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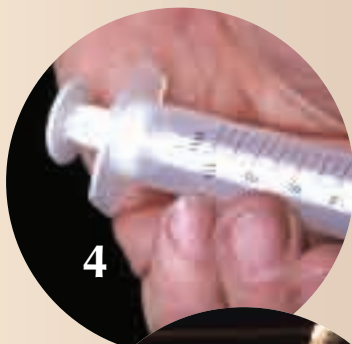
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Why Christians Disagree



An obvious fact about God’s faith family,
 the church, is that we are not as perfect-
 ly one on earth as the Father and Son
 are in heaven. Why is that? Why do Christians,
 united by faith in Christ, so often disagree and
 divide? Why so many separated groups of
 Jesus-followers?

1. Christians disagree because we represent the diversity of humanity. People differ in many outward ways, such as age, appearance, gender, size, shape, race, and language. Now multiply by ten for ways we are inwardly unlike others: inherited traits and talents, acquired knowledge and skills, preferences, desires, mindsets, opinions, and interests. Humans, like snowflakes, reveal infinite variety; none is identical to another. Diversity is a short step from disagreement and often leads to it. If managed well, however, disagreements prompted by normal diversity can produce strength, not division. Don’t discredit most disagreements. Celebrate them!

2. Christians disagree because we’re not yet fully transformed into the image of Christ. Though born of the Spirit and joined with Jesus by faith, we still have something of the selfish in us, unlike our Lord. The result? We often think, speak, and act in ways that demonstrate more concern for our own interests than for those of others. For the sake of unity in Christ’s body, let’s keep the peace by curbing selfish interests that cause some disagreements. Confess them!

3. Christians disagree over the Book we read. Bible students always find plenty of topics to disagree about, and most of us can prove we are right! The Spirit urges us both to rightly divide the Word and to receive those whose opinions on many issues differ from ours. The Bible’s breadth and depth exceed our full knowing, and no one has an exclusive franchise on its truth. Scripture’s purposes are for leading us to Jesus and preparing us to serve (2 Timothy 3:15-17), not for opposing other believers. So let’s not use our Bible differences to combat others. Instead, commend them to more study!

Imperfect knowledge, imperfect concern — these are common to us all. So we’re destined to disagree, even divide, over some things until kingdom come. When we can’t convince others of a doctrine or get them to treat us right, let’s love and serve them anyhow. We may not change the attitudes, beliefs, and conduct of others, but we can learn to control our own.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, wearing a metal handcuff, holding a medical syringe with a needle. The hand is also holding a sickle. The background is dark, and the lighting highlights the textures of the skin, the metal handcuff, and the plastic syringe.

Slaughtering the Canaanites

The same grace that brought us from Egypt gives us power to possess the promised land.
by Dr. Richard Jensen

A pastor I once knew had been freed from a life of drug addiction. After almost two decades of freedom, however, he experienced a terrible struggle. He awoke one night with a desperate craving for a “fix” — a shot of heroin. The craving was so intense that he was dressed and on his way out before he fully realized what he was doing.

At the door, the man realized that finding a fix would be his ruination. He trembled, completely caught up in the wrenching temptation. At any second, he would open the door, walk out, and be completely lost.

Recognizing that he was a mere second away from being consumed, this pastor fell to his knees and clung to his Lord. Jesus assured him, “Cling to Me, and this will pass.”

Had there been other cherished sins in his life, he could not have clung to the Lord to obtain power. Doing so required complete concentration of will to stay kneeling and praying rather than succumb to temptation. The need for a fix was so overwhelming that only the power of God coupled with his determination to cling to God could produce victory. As long as he refused to yield, he was secure.

At dawn the craving passed. Half the night the pastor had spent in desperate prayer, establishing his freedom in Christ. When he told me this story, many years had passed without the return of that temptation.

Brothers and sisters, every temptation is just like this pastor’s in one crucial respect: If we determine to *slaughter* our sins and make no alliances with any

of them, regardless how strong the temptation, we shall have victory. This is a truth that the Israelites failed to believe – and they paid dearly for it.

Faltering in fear

The children of Israel stared across the river at the Promised Land, the place their ancestors dreamed about for hundreds of years. God had promised to give His people the land and enable them to utterly destroy the inhabitants. Yet the Israelites stood at the river, afraid.

Their spies had returned with a fearful message: “The inhabitants of the land are giants; they are fierce and mighty.” The spies explained, “We were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight” (Numbers 13:33).

Caleb and Joshua cried out against this doom-saying report: “The Lord is with us! Surely He will give us this land. The protection of the inhabitants is removed, and we have nothing to fear from them” (see 14:6-9).

But the fearful spies prevailed. The people stared across the river at the land they *would* not possess and were afraid.

Angry with His fearful people, the Lord cursed them to die in the wilderness. Except for Caleb and Joshua, all died in that desert place. They disbelieved the promises of God, rejected the Promised Land, and died in their wanderings.

Giving up the fight

After forty years, a new generation of people crossed the Jordan and began to destroy the inhabitants and possess the land.

Though they experienced one miraculous victory after another, the Israelites grew weary of the struggle. They intermarried with God’s enemies; they formed alliances. A generation of wandering was followed by generations of rebellion against the Lord as His people assumed the character and perspectives of the very enemies God had commanded be destroyed.

The Lord had said:

Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst (Exodus 34:11, 12).

And again:

When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their

high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess (Numbers 33:51-53).

The Scriptures repeatedly express God’s intended procedure for possessing the land: destruction, extermination, genocide (Deuteronomy 2:34; 7:1, 2; 20:17). It is not politically correct to even think it today, but the Lord had judged those nations and appointed His people to execute His judgments upon them. “Slaughter the Canaanites” was God’s command.

At first the Israelites were afraid to fight these enemies, and later they concluded that they had fought enough. In both cases, their failure to utterly destroy the Canaanites resulted in their ruin.

Possessing the land

How is it with you, brothers and sisters? Are you completely possessing the land as the Lord God has commanded?

What “land” am I talking about? It’s what Jesus says in



God had promised to give His people the land and enable them to utterly destroy the inhabitants. Yet the Israelites stood at the river, afraid.

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Matthew 5:48 and Paul repeats in 2 Corinthians 7:1:

You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The “land” that needs transforming is our character — to be set free from sin, now that we have been forgiven. To accomplish this, the Lord has promised us the gift of the Spirit and the mind of Christ. Christ’s mind *in us* is our hope of glory and the transforming power of God *in us* (John 8:34-36). The ultimate intent of the gospel is to *transform* us — to save us *from* our sins, not *in* them.

God intends that we employ His power forcefully and with a single mind to confront and overcome our sins and defects of character. Each of them, one at a time. We do not confront them all at once, just as the Israelites did not know every battle and enemy they would face. But God

intends that we march through our land from victory to victory in His power.

Hindrances to victory

Why do we not enjoy more victory over our sins than we do? Could it be that we feel like grasshoppers in the face of them? Do we disbelieve the Word of God when it commands and promises victory over *all* filthiness of the flesh and spirit?

Brothers and sisters, if you won’t start the conquest because you’re convinced of ultimate failure, then you won’t have victory. Insignificant little efforts will never be effective against particular sins when you really don’t believe in total triumph, by God’s grace.

Another hindrance to victory is taking up the fight in the power of God but later tiring of the struggle. So people end up forming alliances with their sins, willing to live in peaceful co-existence with them. In this they minimize the importance of ongoing victory by stressing the second part of 1 John 2:1 more than the first. But the first part is

the emphasis as John writes it: “These things I write to you, so that you may not sin.” Tired of the fight, they ignore the exhortation: “You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4).

Here is the secret: James tells us that a double-minded person cannot expect *anything* from the Lord. We will not have victory until we are *committed* to victory by clinging to our Lord through the darkest hours, as the pastor did that night.

Fight to win

Slaughter the Canaanites! Show them no mercy! Or as Paul put it, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14). It is your God-given privilege to entirely possess the land, to enjoy victory over each and every temptation to sin, and thus to live out your freedom in Christ.

You need not be a slave to sin. Fight every battle to win, and you shall move from victory to victory. The grace God gives you is not only forgiveness in Christ but also power through the Spirit to possess the land — a change in character that will let you live free till Jesus comes. **RM**

Insipid little efforts will never be effective against particular sins when you really don’t believe in total triumph, by God’s grace.



Dr. Richard Jensen lives in College Place, WA, with his wife, Dana. They attend the Walla Walla church. His latest book is titled *Miracles, Faith, and Unanswered Prayer*.



Questions & Answers

Q **Apart from considerations of heaven and hell, is a Christian life still the best choice?**

A Both for time and for eternity, God's way is best. Whether or not a traditional heaven or hell loom ahead, we should live uprightly before the Lord. It is in our best interest now to obey His Word, not merely as insurance against the day of death.

How do we know this is true? The book of Proverbs, for one, develops this core idea: Righteousness brings lifelong benefit to those who practice it, while evil assures its own negative payback (4:18; 11:18, 19). Repeatedly we read that the fear of God extends life, but the years of the wicked are shortened (3:2; 9:11; 10:27). Both material and spiritual blessings follow in the wake of those who trust and obey the Lord.

The same conviction — that the righteous are blessed over the wicked — permeates scores of other sacred texts. It is indeed a golden rule of faith that what we sow in life, we tend to reap from others and from God (Gal. 6:7).

Jesus says He has come so His disciples may have life more abundantly (John 10:10). How is this abundance experienced? Christ explains by offering all the love of the Father (15:9), fullness of joy (v. 11), and His peace (14:27; 16:33) to His friends. These are not promises for a future kingdom but assurances to be realized now, through the Spirit. The abundant life, then, speaks of a quality for today, not just a quantity of "eternal life" yet future for Christians.

The Bible's "yes" to your question is sustained by those who testify that Christ's grace and truth generate good stuff for them here and now. Surveys consistently indicate that people who practice faith live longer and are typically more content than oth-

ers. Generous, service-oriented people report being happier and more successful now than those driven by selfish desires. Righteousness *is* its own reward.

One familiar verse suggests an alternate view to this: If our hope is in this life only, we are most miserable (1 Cor. 15:19). Taken at face value, this text offers the notion that we'd be happier as non-Christians now, if it weren't for the promise of resurrection and eternal life.

Why would Paul say that? Is he un-persuaded that a clean, honest lifestyle pays off now, as we claimed earlier? No, he knows that the genuine Christian life always attracts the reproach of Christ and the cross, bringing opposition and hardship to its followers. Why would one choose a path on which suffering is certain, unless its end held something far better?

Without reversing Proverbs, John 10:10, or the golden rule of righteousness, the Corinthians verse reminds us that a truly Christian life is one in which the disciple daily lays down His life for Jesus. This living sacrifice makes perfect sense only in light of the resurrection of the dead and return of Christ to judge the world. Without a final reckoning, Paul says that Jesus' sufferings and our motivation to share in them don't carry much weight.

Life is difficult, even at best. Christians have no guarantee of present health, happiness, and unbroken success. God's way is always best, but that fact will become perfectly clear only when we see the resurrected Christ at His coming.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

Note: Readers' responses (300 words or less) to this question will be considered for publication in December. Answers may be edited for length and clarity.



Pulled From the Pew

Does your faith have “staying power”?
by Sherri Langton

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She’s been called the leader of the largest church in the world. Last May millions of hungry souls participated in her “mass trance.” Thanks to the heft of her celebrity and multi-media savvy, Eckhart Tolle’s book, *A New Earth*, has shown multitudes the latest passage from suffering to peace; *A Course in Miracles*, published by the Foundation for Inner Peace, deposits daily New Age doses on satellite radio. It’s safe to say that Oprah Winfrey is the most influential media personality today.

She’s probably also the most misguided. When Oprah threw her weight behind *A Course in Miracles* early this year, believers — including me — rallied against her. Video clips popped up on YouTube: Oprah in a heated

exchange regarding Christ as the only way to salvation; Oprah engaging in a few minutes of silence, led by Tolle; Oprah exposing her claims to equality with God. These clips helped stoke the holy fire against a woman many believers have come to regard as Public Enemy Number One.

More disturbing, however, is what started the talk show queen’s descent into deception. In one video clip of *A New Earth*’s World Wide Web Event, Oprah explains that she grew up in the Baptist church. Caught up in a charismatic worship service one Sunday in her late twenties, she was “amening” the preacher until he said, “The Lord thy God is a jealous God” (Deuteronomy 6:15, KJV).

Oprah was flummoxed. “God is jealous of *me*?” If God is love and omniscient and omnipresent, she reasoned, how can He be jealous of anyone?

That did it for Oprah: She packed her bags and left the church. Thus began her spiritual search to “take God out of the box,” in her words — away from the rules of Christianity to the open range of the New Age.

If we’re honest, a bit of Oprah has been in all of us at times. Many of us have entertained questions about God and His Word, prompting us to eye the exit. I’m one of them. It turned out that my unsettling questions led me to dig deeper for solid truth.

Disappointment

Nothing capsizes my faith-boat like a perceived failure on God’s part to answer prayer. God has consistently turned a cold shoulder to my pleas for my sister’s ill health. Some time ago, both Susan and I prayed for a treatment that could have brought her relief. We sensed a green light from God that this would be a breakthrough.

But the treatment failed. Susan was left not just with worse health problems but with more medical bills. And I was left with my confidence in God shaken.

Had we misunderstood God’s direction, or did God pull a cruel joke? The emotional toll of watching Susan suffer compounded my disappointment in God and made me fidget in the pew. Like Oprah, I felt something about God didn’t add up. A smirk in my spirit claimed that a loving God wouldn’t do this to one of His children.

But I persevered despite my doubts. Romans 8:28 reminded me that God works for good. In time, I noticed He was creating eternal things in Susan that far exceeded her health: increased dependence on God and a deepening prayer life. Susan also began attending a women's Bible study where she grew in her knowledge of the Word. I couldn't deny that God was shaping my sister into a stronger Christian in the midst of her pain.

I'm reminded of the three Hebrew children. When they were tossed into the fiery furnace, they told Nebuchadnezzar that their God was able to deliver them from the fire and from his hand (Daniel 3:17). "But even if he does not," they continued, ". . . we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" (v. 18, NIV).

Even if he does not. This phrase didn't express doubt but a contingency that these men considered. They didn't hold God to deliverance; they trusted Him no matter what. They were prepared to go out in a blaze of obedience if God chose not to intervene.

When something shakes my faith again, I will stay in the fire because He stays with me (v. 25). I won't bend. I won't bow down or give in to the voice inside me that says God failed. And I won't leave the pew.

Disagreement over teaching

For Oprah, it was Deuteronomy 6:15. For me, it was 1 Thessalonians 4:3: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification."

What did that stuffy word mean? Perfection? I didn't qualify. A cut above other Christians? I struck out there too. Other

words spoken from the pulpit — *surrender and lordship of Christ* — agitated me as well. A true believer, the pastor said, doesn't just show up to church, as I was doing. She doesn't cruise through life, content in carnality and insisting on her own way. She must give everything in her grasp over to God, palms down. To a true disciple of Christ, Gethsemane's "Not My will but Thine" carries as much weight as Calvary's "It is finished!"

Week after week, I squirmed in the pew and looked for a way out.

I'm glad I didn't leave. In my personal Bible study, I got to know God more and grew in my knowledge of Christ. My desires changed. I *wanted* to commit myself to Christ, palms down. I finally saw that I didn't need more of the Holy Spirit; He needed all of me.

I slowly made my way to Gethsemane and surrendered my self-control, my demand that I make my own choices. It wasn't easy; it still isn't. The death of the "old man" of sin is slow and painful. It is not a blissful skip to the next stage of spiritual growth but a battle just as Jesus faced on His knees in that garden grove.

I've learned that, with Jesus kneeling beside me, sanctification is a glorious release from the

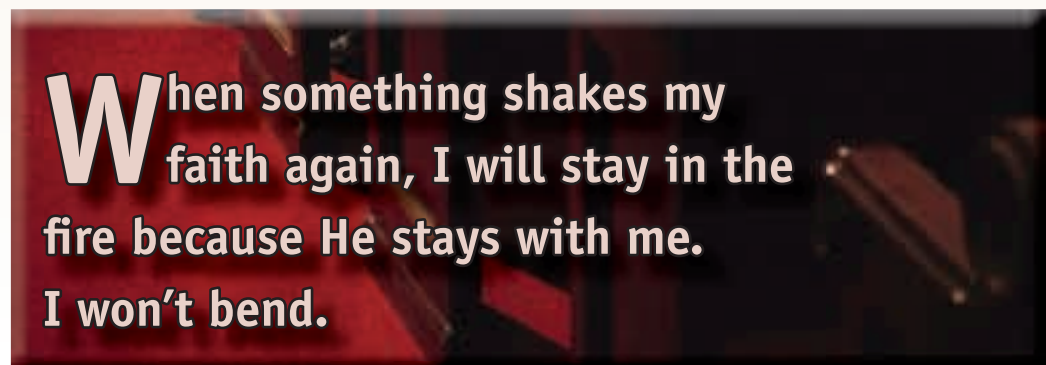
tyranny of my way. Whenever I face the struggle of self, I will not stop praying. I will not sidestep Gethsemane. And I won't leave the pew.

End-time exodus

Clearly Oprah isn't alone in her reactions, according to a recent study. Last February the Pew Forum on Religion released its findings: "More than one-quarter of American adults have left the faith of their childhood for another religion or no religion at all . . . Factoring in moves from one stream or denomination of Protestantism to another, the number rises to 44 percent" (CBS.com).

That's just what Paul said would happen in the last days. He warned Timothy, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons" (1 Timothy 4:1, NIV).

This tells me that there will be many Oprah Winfreys before Jesus returns. But by continuing in what I've learned and been assured of (2 Timothy 3:14), I won't be one of them. **PA**



Double Trouble Ahead?

What's threatening the church and how we can defeat it.
by Calvin Burrell

most of us can learn the basics of our faith. Let's study and prepare ourselves with confident, accurate answers to questions like these:

Who is Jesus?

How do we explain and defend His humanity and deity?

What are the core elements of our Lord's teaching?

What is the gospel for which He died and rose again?

How do we identify and support the church He purchased with His blood?

How do Christians achieve victory in the ongoing battle against sin?

Ignorance on the part of God's people can be deadly. In a text often quoted by an earlier generation but not much heard in today's church, the prophet writes, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The same verse goes on to warn that since we have rejected knowledge and forgotten God's law, He will reject us as His representatives and forget our children. According to Ephesians 6:10-18, knowledge of the Word is the sword of the Spirit — the church's chief offensive weapon against an enemy bent on our destruction.

To assess your Bible knowledge quotient, grab a piece of paper and list the Ten Commandments. OK, we'll settle for just the first and tenth, if you know Jesus' reply to those who asked Him about the greatest commandment in the law.

Or have we, like those in Hosea's day, forgotten God's law — His Word? Without it, the gospel of God's forgiving grace has little meaning and even less power to shape our lives.

"What's the difference between ignorance and apathy?" someone honestly asks.

"I don't know, and I don't care," comes the mocking reply.

In this acidic answer, rumbles of ruination roll toward the Church we love and any other where such perspectives prevail. Historic, bona fide Christianity thrives in soils where knowledge, not ignorance, sprouts and flourishes; in climates where concern, not apathy, prevails. Without knowledge and without caring, as we shall see, we face the certain wreck of our faith.

Called to know

Christians are called to know, not remain ignorant. How do we know this? Consider that the first five books of our Scripture are otherwise known as Torah, or Instruction. Another section of the Hebrew Bible is known simply as Wisdom. Jesus Christ, beyond His role as Savior, is best known as Teacher (i.e., Rabbi, Master). We are His disciples, called to learn and follow His example and teachings. Likewise, the New Testament Epistles are crowded with spiritual and practical propositions, waiting for us to comprehend and apply them.

Not all of Christ's disciples will become scholars, to be sure, but

Ignorance abroad

It is worth noting that ignorance outside the church also threatens our evangelistic mission. The average guy on the street says he avoids churches because they aren't much like Jesus. And why not? Because, says he, Jesus would never criticize anyone or say that certain human behaviors are sinful and wrong.

Those who make such statements reinvent Jesus to an image of their own liking, rather than knowing the real Jesus reported in the Bible. Ignorance for sure!

What can the church do about widespread biblical ignorance in this society? Not that much, perhaps. But consider: Advancing the Bible as a viable and valid source of knowledge for an educated citizenry, not just for those who affirm Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, is a legitimate and defensible position for the church in the public square.

Called to care

As knowledge is a core value in our faith, so is concerned caring. Believers are called to care and not be apathetic. How do we know that a proper kind of care is so important to our faith? Because *care* is another word for *love*, for *compassion*. According to the Bible's best-loved chapter (1 Corinthians 13), care is the one thing without which all other gifts — knowledge included — are devoid of value.

Without a caring love for people, other ministries reduce the gifted one to a mass of noisy nothings. It's worth saying again that most people don't really care how much we know until they know how much we care.

Knowing without caring is

hard, cold intellectualism, repugnant to those who are subjected to it. On the other hand, caring without knowledge can be ineffectual drivel, sop without substance. When mature knowing and caring are combined in the man or woman of God, an irresistible force for good is released.

Raising the quotient

Quick test on your Christian caring quotient: At the heart level, how do you respond when you see or hear someone in the public eye who represents all that you despise in our culture? How do you react to the fall or failure of one who has often been your adversary? Are you often more interested in being right than in being a real friend?

Just as we Christians can increase our biblical knowledge and wisdom through listening, reading, studying, writing, and other disciplines, so we can raise our caring quotient by a variety of means and methods:

- cultivating more meaningful relationships, with Christians and non-believers, than we now enjoy. Deeper knowing produces more caring.

- reading, meditating, and praying through Bible passages that call us to love and care as Jesus did. Try Matthew 5–7;

Luke 6, 7, 15, 18; John 14–17; Romans 12–15; Ephesians 4–6; and Colossians 3 for starters.

- confessing the sin of coldness and unconcern. Ask God to replace our apathy with His passionate care for those in need.

Victory through caring, knowing

Caring, in fact, may be more central to our Christian identity than knowing (John 13:35) and not so easily abused (1 Corinthians 8:1, 2). When our positive caring borders on something burdensome like worry and anxiety, remember this: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

Ignorance and apathy are twin giants that mightily oppose the church of Jesus Christ in twenty-first century America and around the world. What will you do about them? Do you know? Do you care?

Victory over these giants and freedom from their corrosive grip come to those who know enough to care and care enough to keep learning. The Bible puts it this way: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18a).

Come on — let's grow! 🌱

When mature knowing and caring are combined in the man or woman of God, an irresistible force for good is released.



Tending Broken Plants

New from Jabez: truth for wounded souls.
by Charles Irwin

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God has a garden of fruit-bearing plants – some with strong stems, others with broken ones. These damaged plants can, with care, blossom beautifully in season and yield an abundant harvest.

The plants with broken stems are like people who have been wounded. They are the lonely, sick, poor, hungry, imprisoned, and emotionally scarred. Why do they exist in God's garden? Perhaps so that the strong will take note of them and nurture them to health.

Wounded soul

Jabez, born in Israel of the tribe of Judah, may have been such a wounded soul. About him we read "Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore him in pain'" (1 Chronicles 4:9).

Every human birth is accompanied by pain, but the narrative here suggests that his birth was more painful than usual for both mother and child. Jabez's mother may have had a difficult delivery causing injury to the infant – an adverse congenital condition. Or perhaps the child inherited a ge-

netically based impairment. We don't know whether Jabez's pain was an observable, physical impairment or a mental disability.

Regardless, Jabez is described as being more honorable than his brethren. His fervent plea to God was

"Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!" (v. 10).

As the boy grew, he suffered pain. He knew he was a burden on his mother, who grieved for him. Perhaps in desperation, this man sought God for blessing, expanded territory, deliverance from evil, and release from causing pain.

Enlarged territory

As for territory, Jabez's inheritance may have been smaller than his brothers'; thus his pleas that it be increased. This can refer to an ancient kinship system in which one's place in the genealogical record was a legal validation of the right to land, livestock, rank, and, in some cases, marriage. No genealogy, no inheritance.

In the context of Jabez's life, however, territory likely meant something more: moving into a large place and shedding the bondage that resulted from a troubled beginning. Jabez was seeking God (Job 36:16; Psalm 18:19). The Bible speaks of giving room to the afflicted, of deliverance from the chains of tragic circumstances, and the consequent liberty of an "increase of territory."

Jabez's story is one of God's grace. Jabez was weak and he

knew it. He called upon God in his time of need and cast himself upon His grace. The man had done nothing to deserve God's blessing, presence, and deliverance. Yet the Lord of love and mercy hearkened to the plea of this afflicted son and delivered him from the bondage of the past.

Enlarged outreach

Jabez's story also teaches us about increasing our own territory for outreach. Each of us can ask the Father for entrance into a life of greater service where the Spirit of Christ empowers us to minister to the world's broken and wounded. Thousands, perhaps millions, of Jabezses have been in our churches since the first century and are with us today. When Paul the evangelist bid farewell to the elders of Ephesus, he admonished them:

I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Paul's exhortations to support the weak and give to the poor remind us that poverty can take many forms: lack of physical necessities, poverty of spirit, depression, rejection, mental disability, addictions, loneliness, and physical impairment.

How important is our ministry to the weak and impoverished? Our Savior answered the question in His discourse on the separation of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). He commended the sheep for feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, and visiting

the imprisoned. Forasmuch as they did it to them, they did it to Him. The goats, however, were cast into hell because they failed to minister to the afflicted and, in turn, did not minister to Him.

Ministry to the poor and wounded will open doors to lead men and women to Christ. The Lord made no conditions as to whether those needing this support are saved or not. In fact, Jesus preferred eating supper at a tax collector's house rather than sharing a meal with the religious elites.

It behooves every Christian to minister to the Jabezses in the body of Christ, as well as to those outside the church. The sermons may be inspiring, the singing lively, the doctrine sound, the attendance up, and the building substantial. But do we hear weak ones in our midst cry out for help?

Healing the broken

You can, by God's grace, help support a broken brother or sister. You can, by the Spirit's power, assist the divine intent to increase the spiritual and material territory of another and reduce his pain. When you minister to the suffering, you are ministering with the Master, and to Him.

A church I know assists struggling, at-risk students from a near-

by public school with homework. Parents voluntarily bring their kids to the church two nights a week. Teachers and others in the congregation help the students, who are not required to be members of the church.

Are there people in your community who need your help? Are there desperate saints in your congregations? If so, reach out to the stranger, elderly, divorced, maligned, physically impaired, and destitute. Pray that God will lead you to those who need your care.

Many of us are like Jabez in one way or another. Echoing his prayer, we move into new territory of blessing through service to others. By God's grace in Christ, his prayer is answered by this New Testament invitation to everyone with pain:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). **RA**

Charles Irwin, a member residing in Quartz Hill, CA, is a semi-retired school teacher. He once attended Spring Vale Academy.

Are there people in your community who need your help? Are there desperate saints in your congregations?

Resetting the Clock

Making choices about the times of your life.
by David Kidd

@ Handy—Dreamstime.com

Everyone seems busy. Australia, in fact, seems more like the “busy country” than the “lucky country” it is called.

Many people work long hours; both parents usually work. People who are too busy have little time or energy for one another

or can't connect because they work different shifts. An African immigrant once expressed his amazement to me about all the activity here. Now he is very busy, too.

Despite our industriousness, many of us feel that we are not really making progress. Maybe

we relate to the prophet who lamented:

“You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes” (Haggai 1:6).

Most of us are over-committed and tired, with limited time. Yet our Bibles tell us to be fruitful in every good work and zealous for them. Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers few. As He spoke these words, He looked at the multitudes with compassion. He saw them weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

Today we also see many people in great need, but we are too busy or tired to help. The shortage of the Lord's laborers is urgent. Some of us feel frustrated and sorry because we know that we are barely doing His work at such a critical time.

Many Christians don't realize the gravity of this situation. Many don't appreciate that to be a Christian is to be a dedicated servant of the living God. Satan has done a good job tying us up in our stressful lives, doing little for the kingdom of God. That's the bad news.

If our conscience is pierced by this, what can we do about it?

Options

First, we could pretend that nothing is wrong and do nothing about it. Then we would be like the seed sown among thorns, choked by worldly cares and the deceitfulness of riches, or like the wicked, lazy servant who buried his one talent and was

later rejected. This option leads nowhere.

Second, we could forsake all and follow Jesus, serving Him on the front line — by faith. Levi the tax collector did that when Jesus called. Perhaps God is asking us to step out and follow Him full time.

The second option might seem too radical. Certainly not every believer in the Bible took up his knapsack to follow the Lord or His apostles on their arduous journeys. Most first century Christians lived and worked in one area. Many stayed in the same state in which they were called (1 Corinthians 7:20-24). They worked to feed their families, support the local church, help their neighbors, and provide funds to help others in the work of the Lord.

Don't discount this ministry of financial giving. The Lord can use you greatly, busy as you are, if you obey the Word about supporting outreach with your dollars. We all have time to do this.

Regardless of our circumstances, each of us can serve the Lord in all we do, right where we are (Colossians 3:22-24). Even while on the job, we can work to the glory of God, be a good witness to co-workers and clients, and share the gospel at opportune times. This is the third option.

Seeking the kingdom

One final option should also be considered for those not called to leave all and follow in the same manner as Levi. You can pray and plan in faith to one day be free of your busyness and fatigue brought on by mostly secular concerns. May I share my own blessing in this regard?

I obtained a law degree but soon realized that I would be too busy as a lawyer to make much time contribution to the Lord's work. God led me to a more creative way of using my legal skills that doesn't tax my time or energy. Thus I thank God for His faithfulness in providing all my needs. Now I have a successful business as an author and publisher in the law, and I have the time and flexibility to serve the Lord as well.

Not busy?

A note for those who have free time: Value it highly; learn to appreciate it. Be like the slave who was told to use his freedom for the Lord, if it should come his way (1 Corinthians 7:21).

Don't be like the carnal Christian who suddenly finds time on his hands, gets bored, and seeks new challenges in everything but the service of the Lord. Plenty of difficult and exciting challenges remain in Christian ministry. Find one and tackle it!

Don't be like the successful rich man who decided to build bigger barns and take it easy. He was dispossessed of his life soon after that.

Don't be sidetracked with activities that might not make a real difference in people's lives. Be careful to use your time wisely.

Some of us have had time on

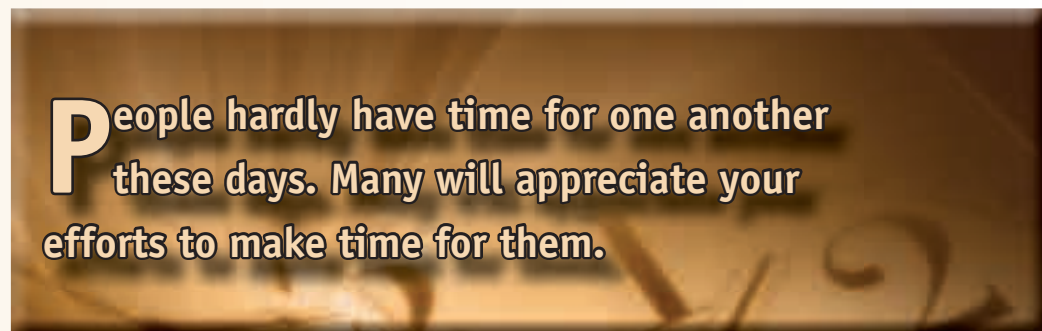
our hands for a long while but don't seem to know how to use it fruitfully for the Lord. One sure answer to this is Jesus' example of caring for the physical and spiritual needs of people. I urge you to find ways to serve people through personal contact. People hardly have time for one another these days. Many will appreciate your efforts to make time for them.

Call to respond

If your heart has been hardened with regard to serving the Lord and others, tremble — and reconsider. God has sacrificed His Son and has a wonderful gift of eternal life for you. Show some gratitude, or risk falling away through the busyness of this world.

If something in this article has pricked your conscience, say, "Hallelujah" or "Amen": You are alive spiritually! Now take up one of the options (except the first) with all your heart. Thus says the Lord of Hosts, "Consider your ways." ❏

David and Angella Kidd attend and serve in the Adelaide church in South Australia.



Building the Church:

Robert Coulter served as president of our General Conference for these 24 years. Native to West Virginia, he ministered in Colorado, Wisconsin, and Michigan prior to being selected to lead the Church. Now 78, Elder Coulter answers BA questions about this era:

BA: Your tenure as Conference president brought new levels of expertise in business and financial management, parliamentary procedure, and organizational acumen to the Church. Where did those skills come from?

Coulter: My business skills were acquired from my father in the construction trade, before I joined the Church's ministerial staff. Dad and I built upscale houses (\$20,000 - \$25,000 in the early-mid 1950s) for the Denver market. I learned how to buy and sell property and manage costs by designing the houses we built and keeping them within budget.

As a teenager, I became intrigued with parliamentary procedures while observing the biennial business sessions of our church. When I assumed the presidency of the General Conference, I joined the National Association of Parliamentarians to learn parliamentary law. It was my desire to effectively preside over meetings of the General Conference, Ministerial Council, and board of directors.

In addition to learning proper

procedures, reviewing the minutes and standing rules of the Church's deliberative bodies back to the merger of 1949 helped improve my ability to preside and expedite the Church's business proceedings.

I give credit and honor to the Lord for any success that we might have experienced while serving the General Conference.

BA: Your adeptness in human relations also served you well — a sort of sixth sense in knowing what ought to be done, how to do it properly, and getting broad cooperation for it.

Coulter: The construction business taught me to be analytical. I learned to solve problems by breaking them down into increments and seeking solutions for each piece. If something failed to serve its intended purpose, we discarded or changed it. I applied the same principles to my work with the Church — a living organism whose message is changeless but whose methods are always evolving.

As I became more acquainted with the organization, it was apparent that some functions were not serving their intended purpose. The Ministerial Council, for example, was preoccupied with domestic issues and had no time for concerns of its international members. To address this deficiency, we proposed and organized the International Ministerial Congress.

I am a firm believer that leaders must lead by building consensus. To obtain agreement, I developed my plan, goals, and objectives, then proposed a means of funding. It was important to me not to promise more than I could deliver, to be transparent, and to consider service a privilege, not a right. I attempted to respect the assignments of others in the organization and not interfere with their prerogatives.

BA: Your tenure embraced dignity and integrity. Who were your mentors in character and churchmanship?

Coulter: My father and mother were my earliest teachers in regard to honesty, faithfulness, and diligence. I was privileged to know many ministers who made an indelible impression on me. K. H. Freeman taught me to love the Lord and His church. Archie Craig encouraged my ministerial aspirations. Burt Marrs mentored me in theological matters. E. A. Straub's friendship, dedication, and churchmanship inspired my commitment to the ministry of the gospel and to the Church of God (Seventh Day).

BA: Many goals were realized in your administration: restructuring and finance of the seven departments, free BA distribution, erection of the G. C. office building and publishing plant, creation of the International Ministerial Congress, and others.

1963-1987



Elder Robert Coulter

What memory brings the most personal satisfaction now?

Coulter: My experiences as director of Missions Abroad while serving the Conference has always been a source of great satisfaction to me. It afforded me the privilege of traveling to all the churches outside the United States and becoming acquainted with their indigenous leadership.

I take great satisfaction in the creation of the International Ministerial Congress and in observing its successful operation, bringing the worldwide Church together every four years. The congress was organized with just eleven charter member churches in 1978. Today there are forty members, and that number continues to grow quickly.

BA: What is your greatest leadership disappointment from that period, what Church goal your toughest failure?

Coulter: I consider the manner in which I approached the transfer of our ministerial training facility from Midwest Bible College in Stanberry, Missouri, to Denver, Colorado (1976), my greatest failure. I neglected to adequately consult the college board and faculty before obtaining the approval of the Conference board for that move.

As my term unfolded, I felt the Church and its ministry were maturing spiritually and could resolve conflicts in a mature manner. It was painful to learn

that not all members had grown as I had hoped. I have always been distressed over our failure to mediate a peaceful settlement for a dispute in a large California congregation near the end of my tenure.

BA: After division from 1933-49 and some turbulence around 1960, the national Church has enjoyed peace until now. To what do you attribute this?

Coulter: Two important developments following the merger of the Salem and Stanberry churches in 1949 account for the peace we enjoy within the Church.

One was the implementation of better business practices and management of funds after the layman's research disturbance of 1958-61. Greater transparency and accountability of Church affairs to its members built trust and confidence in the Church's leaders and management.

Second, opening major leadership roles to qualified laymen made a significant difference in the members' perception of their church. Prior to the 1970s all major leadership positions were filled by clergymen. As we began to realize that the organization was not the "church," we moved to include laymen and women in leadership roles. This open policy helped to break down the "we" versus "them" feelings that had existed in some minds. They began to see that the Church was inclusive of all its members.

BA: Since you retired from the presidency (1987), you've served as pastor in Grand Prairie, Texas, and Hammondville, Alabama; as Southeastern District superintendent; as Ministerial Council president; and as a member of numerous boards and committees. Now you're back in Colorado and volunteer several days each week at the G. C. offices. What remains on your "to do" list?

Coulter: I am presently engaged in researching and writing a more complete version of *The History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*. My goal is to present a factual account of the development of our church.

BA: Anything you want to say to your brethren in North America and around the world?

Coulter: First, I want to greet my many friends and brethren everywhere. I am gratified by the Church's trust and support of my ministry and work and for the privilege it afforded me to serve it over the years. Last, I want to encourage every young man who has aspirations for ministry to pursue that calling. I have never regretted the years I have devoted to the gospel of Christ and His church.

Release From Confusion

by Howard M. Mesick, Sr.

The Mesicks of the 1950s were nominal Christians, attending the church closest to our home in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. We had two Bibles, but nobody studied them.

We children had been taught to call our parents Mother and Father, not Mom and Dad. Mother was a latent schizophrenic, capable of modest cruelties when the sinister side of her split personality took over. When she became angry at her talkative little boy, she'd intimidate me about how bad I was and how strongly I'd soon be punished. Then she'd wallop my backside with her hand. Mother was the family's undisputed ruler.

Yet Mother did some good things. She read worthwhile books to me before I could read them. She helped with schoolwork and borrowed children's science books and biographies from the library for me to read. My love of science and literature sprang from Mother's teaching.

Though he sometimes tried to be affectionate, my father often spent the entire time after work in front of the television — and under the influence of alcohol.

Sexual confusion

I was a creative and sensitive child — the kind experts say is likely to become homosexual, primarily for failure to bond with the parent of the same sex. Brought up like this, a youngster may acquire gender identity disorder (GID) and become sexually confused in life.

In elementary school, I once went secretly to my teenage sister's bedroom and found pairs of her nylon stockings in and around the wastebasket. I took a few of them back to my bedroom and put them on under the covers. Rubbing my feet and legs together, I felt the pleasurable slickness of the nylons. Then I hid them in the back of the lowest bureau drawer.

The next few evenings I occasionally wore them under an afghan wrapped about me. Family members may have known I was cross-dressing, but nobody said anything — not even Mother. She might have felt that I was in big trouble, but didn't know what to do.

Father figure

My nine-year-older brother, Bryant, helped heal my GID. He organized and oversaw softball games I played with neighborhood kids. Though I normally avoided athletics, Bryant's kindly masculine authority gave me the confidence to compete at sports play with other boys.

Bryant became a surrogate father figure, reducing my post-puberty sexual confusion. Still, in secondary school I could not hold meaningful conversations with girls I liked. Because of my domineering mother, I had a subliminal fear of not being good enough for any girl I spoke to — a fear of rejection.

Spiritual hope

I seriously considered suicide as a teenager but did not want to end my existence. I listened to *The World Tomorrow* radio program and was impressed because its beliefs seemed to follow what was in our Bibles. Persuaded that I could escape the pain and find a fulfilling life now and forever, I confessed my sins to God, asking His forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit. My attitude changed, and the Spirit helped me begin to obey God's will as revealed in Scripture.

But I was still deceived about some things. The Armstrong church's atmosphere of rank and privilege did little to help heal a man with family and personal baggage as deep-seated as mine.



Nikhil Gangavane—Dreamstime.com

New life

Years after conversion and less hung up about women, I met Cathy McConaghy. We grew so much in mutual affection and respect that I asked her to marry me. She gave birth to our two children.

I worked mostly as a traveling salesman, but encephalitis forced me to retire from outside employment at age 34. The family moved, Cathy got a full-time job in Delaware, and I began writing and marketing Christian science fiction stories.

Leaving Armstrong's church, we attended the service of a distant congregation pastored by Richard Wiedenheft, often driving over one hundred miles on Sabbath to enjoy his interactive Bible studies. Or we drove to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to learn from sermons given by Bruce Chesney in a church there.

Mr. Wiedenheft eventually dissolved his church and encouraged its members to enter the Church of God (Seventh Day). After I joined this body, I had a religious experience. Standing by myself in our living room, I felt peace and assurance that God's kingdom was not one of competitiveness and power structure, but of cooperation and eternal helpfulness.

Health challenges

One day in my early forties I woke up in a hospital bed with a plastic feeding tube sticking out of my belly. I didn't know then that I'd had a brain hemorrhage and emergency brain surgery. I'd been comatose three months.

A second hemorrhage and another emergency neurosurgery followed. I've been institutionalized for the past sixteen years due to a paralyzed left side and other handicaps. Through all this, God has remade a confused, frightened, depressed soul into a trusting, rational person.

Through prayer and Bible reading for comfort and encouragement, I enjoy a closer relationship with God. Through the *Bible Advocate*, *The Sabbath Sentinel*, and other publications, I've learned about

the trials of brethren and others around the world due to persecution and natural disasters. I've seen the needs and felt the pains of nursing home residents, along with the kind care of many nurses and volunteers. I've been humbled and had my spiritual eyes opened.

Life lessons

One conclusion I've reached is that the real purpose of life is service. Fixing our eyes on God and the needs of others, we see beyond our lives. We find the joy in giving to be far more substantial than the fleeting pleasures we seek.

In obedience to the hard commands of Christ, we keep resisting ourselves and calling upon God, our supreme sovereign and greatest servant, for help in becoming like Him. He gave His Son to experience life and endure death in shame. When we endure to the end as He did, we go to sleep and are awakened in a glorified body without the constant negative pulls of this earth.

I've learned this through suffering: We can cooperate in the everlasting culture of servants who always have joy because their eyes look beyond their own small selves. What I've learned is worth far more than my hurts. I've been blessed!

Blessings don't always feel good. Sometimes they hurt a lot, but they're still blessings. Whether we're happy or sad, feeling good or bad, God is blessing each one of us who stays the course.

Howard M. Mesick, Sr. is a resident of Harbor Healthcare and Rehab Center in Lewes, DE. His wife, Cathy, lives in the family home not far away.





Embracing the Valley

My friend Ronda* can be very convincing. “God can take this from you. God *wants* to take this from you. He wants me to pray for your healing.”

Who knew? Maybe this was the time God was waiting for. As Ronda prayed, that little caterpillar of hope started nudging out of its firmly encased chrysalis again.

I have known for fifteen years that I have polycystic kidney disease — the same disease that brought death too early to my mother, her mother, and most of her sisters. You can know you have it for fifteen years, but you can do nothing about it except wait and pray for a transplant when the time comes, and that it works. For me, that’s going to leave about eighteen years for well-meaning friends to try nudging that caterpillar of hope into a butterfly. Eighteen years of people who are *certain* God plans to heed their pleas for my healing. Eighteen years for me to start believing again that maybe this time this prayer would be the one.

Three weeks after the conversation with Ronda, I walked into the nephrologist’s office with the little caterpillar shoving away at its confines. *Definitely this time. She was so sure. Or definitely not.*

*Name has been changed.

With lab results and prognosis the same as they had always been, I left the office scolding myself for doing what I really knew better than to do. Not for believing God; He can heal — and does. But I have known for some time through peace from the Holy Spirit that He will not choose to. This time, I will walk the valley my mother walked. It wasn’t pretty. I am not keen to walk it myself, but it really is all right. At least it would be, if only those around me could be at peace as well.

Perhaps someone you love is walking a valley of illness, death, divorce, or loss. Should you push harder? Pull back? Pray more fervently? Muster more people for more prayer power? Pump more Bible verses? I suggest a radical approach: *Embrace the peace of the valley*. Here are three good reasons to do so.

Peace in the valley

Isn’t being content in the valley just giving up? Didn’t Jesus tell the story of the persistent widow badgering the judge day and night until he granted her request? Yet two things stand out to me in this widow’s story.

First, she didn’t ask for relief of personal pain or worry; she petitioned for justice. She wanted God’s inherent character to be satisfied. As far as I can tell, my physical healing isn’t a matter

of right or wrong. I’ve done the widow’s job for twenty-five years, praying for my brothers’ and sisters’ salvation. God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Second, the widow persisted because she never got an answer. Is it still commendable to persist when we get an answer — and the answer is no? For this case, I look to Paul, who begged God to remove his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:8, 9). Paul persisted. Paul got an answer. Paul let go. Paul was at peace. Works for me.

Dear friends, when your discontent with my status quo causes me to doubt my own contentment, I have to tread again the difficult ground I’ve already stumbled through. I prefer to take off the hiking shoes and plunge my feet in the cool waters of peaceful waiting in the valley. I’m ready to be still and know that He is God. I haven’t given up; I’ve given over.

Gratitude in the valley

Job lost everything and every person dear to him (except his wife and a few friends). Yet Job affirmed, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). Can you look at your friend’s pain and believe that, if it happened to you and God was all you had left, He would be

Ending the struggle against God's "no." by Jill Richardson

Corel Photos

enough? Would you rail at the unfairness of life?

Sometimes persistent petitioning to God for healing is commendable perseverance. But sometimes it's our own unwillingness to accept the unfairness of life. It's our demand that good people be rewarded with good things.

Walking the valley produces something in the heart one might not expect: gratitude. Gratitude for the breathless miracle of our mere existence, for the unfathomable miracle of God's grace. You see, part of us has died. Ideals have perished. Goals and intention, roadkill. But out of that death rises an appreciation for what matters in the light of eternity. Do you really want to comprehend eternity? You gotta die. If your friend in the valley is at peace, it means she's seen what Job saw. If you don't run and you don't fight, maybe you can see it, too.

Incarnation in the valley

People going through the valley need a flashlight-holder more than they need a cheerleader. Don't tell me from the sidelines that God is good and wants to heal me; come down where it's sometimes scary and stand by me. Like Jesus did. Jesus did not yell encouragement from heaven when we were in greatest need. He came down. He walked be-

side. He felt the fear and calmed it with His presence.

A family of words in the New Testament describes this kind of incarnational encouragement: *koinonia*. The *koinonia* word family translates "associate," "partake," "communicate with," "participate," "share with," "ready to give," "compassionate," "companion," "fellow traveler." A fellow traveler to walk alongside you. Someone to lift you up when you're weary or guide you when you don't know which road to take.

One of my favorite stories in Scripture is Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. These three men were willing to die for their faith, a faith that believed that God could save them from execution if He chose.

"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. . . . But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you . . . that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up" (Daniel 3:17, 18, NLT).

Did you catch those four important words? *Even if he doesn't*, we are at peace. It appeared God would not save, as into the furnace they went.

But here the story takes another fascinating twist: God did not swoop down and save the Hebrews from going into the fire;

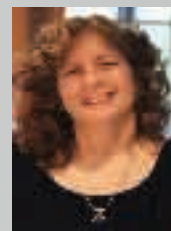
He went into the furnace (v. 25). God showed up not to take them out but to go through with them.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). That takes courage because it's scarier, messier, more time-consuming, and requires more emotional risk than verbal "encouragement." It's incarnational encouragement. It's in the valley we realize the depth of human relationship God intended for us.

The butterfly of hope will emerge for me one day, but I am content to let it happen when it's fully developed and ready to fly. Meanwhile, dear friends, don't stop praying for me. But remember the words of C.S. Lewis: "Prayer is not a way of making use of God; prayer is a way of offering ourselves to God in order that He should be able to make use of us."

Don't let the object of your praying be my victory; that is already assured. Let your object be to allow God to make use of you — and me — during our walk in the valley. **PR**

Jill Richardson
writes from War-
renville, IL.





YOUTH REACH

Mission Possible 2008

Joseph

by Wayne Hrenyk

Young people are put into situations that challenge their faith every day. At school you're tested to see whether you will live what you believe about Jesus, the truth, the way, the life.

You meet many your age who don't know Jesus except as a cuss word. You're instructed by teachers who look down on anything Christian. You are on the front line of the battle for this generation. Your pastor can't be with you there, nor your parents or Sabbath school teachers.

This pressure and aloneness is discouraging — totally frustrating. You may feel like blending in with the non-Christian crowd.

But wait a moment. Think about another true-life person who dealt with the same issues you encounter: Joseph. When he was young, his brothers sold him to traders going down to Egypt, a pagan land. This would test his faith to its very core. He would be alone — no father or mother to guide him, no family or church to support his faith. He was a stranger in that land.

What was Joseph to do? Blend in? Become Egyptian? Worship new gods? Would he deny true faith so he didn't stick out like a sore thumb?

This may sound similar to what you're facing at school. I can relate. In my elementary school a man handed out pocket-sized Bibles. Hungry for the God I had heard about, I read it. My friends called me Religious Hrenyk. Those were the worst of my elementary school days.

My mistake was that I caved in and left the Bible and God for a while because I felt alone in my faith. Actually other kids in my class went to church, and one was a minister's son. I was not alone after all but could see only what the Adversary wanted me to see. Later, I led one of my school friends to Christ. He ended up going to the mission field to share the good news. God may use you to touch your friends who may never



hear of Jesus and the gospel except through your words and life.

If you struggle with these issues at school, find other Christians in the same boat. They're probably looking for someone just like you. Meet with others who have needs like yours and start a support group. Your school may already have a club where Christian young people meet before classes to pray or study the Bible together.

The story of Joseph tells a long, hard struggle. Though Joseph was its human hero, the real hero was God, who never left Joseph and blessed him wherever he went. As a result, Joseph changed history, his family, and many lives. He even introduced God to the king of Egypt. This would never have happened unless Joseph decided that God was greater than the pressure he faced.

Going to school and being a possible target for pressure by others is a challenge. But remember God is there with you in the classroom. If you want to be true to yourself, true to who you are, and true to the God you serve, there is a way!

Got a concern? Write to Wayne at hrnyk@sbcglobal.net. He'll be glad to pray for you.



So What Did You Do With Your Summer?

School is here again. Back to studying, learning, eating cafeteria food. As you look ahead to another school session, look back to what you did this summer.

Did you earn money for college or a new radio for your 80s model Mazda? Lay out on the beach,

Students' Legal Rights On Public School Campuses

1. The right to meet with other religious students and to form Bible Clubs.
2. The right to express your religious beliefs through signs, symbols, and clothing.
3. The right to talk about your religious beliefs and share your faith with other students on campus.
4. The right to distribute religious literature (Bibles) on campus during non instructional time.
5. The right to pray on campus alone, with others, and during graduation.
6. The right to carry or study your Bible or other religious literature on campus.
7. The right to do research papers, speeches, creative projects or talent programs on religious themes.
8. The right to be exempt from activities that contradict your religious beliefs.
9. The right to celebrate or study religious holidays on campus.
10. The right to study religious themes, religious literature, and religious history.

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working

on that tan? Walk

around town bored out of your mind? See every new movie that came out? Stay home and play the Wii day and night?

Perhaps you helped out with the Vacation Bible School at your church? Went to youth camp? Helped paint your church building? Visited someone in a nursing home? Volunteered at a community center? Did you step out of your ordinary life and do something unusual?

In this issue you see pics of some youth who stepped out of what's familiar to them and served others. Thirty-nine youth from the Eugene, Harrisburg, and Marion, Oregon, churches — along with Spokane, Washington, youth — went on a week-long mission trip to the Yakama Indian reservation. There they provided a three-day VBS program,

outreach nights to the community, and small-work projects to minister to the Yakama Indians.

Thirty other youth went to Conroe, Texas, to participate in MISSION POSSIBLE, our ministry-based youth camp. They participated in ministries such as worship, drama, work crew, hospitality, video, and children. They learned how to serve Christ through serving in these ministries geared toward the church and the community. They fed the homeless, played with children, worked at people's homes, interacted with seniors, volunteered at a food bank, and much more.

These youth gave themselves and ministered to others this summer. They accomplished the extraordinary. Or did they? Who said that service to others is extraordinary? Shouldn't these things be a part of our everyday lives?

Jesus walked around more than three years serving others — an ordinary lifestyle for Him (Philippians 2:5-11; Mark 10:43-45). If we are to be like Christ, shouldn't we expect to have the same kind of lifestyle?

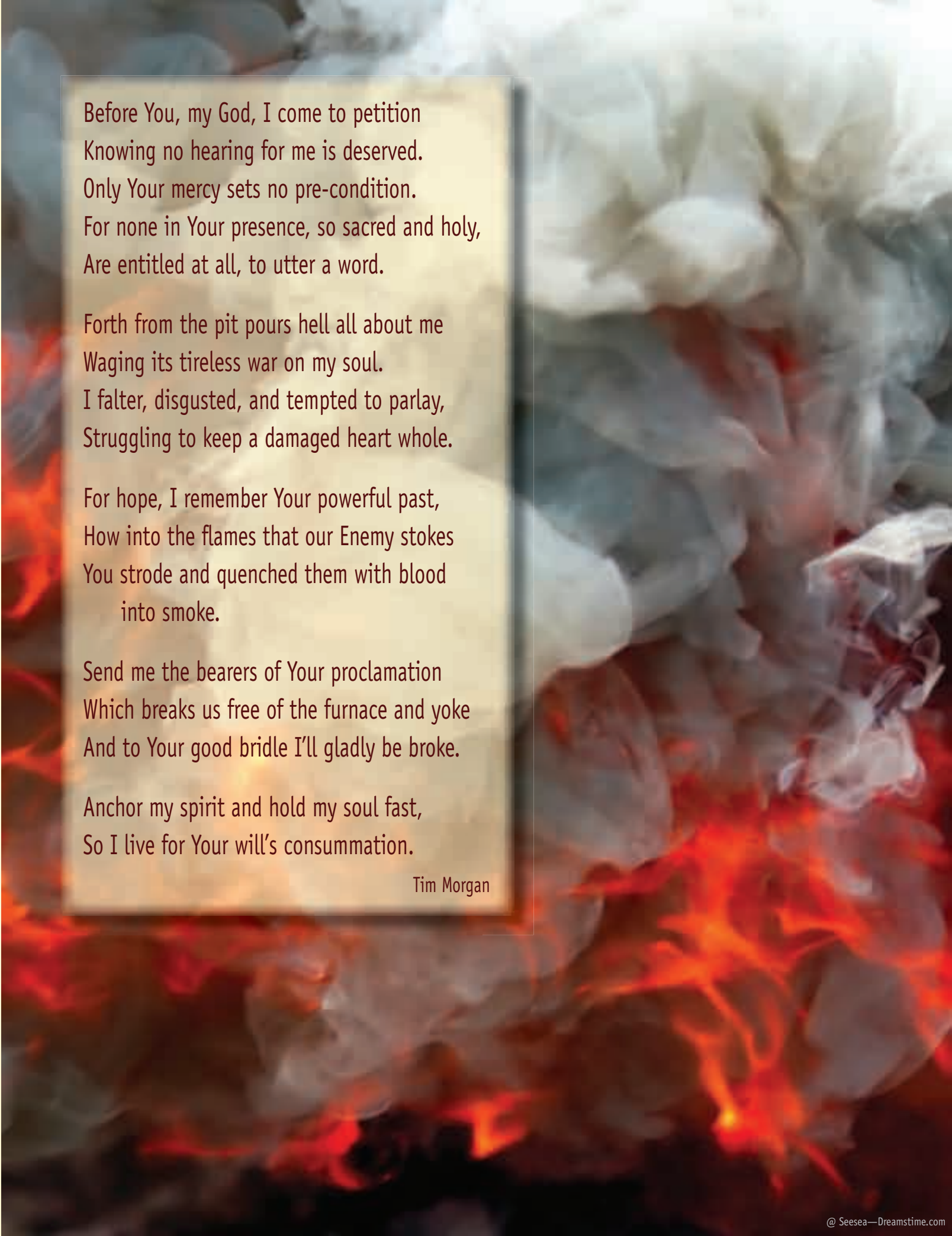
Teens and young adults today are praised whenever they think of someone other than themselves, as though they did something extraordinary. Can we, as CoG7 youth, change our lifestyles so that service is the norm?



All photos taken at the Yakama Indian Reservation, Washington state



For more events and pictures, visit <http://nfyc.cog7.org>



Before You, my God, I come to petition
Knowing no hearing for me is deserved.
Only Your mercy sets no pre-condition.
For none in Your presence, so sacred and holy,
Are entitled at all, to utter a word.

Forth from the pit pours hell all about me
Waging its tireless war on my soul.
I falter, disgusted, and tempted to parlay,
Struggling to keep a damaged heart whole.

For hope, I remember Your powerful past,
How into the flames that our Enemy stokes
You strode and quenched them with blood
into smoke.

Send me the bearers of Your proclamation
Which breaks us free of the furnace and yoke
And to Your good bridle I'll gladly be broke.

Anchor my spirit and hold my soul fast,
So I live for Your will's consummation.

Tim Morgan



General Conference
Church of God (Seventh Day)



Did you know . . .

- that Publications ministry, started in 1863, is the oldest inter-congregational effort in our church?
- that the Women's Association was born in 1939? Ministerial training began in 1951? and SWORD in 1998?
- that the General Conference maintains its organic and organizational ties with Spring Vale Academy, now 60 years old?
- that Missions Abroad works closely with the International Ministerial Congress in more than 40 nations?

G. C. Ministries

Eddie Villalba, Director of Administration

Our Savior Jesus Christ left us a job to do as His saved people: to fulfill the Great Commission (Mark 16:15, 16). Some have taken that work to heart. Others are trying but do not feel capable of doing much. We encourage those of you who are doing your best to continue your hard work. One day the Lord will reward you for your effort.



For those who may not feel they are trained for this work, let me tell you one way you can be part of the Lord's growing harvest. By supporting the various ministries of your General Conference, you are helping spread the gospel around the world! We challenge every member and congregation to take advantage of what these ministries offer. Please don't forget your financial support here to continue the Lord's work.

All of us can look deep down into our hearts and ask ourselves, "What have I done to help the growth of God's work and my church?" We urge you to support the G. C. Ministries so they can, in turn, help unify your local church and assist in its spiritual growth. Please remember these people in your prayers and everyone here at the General Conference office:

Publications: Keith Michalak, director; Calvin Burrell, Sherri Langton, Sylvia Corral

Missions Abroad: Bill Hicks, director

MTS: Calvin Burrell, director; Raul Lopez, Amber Riggs

National FYC: Kurt and Kristi Lang, directors

NAWM: Mary Ling, director

SWORD: Christy Lang, director

Two Missions Abroad

1 In Munster, Germany, reported by Pastor Roberto Torre of Italy:

“It was an exciting experience to attend the European CoG7 congress in Germany on May 24, as a delegate of the Italian Conference. Brethren came from several European nations (a large



delegation from England brought touching music) to worship God and enjoy nurture through His church. Every delegate participated and all the people received spiritual food.

“My message, from Revelation 12, was intended to encourage people of God to go faithfully ahead during difficult times, without compromise to demonic powers. We are part of the woman’s seed spoken of in this chapter. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus are protected, though persecutions and troubles must come before the Lord’s second coming.

“The loving hospitality of the German brethren was unforgettable. Several of them conquered my heart with their simplicity during my stay. ‘How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ (Psalm 133:1). What a blessed experience it was! Praise the Lord!”

• • • • •

2 In Orissa State, India, reported by Pastor Jacob Rao of Hyderabad, Andre Pradesh State:

“On India’s northeastern coast, Orissa State has a nearly 95% Hindu population. Christians, among the persecuted minority, make up less than 2% of the total. It was here that Dr. Graham Staines, an Australian missionary, was burned alive with his two sons in 1999, while serving leprosy patients. Jesus said that when a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it brings life.

“On May 23 of this year, Pastor P. Kennedy and I left Hyderabad for Orissa, and were received by Pastor Hanok Kumar Nayak and his son Watson at the airport. Traveling by car to Parlakhemundi, we

learned that Pastor Hanok, previously a Baptist, had begun his own gospel work, learning more truth through Bible Advocate Press literature we had supplied. Now he wanted to establish the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Orissa.

“On Sabbath the 24th, we conducted worship services in the pastors’ house, spoke about the origin and blessing of Sabbath-observance, declared the establishment of the first church in Orissa, and blessed the new congregation — praying that God would abundantly multiply the seed planted. In the afternoon, several more BAP tracts were distributed, and financial assistance was pledged for translating and publishing the Church’s Statement of Faith into the local dialect.

“Those of us watching these things may one day testify the story of the grains that fell on the ground in Orissa that day. Or if our breath does not hold us that long, the pages of Church history will tell it to future generations.”



Pioneer Missionary Training

Is God calling you or giving you a vision to reach the world around you? Do you have a desire to serve your fellow man? Are you interested in serving on the mission field? PMT Level 1 could be just right for you!

Pioneer Missionary Training (PMT) is a program hosted by the Mexican CoG7 General Conference and facilitated by the Missions, SWORD, and NFYC ministries of the North American Conference. Participants learn the concepts of evangelism to the unsaved through classroom training and hands-on

In Memory

Elder Harris Kinzler, 66, died June 23, 2008, in an accident at his farm near Fredonia, North Dakota, near his birth place.

After graduating from high school in Gackle, North Dakota, Harris married Shirley Schlenker of the Alfred, North Dakota, congregation, and became a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day). He graduated from Midwest Bible College in 1972 and served the Conroe, Texas, church as pastor for several years. Returning to North Dakota in 1977, he continued to serve the Lord in ministerial capacities until the day of his death.

Elder Kinzler is survived by his wife, Shirley, three daughters (Gina Kinzler, Renee Listul, and Michelle Hammer), and their families. They miss him dearly, as do all who knew him and his heart for the cause of truth and right. May God multiply the seed that Elder Kinzler sowed a hundredfold and raise up more preachers to replace him!



Shirley and Harris Kinzler

experience living and working among brethren of like faith in their country.

This year's PMT team will travel to Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, December 21-31. The \$400 cost includes housing, food, and transportation within Mexico, but not airfare to and from Monterrey. This short-term, Level 1 trip, designed as an introduction to foreign missions, is required before someone is considered for a future CoG7 missions trip.

If God is prompting you in this area, contact one of these for an application (must be postmarked by October 31):

Kurt Lang, NFYC director, 541-517-1079 or kurt@cog7.org

Christy Lang, SWORD director, sword@cog7.org

Bill Hicks, Missions director, carlylehix@aol.com

Missouri Women's Retreat

September 26-28, 2008

Kamp Kiersey, near Amsterdam, Missouri

Theme: "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"

Contact: Ruth Reynolds, 913-757-2257 or ruthmusic@yahoo.com

Congratulations . . .

. . . to Don and Eileen Rodgers of Alma, Arkansas, who celebrated 50 years of marriage on June 8. If you know of other golden couples who've not been recognized in the BA, please send names and wedding dates to the editor.

Music for Missions

Admirers of singing evangelists John and Katherine Kiesz will be glad to know that their albums are now available on CD. For one or both CDs of the Kiesz's music, write Missions Ministries, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233, or call 303-452-7973 with a credit card handy. Suggested donation: \$20 for one CD, \$35 for both. All proceeds go to support CoG7 Missions Abroad. Brother and Sister Kiesz served together in ministry for more than 60 years prior to their deaths in the 1990s.

CoG7 Invades Utah

Welcome to 30+ new members and friends meeting in the Salt Lake City area – our first church in that state. Pray for this vibrant group. Worship with them when you can:

3450 S. Main Street, Suites 62 - 64
Salt Lake City, UT 84115

Gerardo Murga, leader, 801-808-1347



North American Ministerial Council

**Celebrates the 150th anniversary of
the founding of the
Church of God (Seventh Day)
1858-2008
at Gull Lake Conference Center,
Hickory Corners, Michigan
October 6-11**



This council meeting will be combined with a Leadership Conference that all CoG7 lay pastors and lay leaders are invited to attend.

- Overall theme: "Equipped for the Journey"
- Featured biblical discussion: the new covenant
- Pre-council day: Church Planting Conference on Monday, October 6
- Leadership Conference: includes most council sessions, plus a seminar track for lay pastors and leaders
- Michigan State Conference: joins us for a super Sabbath celebration (with historical highlights of the Michigan church) on October 11



Ministerial Council officers, L to R: Ken Knoll, Robert Coulter, and Carl Palmer

Describing what happened 150 years ago, Elder Gilbert Cranmer wrote:

"At last I made up my mind: I would not belong to a [movement] that was ruled by a woman any longer. From that time the Bible has been my creed, with Christ at the head of the Church. I started alone, with my Bible in my hand. God has blessed my labors beyond my utmost expectations. We have some eight ministers and some hundreds of members in the state of Michigan. God has manifest His power among us in a wonderful manner."

In the Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, Michigan, area where Elder Cranmer planted the first congregations that later became Church of God (Seventh Day), we have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate our religious and spiritual roots. Gull Lake Conference Center offers comfortable accommodations in a rural setting, and October weather in Michigan is typically lovely. Ministers, pastors, leading laymen, and their families are invited to enjoy this event together!

In the Church Planting Conference on October 6, Dr. Thomas E. Cheyney, a specialist with the Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, will address the question of what it takes to plant an effective church, and related topics. Those interested in starting a new congregation should by all means attend this one-day conference.

Registration: call 303-452-7973 or download forms at www.cog7.org

Cost is \$358 for room and meals at the council and Leadership Conference (begins 7 p.m. Monday); add \$87 for the Church Planting Conference (arrive Sunday evening). Ground transportation will be provided from the Grand Rapids airport to Gull Lake.



International Tour

Australia

The past year has been interesting and exciting for the Church here. It started in July '07 with the visit of four brethren (Quintino and Enzina Marsella, John Klassek, and Phil Kordahi) to the North American General Conference convention in Overland Park, Kansas. Two of us (John and Phil) stayed on to attend the International Ministerial Congress (IMC) at the same site.

After experiencing the IMC in Kansas as an observer, John Klassek was so impressed by the spirit of unity that he decided to join the Church of God (Seventh Day). John and his wife, Rebecca, of Perth, Western Australia, are founders-producers of Message-Week a multimedia non-profit service, creating religious films since 1997 and streaming them over the Internet at www.message7.org.

Through John's expertise, we have a new, modern Web site (www.cog7aus.com) that generates inquiries and requests for gospel literature.

The Lord has blessed us with church growth and successful projects, to His glory. One of our ongoing efforts is to invite the community around our church facility to share in a barbeque and an afternoon of friendship. Also, several brethren sponsor children's education in India through Bright Futures, an aid and development program operating in Australia. And we continue to support Missions Abroad in Zone 6 and beyond, through the blessings of our Lord.

The '07 Australian General Conference meeting in Portland, Victoria, was a great success, bringing brethren together from all over Australia – in some cases



David and Angella Kidd (left) of Adelaide, South Australia, pose with Pastor James Dugger and family in Offinso, Ghana.

for the first time. What an inspiring time we had!

On a personal trip in early '08, David and Angella Kidd of the Adelaide church visited brethren in Ghana, West Africa, for nine days. This connection began a few years earlier when we regularly sent multiple copies of our *Edifier* publication to the church there. While in Ghana, David preached for an evangelistic crusade in Amowi, near Offinso. Many souls came to Christ in that effort, according to local pastor James Dugger. He wrote: "The visit of the Kidds was very important in planting the church at Amowi. Many people now tend to view the ministry to have a firm foundation."

We look forward to what the Lord has in store for us in the coming year and pray that we will be ready and able to serve Him through sharing the gospel.

— Phil Kordahi
Pastor



Rebecca and John Klassek (far right) pose with their children and others at Sabbath fellowship in Perth, Western Australia.

Theology Matters

Consider this conversation between a little boy and his father.

“Who made me?” the boy asked.

“God,” Dad replied.

“Who made you?” the boy continued.

“God did.”

Again the boy asked, “Did God make everybody?”

“Yes,” Dad responded, “all the people in the world.”

So far, Dad’s answers were correct, but the tough question followed: “If God made all the people in the world, then who made God?”

Dad scratched his head, then said, “I guess God made Himself.”

Wrong answer! To say God made Himself implies that at one time God did not exist and that He is a created being. This contradicts the scriptural assertion that God is creator, not created; that He has always existed apart from His creation; that He is the uncaused cause, the unmoved mover, the I AM.

This calls to mind the importance of a “theological construct.” Theology (*theos*: God; *ology*: study) is a science. The task of a scientist is to make sense of the world by formulating theories about it that are non-contradictory and consistent with known facts. Similarly the theologian brings clarity to the Scriptures by making sense of its various parts and by presenting a picture of God — a construct — that is harmonious and non-contradictory.

Sound theology will not produce ready-made answers to all biblical matters. However, it will stimulate the learning process, expand your biblical world, help you better explain your beliefs, and equip you to handle controversial questions.

A sound theological construct is essential to ministerial development, and thus critical to the church’s future. I am not alone in this conviction. The following statement, reportedly etched above the gates of Harvard (our nation’s first college), underscores the conviction of early settlers regarding the importance of a trained ministry:

After God had carried us safe to New England and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God’s worship, and settled the civil government: One of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.

Surprisingly, most Ivy League schools, not just Harvard, were founded to prepare clergymen to promote the gospel. They may have strayed far from that target, but the original vision is noble.

On the other hand, CoG7 pioneers de-emphasized the need for a theological construct in favor of the right of each individual to judge for himself the meaning of Scripture. They considered the preparation of the heart more important than that of the mind.

But these need not be in conflict. Those of us who know about God do theology, even when we deny the need for it. The issue is whether our theology is biblical and consistent, or not. The liberty to be our own interpreter is our privilege as Christians, but we must also rightly handle God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Our church’s commitment to being Bible-based should reflect the priority of Christian education and the development of a theological construct based on sound principles of hermeneutics.

So the next time you hear comments like “I don’t subscribe to creeds” or “I’m not into theology,” remember that every church has its creed, though it may not be official, and that everyone has a theology, either good or bad. If it’s true that right action flows from right beliefs — and it is — then theology really matters.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President





MTS

SUMMER SESSION



Fifty-eight students and ten instructors came to Ministries Training System Summer Session in Denver, June 2-12. How many do you know? Thank God for them!

From these and a hundred more, the Church's pastors and ministers for the next ten to twenty years will come. Pray for and bless them when you can!

Ongoing training for service is available to all members through MTS. Contact: training@cog7.org.

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