4 percent of women worked outside the home in 2019. This was up from 43.3 percent in 1970. The trend is going in the wrong direction, and we see the impact in broken families and lawless children who become lawless adults (Proverbs 29:15).

Can you imagine a world in which women as homemakers consistently teach their children values that will benefit them for a lifetime? Can you imagine the impact on neighborhoods and society? What impact would that have in the classroom or for the police? Children would learn to submit to authority, to treat others with respect (Matthew 7:12), and not to steal—and the impact on society would be monumental. People could take walks downtown without fear. Insurance rates would decrease because there would be virtually no theft or vandalism. These are only a few of the positive benefits; I'm sure you can think of many more.

Feminine Character

I know that this is Satan's society and that many Christian women living in it will not be able to fully live up to these expectations. I was not able to do so when my children were young, and I worked outside the home. The truth is that Christian women working outside the home have a greater burden to bear, because they still have the responsibilities of homemaker and mother. Of course, things will not go as perfectly as you would like, but God is not unaware of your struggles. As you work in support of your family, don't buy into the satanic lie

that women need to work outside the home to be fulfilled. Ask God to help you, to inspire you, and to bless your efforts to fulfill all your responsibilities—and keep His perspective in mind.

Christian women should reflect the feminine character that God intended. More often than not, society portrays successful women as brash, egocentric, vain people who dress provocatively to attract attention. Such ungodly attitudes and styles are often mimicked by women in every age group. However, God expects His daughters to have a gentle and quiet nature, as opposed to a brash one (1 Peter 3:3–4; 2 Corinthians 10:1). Godly women will have outgoing concern for others—godly love—as opposed to being self-centered. Christian women should set an example of modesty in their decorum and dress, and not be provocative (1 Timothy 2:9). In fact, kindness, goodness, and gentleness are aspects of God's character, which He wants all of His people to emulate (Galatians 5:22–23). God has given women a wonderful opportunity to display His nature in the role He has ordained for them, and we should eagerly desire to do so.

Men and women are created in God's image with equal potential to be born into the Family of God (2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26–29). Christian women have God-given roles and responsibilities that are righteous expectations. Among these are the expectations to be keepers at home, to teach and educate their children, and to reflect God's character in a uniquely feminine way, to name a few. Don't allow society to make you feel apologetic for pursuing the path that God has designed for you, the path that ultimately leads to true happiness and fulfillment. Go forward and pursue the expectations—*truly* God-given rights—of a godly woman. (LN)

Four New Evangelists in God's Church

May 11, 2023 was a historic day for the Living Church of God, as four longtime ministers were ordained as evangelists. Hands were laid on these four men by Mr. Gerald Weston, Mr. Richard Ames, Dr. Douglas Winnail, Mr. Stuart Wachowicz, and Mr. Mario Hernández, and they were ordained in front of nearly all of their fellow members of the Council of Elders.

Mr. Peter Nathan serves as LCG's Regional Director in Europe and Africa. Ordained as an elder in 1973, he has been a minister of God for 50 years and has pastored congregations in Southern Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand. He is also a frequent visitor to congregations in South Africa and writes for the *Tomorrow's World* magazine and other LCG publications. He and his wife Karen currently reside in England.

Ordained as an elder in 1989, Mr. Jonathan McNair has served as a minister of God for more than 30 years. During that time, he has helped train many ministers and has raised up numerous congregations, both in the U.S. and internationally. He currently serves as Director of the Living Education Program. Mr. McNair resides near Charlotte, North Carolina, with two of his five children. His wife, Christy, who finished her race in 2021, was a beloved pillar of God's Church as well.

Mr. Rod McNair serves as a presenter on the *Tomorrow's World* telecast and as Assistant Director of Church Administration. Ordained in 1996, Mr. McNair pastored congregations in the U.S. and the Philippines before serving at Headquarters. He, his wife Dana, and their four children now reside near Charlotte, North Carolina.

Mr. Wallace Smith, a presenter on the *Tomorrow's World* telecast and Executive Editor of LCG print media, was ordained in 2006. He pastored congregations in several states and served as a telecast presenter before Dr. Meredith brought him to Headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he now resides with his wife Jeanine and their four sons.

Let us pray for these dedicated men and their families as they shoulder new responsibilities as evangelists in God's Church!

—Editorial Staff

In Loving Memory

Mrs. Jacqueline Baczkowski, 90, died peacefully in her sleep on March 11. She was from the Pontefract congregation in the UK. A stroke in 2019 and a fall last September both took a toll on her. Mrs. Baczkowski will be dearly missed by her family and her friends.

Mrs. Jean Bannister, 77, died on February 13. Mrs. Bannister was a longtime member of God's Church, baptized in 1974. A member of the Pontefract, UK, congregation, her lively, chatty personality will be missed by the brethren there and at the Feast, as will her readiness to serve and encourage others. She is survived by her husband, John, as well as other family members.

Mr. Robert (Bob) Duray, 88, died unexpectedly on June 3. Mr. Duray and his wife Jacqueline (Jackie) heard the Worldwide Church of God radio program shortly after they were married, in Louisiana in 1968, and they began studying the Bible and supporting the Work. They studied, tithed, and kept the Sabbath for four years before requesting a visit with a minister, and were baptized together in 1974 in Ohio. In 1975, they moved to Bradenton, Florida and attended services in St. Petersburg and later in Sarasota. In later years, they moved to Mountain View, Missouri, where they attended the Living Church of God congregation in Springfield. When they returned to Florida, they attended the Pensacola congregation. Mrs. Duray predeceased her husband in 2019. Mr. Duray was loved by all who knew him. He loved the Church, the Work, and all the brethren. He enjoyed dogs, guns, hunting, and scuba diving, but the Church and God were his main passion. Area Pastor Ed Breaux conducted a private funeral service.

Mrs. Mariammah Kasinathan, 67, a longtime member of the Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, congregation, died on April 1 after many years of health problems. She was baptized during the Feast of Tabernacles in 1975. Mrs. Kasinathan is survived by her husband, Mr. Jacob Kasinathan, as well as three sons,

two daughters, and four grandchildren. All her family members are in the Church. Mrs. Kasinathan will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Mr. Scyrell New, 81, died at his home on April 18. He was a longtime member of God's Church, baptized in 1970 with his wife Linda, who survives him. He faithfully attended the Little Rock, Arkansas, congregation until failing health precluded his attendance. Mr. New was a friendly, kind, and outgoing man with many interests, and he particularly enjoyed being a private pilot. He was a gifted mechanic and a recognized expert in large industrial compressors and equipment who traveled to many parts of the world servicing compressors. Besides his wife of 59 years, he is survived by one son, two daughters, seven grandchildren, one great-grandchild, many other relatives, and many friends. He will be very much missed by all who knew and loved him.

Mrs. Faye Speers, 88, died on March 24. Born during the Great Depression, she grew up working with her family on their farm. She and her two siblings attended a local one-room school, and she went on to complete high school in larger communities. She always aspired to be a teacher and first taught high school under permit at age 17—some of her students were older than she was. Later, she graduated from Normal School in Winnipeg, obtained her teaching license, and completed her degree at Brandon University. She also attended summer classes at the Banff School of Fine Arts in Alberta. In 1961 she married Archie Speers, who predeceased her, and they had one son, Tim. She enjoyed a variety of activities, including gardening, oil painting, curling, and traveling. She also did volunteer work in the community and at schools, including helping with the training of new teachers. Besides her son, she is survived by her sister, one sister-in-law, eleven nieces and nephews, and other relatives. Mrs. Speers was baptized in 2005 and attended the Brandon, Manitoba, congregation, where her son still attends.

Ordinations

Mr. Brad Howe was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of April 1 by Area Pastor Michael Brown and elder Paul Rempel. Mr. Howe serves in the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, congregation.

Mr. and Mrs. Chris (Jessica) Jacques were ordained deacon and deaconess on the Last Holy Day of Unleavened Bread by Area Pastor Glen Harrison and elders Mike Rivet, Chip Wheelahan, and Ray Joffrion. Mr. and

Mrs. Jacques serve in the Lafayette, Louisiana, congregation.

Mr. Zacharie Ngendakumana and **Mr. Marc Nkunuzimana** were ordained elders on the Sabbath of April 15 by Regional Director Peter Nathan, Area Pastor Rees Ellis, and elder Juvenal Karibwami. Mr. Nkunuzimana and Mr. Ngendakumana serve in the Nyanza-Lac, Burundi, congregation.

Mr. Nathaneal Owora was ordained an elder on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread by Regional Director Peter Nathan, Dr. Scott Winnail, and Area Pastor Simon Muthama. Mr. Owora serves in the Tororo congregation in Uganda.

Mr. Nathan Thomas was ordained a deacon on the Sabbath of September 3, 2022, by Area Pastor Wyatt Ciesielka and Elder Carl Derstine. Mr. Thomas serves in the Richmond, Virginia, congregation.

Weddings & Anniversaries

Mr. and Mrs. Ken (Mae) Christenson reached their **75th wedding anniversary** on November 8, 2022, and their family and friends honored them at a reception to celebrate such a rare milestone. Mr. and Mrs. Christenson are longtime members of God's Church, baptized together in 1975. They have attended the Minneapolis, Minnesota, congregation for more than 40 years. Family members commented that factors in the longevity of their marriage include their genuine care for each other and mutual supportiveness, as well as the fact that they "work to make it work." Their relationship and the strong, close family they built are inspiring examples. Mr. and Mrs. Christenson have six children, 21 grandchildren, and 40 great-grandchildren.

Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey (Christine) Edwards celebrated their **50th wedding anniversary** on January 29. The Wadebridge, UK, congregation honored the much-loved couple with a bouquet of flowers and warm congratulations.

Mr. and Mrs. Jean-Louis (Agnes) Laflamme recently celebrated their **50th wedding anniversary**. They were married on March 19, 1973, in Red Lake, Ontario, and were baptized together in 1980. Mr. and Mrs. Laflamme attend the Edmonton,

Alberta, congregation. They have three children, ten grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Laflamme on this wonderful milestone!

Mr. and Mrs. Carl (Marlene) Osterberg celebrated their **64th wedding anniversary** on May 18. Mr. and Mrs. Osterberg have been members of God's Church since 1966 and attend the congregation in Kelowna, British Columbia, in Canada. Mr. Osterberg worked in the WCG printing department in Pasadena, California, way back in the early 1970s. All who know them love them and enjoy their interesting stories of endurance and adventure over many decades.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward (Velma) Stringer reached their **60th wedding anniversary** on June 7. Mr. and Mrs. Stringer are longtime members of God's Church and have been a tremendous example of service and support for the brethren in Saskatchewan for decades. Mr. Stringer has long served as a deacon. They are dearly loved and well respected. The brethren of the Prince Albert congregation celebrated their anniversary with cake and fellowship. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Stringer, with love and appreciation for your service!

Living Education—Charlotte's Fifth Graduation

Concluding its fifth year of operation, Living Education—Charlotte held its 2023 graduation on May 26 at the Waxhaw Women's Club in downtown Waxhaw, North Carolina, where the program's participants gathered to celebrate each other's accomplishments this year.

After a year of twists and turns, abounding with field trips, forums and assemblies, student-hosted meals, challenging academics, and other opportunities to learn and grow, faculty and students were glad to meet and wrap up the academic year with ceremony and fellowship. They were also able to hear encouraging messages from four distinguished speakers.

Living Education's Director, Mr. Jonathan McNair, spoke on the focus of the Living Education—Charlotte program and introduced the "Year in Review" video produced by Living Education graduate Nathan Kroon. Mr. McNair was followed by Mr. Kenneth Frank, Living Education faculty in theology, who spoke about the legacy of education in God's Church and its meaning in the Church today, particularly as it pertained to the graduates. Mr. Dexter Wakefield, a Living Education faculty member in communication, then shared some helpful and encouraging thoughts for the graduates, emphasizing the importance of remaining set apart from the world and out of the devil's "circle of attack." Finally, Mr. Richard Ames' address focused on the truth of God as the missing dimension in knowledge, and he urged the students to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, building on the foundation that has been laid.

After the ceremony, family members and guests were able to spend time sharing their loved ones' experiences, perusing this year's delightful Living Education scrapbook of memories, and enjoying abundant hors d'oeuvres.

The graduating students this year are Kaleb Johnson, Andrew McNair, Madeline McNair, Jontavius Mincey, Rachel Price, Dawn Rude, Lauren Sena, David Smith, and Rachel White. Additionally, Kezia Ciesielka, Nathan Kroon, and Sabrielle McNair graduated from Living Education's Student Leader program. May God bless all of these students and their every effort as they strive to "build upon the Rock" and continue to center their futures on His word and His way of life.

—*Editorial Staff*

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King Charles III, King Solomon, and Zadok the Priest

There are many fascinating current and historical facts of Great Britain, the British monarchy, and the customs, beliefs, and blessings of the peoples that find their precedents in the ancient nation of Israel. This was witnessed at King Charles III's recent coronation. As millions watched, they also heard a powerful piece of music during his anointing that referenced the biblical figures of Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Solomon the king.

The coronation of King Charles III took place on May 6, 2023, in the elaborate setting of Westminster Abbey, where monarchs have been crowned since 1066. The building, furnishings, décor, and royal clothing were exquisite, befitting a grand and historic event. Part of the grandeur was the song that was performed as the Archbishop of Canterbury anointed the king with oil—a song carrying great biblical and prophetic significance. As a *Reuters* article noted on May 7, “The explosive crescendo of ‘Zadok the Priest,’ Handel’s soaring anthem composed nearly 300 years ago for the crowning of King George [II], marked the most sacred moment of Charles’ coronation on Saturday.”

Handel’s anthem is based on Bible passages such as 1 Kings 1:34–35, 39, recounting the anointing of David’s son Solomon as king: “There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall be king in my place. For I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah.’... Then Zadok the priest took a horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the horn, and all the people said, ‘Long live King Solomon!’”

The text of this piece of music is one of many connections between the biblical nation of Israel and the modern nation of the United Kingdom. We in the Living Church of God appreciate that many of the people of the British Isles are descendants of the ancient Israelites, including Israel’s grandson Ephraim (through Joseph). This brief piece doesn’t have the space to go into those details, but if you’re interested in the amazing link between Great Britain and the biblical nation of Israel, you can read our free booklet *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*.

The connection between today’s United Kingdom and ancient Israel runs deeper than many realize, and its implications are vital. Yet as British society and Western culture in general become more secular, how much of the pomp and ceremony of the coronation is merely that—included more out of tradition than conviction? As we increasingly see signs of what Bible prophecy warns are the end-times (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21), these matters are more important to consider than ever. The new king, other leaders, and the people of the British Isles at large should not merely refer to Bible passages and ancient Israel out of tradition and ceremony but should take serious heed to the lessons that Israel failed to learn millennia ago.

Charles III has been anointed king, as was King Solomon about 3,000 years ago. Perhaps the most important lesson to be drawn from these observations is summarized by some of the final words that King Solomon wrote—words that contain a lesson for the new king, his subjects, and all of us: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

—Josh Lyons