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BIBLE ADVOCATE®

October-November 2009

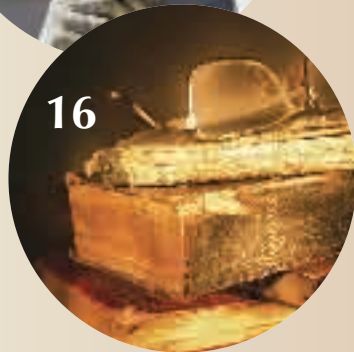
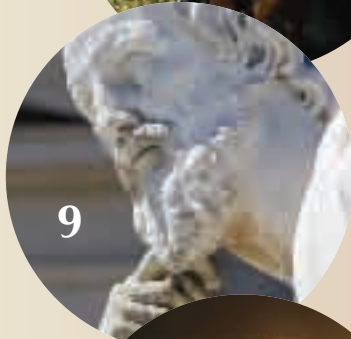
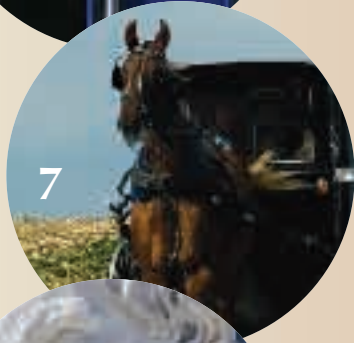


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Coming in the December BA: annual issue on prophecy; persecution of Christians

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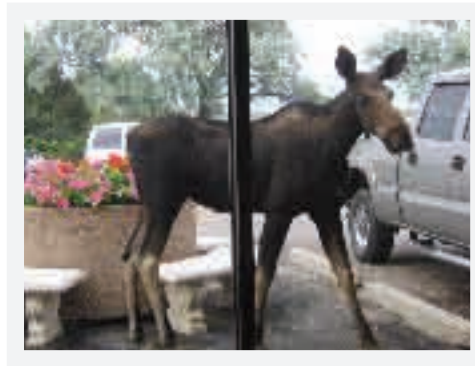
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Close Encounter of the Moose Kind



When Bible Advocate Press and CoG7 first moved to these thirty-three acres just fifteen miles north of Denver, we were “country” for sure. Not anymore! In thirty-seven years here, we’ve been encircled by urban development. Our wildlife is mostly prairie dogs and cottontails, plus an occasional coyote or bull snake.

Imagine the surprise, then, when a seven hundred-pound moose



wandered through at mid-morning, July 30. We’re not talking long distance, here: Miss Moose mooseyed along the sidewalk in front of our building, near enough to reach out and touch, if someone had opened the door.

Whaid Rose saw her first and yelled. Larry Marrs grabbed his camera and started shooting;

some of his photos made it on the evening news. Allan Stroupe teased Rebecca Vandewyngaerde, our resident bunny lover: “We’ve been telling you not to feed the animals.” Others turned their cell phones into cameras or watched as nearby motorists pulled in for a closer look. Linda Michalak thought, *Hasn’t anyone ever seen a moose before?*

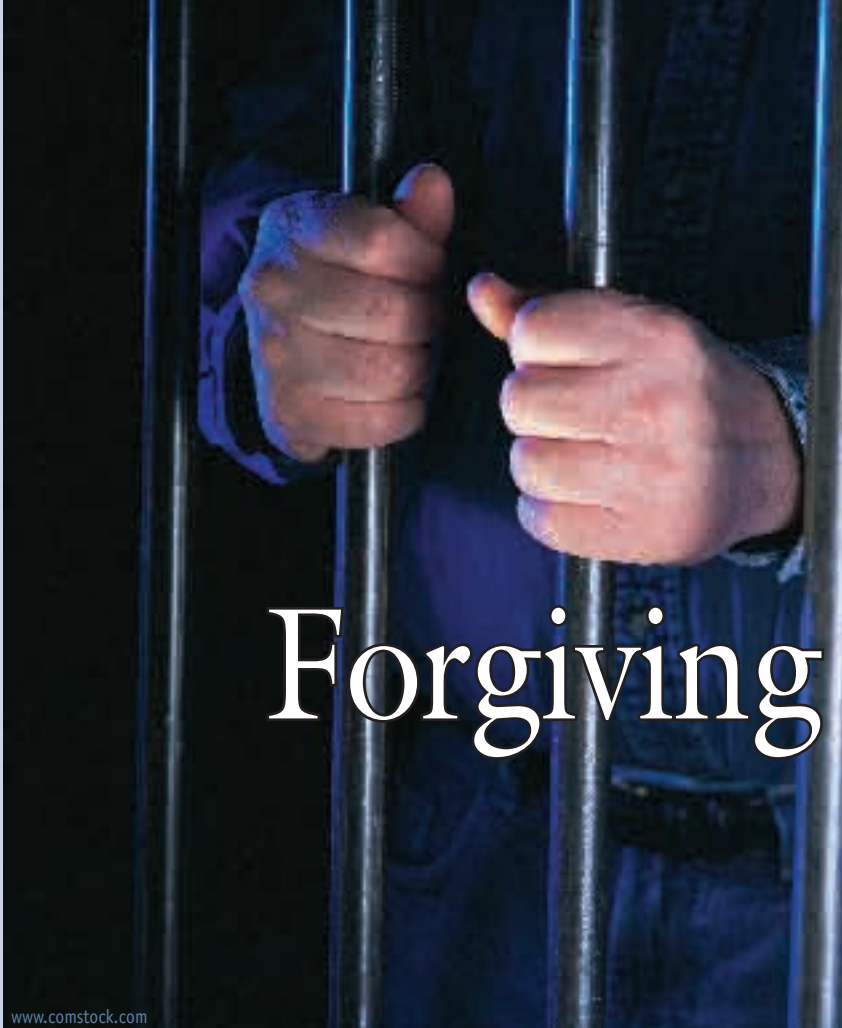
Amid this frenzy of attention, the moose calmly laid down on our lawn for a nap.

Where had she come from? Probably from a national forest or park land in the Rocky Mountains more than twenty miles to the west. Perhaps this yearling became disoriented when her mother weaned her and sent her away.

Where did she go from here? She “vamoosed” – look it up. Wildlife personnel tranquilized her and returned her to the Colorado wilderness.

Miss Moose’s half-hour visit gave us great memories and reminds us that the One who sees the sparrow fall also cares for a lost moose: “Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:10).

— Calvin Burrell



Forgiving a Killer

Freedom from the past is possible in the present.
by **Lynetta L. Smith**

Something like the sound of firecrackers peppered the hot June afternoon as our house stirred with waking toddlers and preschoolers. “It’s a little early for fireworks,” I told my husband.

A few minutes later, more shots rang out. They sounded different than the first round. Panic filled me as I grasped the situation. Gunfire. Somewhere near our home on a safe Air Force base, someone was shooting.

“OK,” I said. “Time for cartoons.” My attempt at calm demeanor couldn’t fool my two-year-old daughter and four day-care kids.

As they gathered around the television, questions they didn’t know how to ask filled their eyes. As *The Flintstones* filtered through our living room, I closed

the blinds and began to pace.

I stepped outside after a few minutes to see airmen in white hospital uniforms walking the streets. “Back inside your house, Ma’am!” They shouted at everyone who opened their front doors.

I complied and went to sit with the kids. *The Flintstones* was interrupted by a news brief. We all sat glued to the TV as reporters put bits and pieces together about Dean Melberg, who went on a killing spree at the base hospital just two blocks away — where my daughter had been born.

I fought back tears as I looked at the youngest boy in my living room. His mother worked at the hospital.

Throughout the afternoon, stunned parents called to check

on their children, and that evening clutched them into grateful hugs as they picked them up. I later learned that a psychologist I had once seen (for gun phobia, ironically) had been shot and killed, along with other hospital staff. Those last shots I heard were from a security officer’s gun — the fatal shots that ended the rampage and Dean Melberg’s life.

As we sorted through the emotional wreckage, the hospital closed for renovations. They made plans to enclose the building within the fence of the base to prevent any more unauthorized entry.

In the meantime, a fence crumbled from around my heart — the stone fence I had put up to imprison my emotions from another shooting. All the news and

www.comstock.com

hoopla surrounding the Melberg killings chipped away at it until I could no longer avoid all the horrifying details of what had happened back in November 1990.

Another fateful day

The day after Thanksgiving, five years earlier, I was in my dorm room at Fort Lowry in Colorado. A knock sounded on the door. I opened it to see the squadron runner standing before me. She told me to report to the captain immediately.

It was a holiday, so hardly anyone was supposed to be on duty that day, much less the captain. My chest squeezed with dread as I followed her to the captain's office.

The captain met me at her door and ushered me in. She was six feet tall with short blonde hair, and her intimidating reputation had preceded her. No one wanted to get on her bad side. I expected to stand at attention while she briefed me on whatever was going on. Instead, she told me, "Sit down."

As I sat, the sick feeling in my gut increased. Instead of the gruff commander we'd all come to fear and respect, I saw a woman who was about to lose all of her professional composure. After a half-minute of wiping her palms on her pants, switching positions, and folding her hands, she simply said, "You need to call your family."

Horrible reality

Not knowing which family to call, since my parents were divorced, I dialed my mom. When I got her on the line, she said, "Oh, honey, did they tell you?" By now I knew that something

horrible had happened and that no one could form the words to tell me what it was.

"Mom, what is going on?" I shouted into the payphone, drawing stares from other students in the squadron. An officer cleared the area, but I was already near hysterics as Mom tried to explain that my Aunt Beckie, her sister, and three of my cousins had been shot and killed. I continued to scream questions like "Why?" and "That kind of stuff doesn't happen in Wyoming!"

The rest of the day was a blur. As I waited through the weekend to fly to Buffalo, Wyoming, where my family lived, my friends brought me food and tried to

keep up a conversation. The captain came by and told them to make sure I wasn't left alone.

The next day I had regained some composure and called my grandmother. "Did they find who did it?" The answer had me reeling again. Beckie's fifteen-year-old stepson had shot her and his three brothers with a twelve-gauge shotgun. His confession made things easy for the police but infinitely tougher for the rest of us.

Aunt Beckie had been one of my favorite people. She loved life and laughed out loud often. Her sense of humor and practical jokes were legendary. In my childhood, I spent many happy summer nights at her house,

Breaking Free

Is there a national forgiveness week? If not, there should be. The Jewish people offer forgiveness to one another prior to their annual Day of Atonement.

Jesus told us if we come to the altar to offer a gift and remember that someone has a grievance against us, we are to leave our gift before the altar, not on it, go and make peace with our brother or sister, and then offer our gift (Matthew 5:23, 24). In our day, we offer tithes and offerings to the church and our prayers to God. Should not Christ's wisdom extend also to this?

We should be careful to keep short accounts with others, lest our prayers be hampered by a spirit of bitterness. We cannot expect God's forgiveness if we don't forgive others. We should also forgive ourselves of all sins remitted by the Great Accountant. Satan raises past sins to cause us to doubt our salvation. God says that once our sins are forgiven, He casts them as far away as the east is from the west. God will empower you to forgive someone, even if that someone is you.

It is by faith that we accept God's forgiveness, and by faith we find the desire and will to forgive others — no matter what. Doing this releases us from the prison cell of hatred, sadness, and defensiveness. Choosing to forgive, we can live in the present.

— Linda Storm
Joplin, Missouri

I wanted the killer dead, just like my aunt and three cousins. Most of all, I wanted him to pay for hurting us so much.

playing in her huge backyard and lying in her hammock. We went shopping and to the movies.

Aunt Beckie dedicated her life to her family, nursing school, and the severely handicapped. Her compassion for others belied logic, especially where her stepson was concerned.

All that was cut short the morning after Thanksgiving Day by the one she'd tried to help the most.

Living with loss

The Melberg shooting on Fairchild AFB stirred up all those emotions again, and I couldn't keep them from surfacing anymore. I eventually quit the day-care; I barely had the ability to meet the emotional needs of my own child, let alone other peoples'.

Since my husband was working swing shift, I had way too many quiet hours after my little girl had gone to sleep each night. I sat up in bed, reading my Bible and praying that God would take away the pain.

The killings in my family were so senseless and wasteful; I hated the killer. A life sentence with the possibility of parole was way too

good for him. I wanted him dead, just like my aunt and three cousins. Most of all, I wanted him to pay for hurting us so much.

Bitterness ate me alive, and I knew I could no longer go on as if I were over it.

Breakthrough

Over and over, I asked God, "Why?" Searching for answers, I started reading the Bible from cover to cover.

One night I had gotten to the book of Chronicles when I finally cried out to God, "How can I forgive him? Do You really expect me to forgive a murderer? I hate him!"

Gently, God helped me picture Christ on the cross, where He'd forgiven those who murdered Him. I realized my hatred was no better than the hatred that caused this young man to pick up a gun and blow away his family. Hatred did nothing to bring them back; it only hurt me more. I could either let it consume me or let it go. In short, I could forgive because Christ forgave.

Eighteen years later, I still see that as a significant mile mark in my walk with Christ. I no lon-

ger harbor venomous thoughts toward the young man who murdered my relatives, nor do I wish him dead. Since he has still not expressed any remorse, I do feel he should be in jail and that justice must be served. But I am free from the bondage of bitterness.

Though I still tear up when I think of my aunt, especially on her birthday and Thanksgiving, my heart swells when I imagine seeing her again in eternity. It wouldn't be like her to run up and hug me; she'd sneak behind and startle me with a loud "Boo!" Our reunion will be full of raucous laughter, I'm sure.

Restoration

I still grieve for the families of those who died in the Fairchild AFB hospital that day. I know how they feel. Somehow one can't fully comprehend that sort of pain unless they have gone through it.

As workers restored the hospital and declared it a place of healing and peace, so God did in my soul. With new carpet and new walls where bullet holes and blood had been, the staff could provide health and well-being to their patients. In the same way, God cut out the bitter black parts in my heart and replaced them with compassion and hope. What seemed impossible — forgiveness — God made into a beautiful reality. **BA**

Lynetta L. Smith writes from Spring Hill, TN.



When you hold a grudge,
who really suffers?

by Heather Carr

In October 2006 the Amish community in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, endured the fatal shooting of five young girls in a one-room schoolhouse. Many of us looked on in wonder as this community forgave the shooter and embraced his family. In this case, the Amish demonstrated the amazing human ability to forgive, even in the most painful of circumstances.¹

Forgiveness was a tough choice for those people. It's tough for us as well, but something we must do if we're going to survive spiritually, physically, and emotionally. If we choose instead to begrudge the evildoer, the stakes may be higher than we think.

Jesus makes this clear. He says that forgiving an offense is not merely a nice thing to do; it is a requirement that affects our relationship with God:

"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14, 15).

Through our example, we open the door for others to accept the life-giving forgiveness offered through Christ. Extending forgiveness, especially when it seems impossible, allows the heart of God to shine through us.

Defining a grudge

When we experience an emotional offense, extending forgiveness is a real challenge. It may

seem impossible to see anything beyond our grief. If the pain begins to take over, a deep-seated resentment, or grudge, may form.

A grudge results from allowing our initial negative reactions to consume us. We replay our hurt repeatedly, leaving us feeling helpless, even overwhelmed, in the face of injustice. Anger, confusion, or sadness dominate our thinking and crowd out positive feelings, like joy and peace.

Look for these cues to determine if you're holding a grudge:

- You think about your painful past more than your present.²
- You feel physically or emo-

tionally upset thinking about the offense.²

- You replay the situation in your mind.²
- You have a chip on your shoulder.³
- You are easily angered.³
- You plot revenge.³
- You think the worst about people or situations.³

Damaged health

Holding a grudge doesn't hurt the offender; it hurts us. Researchers have discovered that unforgiveness adversely affects the immune, nervous, and

The Power of Forgiveness



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National Forgiveness Week

October 25-31, 2009

Purposes

- to celebrate the power of unconditional love and forgiveness in producing good health and happiness at home, at work, at worship, and in our individual lives.
- to repair, restore, rebuild, and revive damaged relationships through the process of unconditional love and forgiveness.

Prayers

Sunday: *Please forgive others.*

Monday: *Help me forgive them.*

Tuesday: *Please forgive me.*

Wednesday: *Please restore my joy.*

Thursday: *Remove bitterness from my heart.*

Friday: *Bless those who have hurt me.*

Sabbath: *Help me to forgive myself.*

Visit www.unconditionallovelive.com. Click on National Forgiveness Day. Download information and send to others.

— Robert Moyers
Liberty Center, Ohio

cardiovascular systems. Result? Higher blood pressure, increased headaches and backaches, stomach problems, and other ailments.

Refusing to release a painful experience causes our bodies to relive it. Whether the event is recent or many years ago, the physical result can be the same. "When we think or feel something intellectually or emotionally, part of that experience is a physical experience," says Dr. Fred Luskin, director of the Forgiveness Project at Stanford University.

According to Dr. Luskin, the mind-body connection is the link between forgiveness and health. A long-standing resentment or grudge is "going to have an impact on you physically through

the stress response, and then the physical is going to have an influence on your mind by telling you how much this painful experience has harmed you."

Our bodies aren't the only things to suffer when we hold grudges from being wronged; our emotions take a beating as well. Negative feelings like hopelessness, depression, and anxiety can overwhelm us.

Research has also shown that deciding to forgive the hurts of the past allows us to release those negative emotions and replace them with joy, hopefulness, and improved self-confidence. Forgiving allows us to focus our energy on the positive aspects of self and the world around us.

First steps, hurdles

Admitting that you're holding a grudge is tough. Letting go of it can be even tougher, especially when the offense is great. As with many challenges in life, it takes only a few small steps to move in the right direction. Try these to get you moving:

- Understand what specifically caused you to become upset. Why do you feel the way you do?
- Share your feelings with someone you trust. Loved ones may be able to shed light on the situation and provide needed support.
- Make a commitment to forgive. Forgiveness isn't easy, especially if the offender isn't interested in receiving it. But with practice and patience, you can work through it.

Here's a look at some common hurdles and concerns in forgiving, and how Dr. Luskin recommends overcoming them:

- Forgiveness doesn't mean you condone the actions of the person who hurt you, nor that you'll reconcile with him. Forgiveness does mean that you can find peace regardless.
- You don't have to forget in order to forgive. You may still remember what happened, but you'll remember it differently, allowing you to move forward.
- You don't have to wait for someone to ask your forgiveness. In the case of a stranger or one who's died, waiting for the person to ask will prevent forgiveness and block you from the benefits of a forgiving lifestyle. In many ways, forgiving isn't about the person who hurt you; it's about you.

continued on page 13

In Search of Absolute Truth



It helps to ask how do we know what we know? by **Ray Straub**

No culture, community, relationship, or person can retain integrity or good health if truth is not safeguarded. Truth builds and supports; corrupting it, destroys.

Information is absorbed incessantly through our five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and feeling. Processing information gives us ideas that are never exactly like those held by anyone else. It is our personal responsibility to account for what we conclude to be truthful.

This analysis will identify three

major academic sources of truth. While each uses its own approach in sorting facts, they use each other's tools and methods in arriving at worthy conclusions about what is. It is helpful to know their contributions.

Science

Science is the search for truth through empirical evidence — what we learn from experience. It is primarily a study of the physical. The quality of information gained from occurrence and analysis depends on how accurately our conclusions match reality.

Scientific discovery has provided unfathomable benefits in efficiency, security, adventure,

health, comfort, enjoyment, and numerous other values. We benefit beyond our ability to comprehend by truths discovered as we become increasingly acquainted with what exists physically.

The challenge and nature of science is to continually question, analyze, experiment with and otherwise investigate established conclusions. Scientists do not think in terms of absolutes; they continually ponder new possibilities.

No matter how meritorious and extensive the discoveries, it remains that science is “an approximation to the essential nature of all things” (Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism*, p. 243).

Scientists do not think in terms of absolutes; they continually ponder new possibilities.



Philosophy

Wisdom and purpose are the underlying concerns of philosophers, and they seek truth mainly through reasoning and reflection. Philosophy attempts to determine how we should perceive the world, treat fellow human beings, and adopt attitudes that bring greater meaning to our existence. Its curiosity goes beyond the physical, wondering about the soul, emotions, religious ideas, and eternity.

Science and philosophy are not inherently opposed. Many superior thinkers have offered appreciable advances in both fields. An early Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, was an outstanding renowned mathematician. He also introduced ideas about the nature of the soul, further developed by Plato and later religious writers. Aristotle defined logic in profound, near mathematical precision, the syllogism being his basic construction. His observations continue to be a benchmark in the academic community, providing important criteria to determine the validity of conclusions.

A downside to philosophical truth is its lack of endurance. Philosophers reject each other's

ideas regularly because many arise from personal experiences and attitudes that slant conclusions. They do not build on each other's discoveries as consistently as do scientists.

It is important to note that the search for truth in both science and philosophy begins with a hypothesis — an unproven conclusion based on a combination of experience, intuition, and imagination. It is an assertion that seeks to be confirmed through experiment and/or reasoning.

Neither science nor philosophy thinks in terms of absolute truth. Each has its axioms (i.e., self-evident assertions, like “the shortest distance between two points is a straight line”) and postulates (i.e., obvious generalizations, like “humans are emotional”). But there are few “truths” that science or philosophy cannot continue to question.

Religion

The nature of religious truth, called dogma, differs from scientific and philosophical conclusion in that it is accepted by believers as absolute. Testing a hypothesis requires some faith in process,

evidence, accurate observation, and other factors. In contrast, dogmas are accepted as truth by faith and survive with or without empirical evidence or reasoning. They are subject to occasional doubt, but that is the nature of faith. What is not subject to doubt is not being retained by faith.

John's Gospel describes the contrasting nature of a dogma: “And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:5). The Greek word from which *comprehend* is translated has more assertive synonyms.

New International Version: “darkness has not understood it.”

The New English Bible: “darkness has never quenched it.”

Greek English Interlinear: “darkness it not overtook,” restated: “darkness did not overtake the light.” The assurance is that dogmas (biblical truths) are absolute, abide with believers, and cannot be invalidated.

Accepting dogmas as ultimate truth is more than intellectual acknowledgment. Whether or not one can believe is based on faith, a virtue possessed in varying quantities. Everyone has some trust in family, friends, employers, professionals, governments, and a host of other sources we take for granted. The gift of faith is shown in the ability to believe in what the anti-religious call the “mystical” — that which cannot be experienced empirically nor proven conclusively through reason.

Concerning origins, the contrast between science and religion is stated in Hebrews 11:3: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that *what is seen*

was not made out of what was visible" (NIV).

This verse states a non-scientific dogma. Science deals with matter; it insists that matter cannot come into being from nothing. Science will never be able to explain with certainty how the universe originated, because it cannot explain the origin of matter. It can only give educated ideas of how what already existed evolved. This doesn't undermine the value of science; it only identifies an issue beyond its purview. Creation by Intelligent Design is a dogma accepted by faith and enjoys good reasons to support it.

Dogma and divine authority

Not everyone has the gift of faith. Those who do not have this precious gift lack the capacity to accept dogma, which is why it is futile to argue God's existence with an atheist. Each believer retains truths held in common with other people of faith. Such dogmas, among others, include that God exists and is the creator and sustainer of the universe; that He sent His Son Jesus to live, die, and resurrect for our salvation; that God saves those who diligently seek Him; that we should sincerely love God and our neighbor; that reward in an afterlife awaits believers; and that the Bible contains information and teachings that are accurate and adequate for us to gain salvation and access to God through repentance, prayer, and worship.

Since faith maintains that these dogmas are absolute truth, the believer protects and nourishes that belief vigorously. Faith as a gift is capable of being enhanced and strengthened

as talented musicians and athletes constantly perfect their skills through practice and use. Developing faith is built on a living, dynamic, personal relationship with God. It communicates through prayer, thought, biblical study, and worship of a heavenly Father who loves, sustains, comforts, and meets the needs of those who trust Him. This faith is demonstrated in a life committed to love and respect for God's principles.

Institutional dogmas

All religious denominations hold a few unique dogmas that distinguish them as organizations. These teachings may include varying opinions about baptisms, the nature of the soul, the rapture, the godhead, predestination, and numerous other perceptions. Those settled in their hearts and minds on absolute truths can debate without frustration many of these historic disagreements, while growing in grace and understanding.

It is virtuous both to be settled in our own minds *and* to be hospitable to the sincere ideas of friends and acquaintances.

Faith and logic

Recently a television host boasted, "I don't believe in any imaginary higher power; I'm logical," followed with applause from the small audience. This contrast reveals ignorance of both faith and logic. They do not oppose each other. Logic has led superior thinkers to faith in God, and people of faith should be reasonable.

Concern for truth is an obligation we owe to all whom our lives touch. Three fields have been identified that seek truth: science, philosophy, and religion. Each endeavor supports the others, and each has its limitations. We must accept dogmas because God is pleased with our faith (Hebrews 11:6). There is no need to be apologetic or shy about professing and explaining them. They are truths that endure. **BA**

Ray Straub, lifelong student of God's Word, writes from his home in West Linn, OR.



Creation by Intelligent Design is a dogma accepted by faith and enjoys good reasons to support it.

How Can I Say Thanks?

CoG7 folks express their gratitude — 2009 style.

Early in my widowhood, I promised the Father and my parents that I would take care of them to the end of their days. After ten years of adult companionship and support with them, my life was suddenly enhanced by the appearance of a wonderful man, Vernon, who became my husband. From the beginning, he knew that the fulfillment of my promise would be required at some point.

In the fourth year of our marriage, both my parents' and our homes were sold within three days, and a house spacious enough for four adults was purchased. For four-and-a-half years, the promise of life in His Spirit has been abundantly fulfilled in our home. In 2006 Dad fell asleep in Jesus, and Mom followed him this spring. There was never a day I wanted to stop tending to their needs, though it was challenging and taxing at times. When I foundered on the foreign shore of Mom's

Alzheimer's, God pulled me through. The love and help of my husband showed me the face of Christ. What wonderful blessings I have received through trusting and obeying my Savior, as well as through loving and comforting my parents.

— *Diana M. Dickinson*
McCloud, Oklahoma

I have been blessed tremendously this year by the opportunity to coordinate the children's division at my church. I was the first male instructor and the first under the age of twenty-one. As you can imagine, many were eager to see the results of my work with children. I am most thankful for the experience of making a difference — sharing love for God, Jesus, and our church — in a child's life.

Sadly, the children's division at church does not receive much focus. Adults might have wisdom, the youth may have strength, but children hold the future. It is im-

portant for us to pave their way by equipping them with the right tools. Thanks to all my CoG7 brothers and sisters who help with children. God has given each one of us special talents, and He wants us to use them wisely, whether managing the nursery or working with adolescents. Your work is greatly appreciated not only by the Church but also by God.

— *Javier Ramos Gonzalez*
Elgin, Illinois

This spring I suffered an injury to my esophagus from swallowing a fishbone, resulting in a blood loss of nearly three pints. I believe the decisions made just after the injury were prompted by the Lord, as was the care I received in the hospital — nine days total, three in intensive care. I am especially grateful to God to be home again with my wife, able to provide our primary care.

— *Roy Marrs*
Lodi, California

Four years back, the youth of two congregations gathered to celebrate a birthday. Pastor Worrel Largie of the Central Florida CoG7 was thrilled to see so many from the Tower of Faith Church, also of Orlando, at the function. Immediately he thought of measures that could help these youth, adding the long-term goal of merging the congregations. For me, this was worth exploring.

We commenced discussing the idea, relayed the information to our members, and provided a discussion forum in our churches, generating excitement.

Leaders and members in both prayed to discern God's will and timing regarding unification. The brethren were provided with opportunities to discuss their concerns and feelings, with Sabbath afternoon meetings to facilitate the dialogue.

After several months of deliberation, both churches agreed on the ultimate goal of unifying the two. Brethren were engaged in committee work to move us toward that goal. In 2008 we celebrated the Lord's Supper together.

In August of 2008, we finally merged and became one congregation. Since the unification we have realized great celebration, thanksgiving, and sweet fellowship. Thank God!

Earlier this year, we planted a church in Jacksonville, Florida, under the leadership of Pastor Lergie. We are also in the process of starting an English congregation in collaboration with the Tampa Spanish brethren.

We have benefited in many ways: more financial resources to meet expenses; more effective and efficient deployment of human resources; enhanced music; cultural diversity; and a wider variety of styles, approaches, and methodologies.

Despite impediments along the way, God has carried us through one year with every reason to be thankful. I am convinced that we, by relinquishing selfish motives and focusing on similarities rather than on differences, would be more dynamic, prolific, and viable. Church fragmentation caused by trivial matters weakens us all.

— Godwin Prospere, co-pastor
Orlando, Florida

BA

The Power of Forgiveness

continued from page 8

Healthy habits

Overcoming these hurdles is a huge accomplishment, but don't stop there. To fully realize the benefits of forgiveness, Dr. Luskin recommends making forgiveness a lifestyle. Putting these healthy habits into action will help you make the transition from pain to freedom.

Live in the present. You can't change the past, but you can control your reaction to it today. Admitting that your pain results from the past will help you move ahead.

Look for the silver lining. If you feel upset, try to focus your attention on something that still brings you joy.

Put your time and energy into something positive. If you're tempted to revisit the pain of the past, redirect your energy into something like volunteering, helping others cope with a similar experience, or working toward a life-long goal.

Live with a thankful heart. Instead of dwelling on your pain, look for the beauty in the world that surrounds you. An attitude of appreciation will help heal the hurts of the past.

Tell a new story. Think about your experience and retell it in a way that emphasizes your triumph, not your tragedy.

Follow the example of others. Approach someone you know who has come through a similar situation — victoriously. Or join a support group.

Finding peace

A forgiving lifestyle enables us to maintain a sense of peace through difficulty. We relinquish our desire for revenge and acknowledge God's control over our situation.

Many examples of forgiveness are in the Bible, from Joseph's acceptance of his brothers' plea after selling him into slavery (Genesis 50:17) to the greatest example, Jesus. As He was dying on the cross, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

This can be the case in our lives as well. People may not know what they've done to hurt us. They may have started out with good intentions. We will know we've truly forgiven when we feel peace despite what they did. The desire for revenge or need to speak against offenders will be replaced with sympathy, gentleness, and compassion.

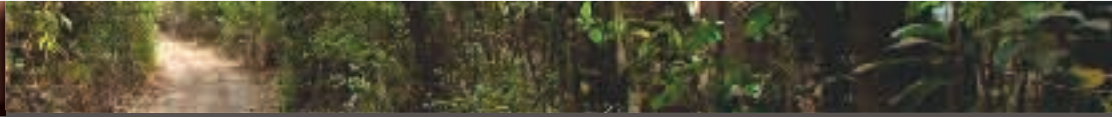
When it comes to forgiveness, the choice remains ours. May we go the way of Jesus and reap the benefits. BA

Heather Carr writes from Waterford, MI. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



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Breaking the Bonds of Guilt

by Jenny Silva

It happened one night during a Bible study in my home. I felt moved by the Spirit to share some personal struggles with my brothers and sisters in Christ. The conversation lasted all of ten minutes, but what power so few minutes can have on one's life! I came away, freed from guilt and beginning a path of a more joyous life.

Later, as we talked about studying the Bible by topic, my friend shared that she had recently studied prayer. As I listened, I began to feel that old guilt wash over me, and I fell into a pattern of chastising myself for not being better at prayer.

This scenario had repeated itself all too frequently in my life. The interesting thing is that I wasn't aware of how much I focused on guilt. I had come to accept that this was who I was: someone who felt guilty for seemingly everything.

My descent into a life tortured by guilt began as a young girl. I used to find myself awed at the tremendous amount of work that my mother and grandmothers accomplished in any given day. All three are wonderfully talented. Among them they have sewn hundreds of outfits and quilts, planted numerous gardens, raised their children in the Lord, canned hundreds of quarts of fruits and vegetables — all while working full time and keeping immaculate homes.

It seemed that any attempt on my part to mimic their virtues fell far short. As a young adult, I berated myself. *Why can't you do things better?* I would shout to my adolescent self. *Grandma would never do it that way!*

I couldn't possibly compare to what I thought of as perfection. Once this pattern was established, it became a way of life. Every time I completed some chore or project, I constantly compared my work to theirs

or to others' I admired. But my problem with guilt was only just beginning.

As an adult, I came to accept most of the values my parents hold dear, but not necessarily their denominational convictions. Several years ago, my husband and I began attending the Church of God (Seventh Day). Having given up on so many of the denominational beliefs I was raised with set me free, but at the same time, I continued to stoke the fires of guilt by wondering whether or not my family would approve of my new beliefs. I began to feel guilty for not sharing the common bond of denomination with my family. Guilt continued to haunt my every waking moment, and I felt powerless to stop it.

I finally realized that the guilt that had tormented me for so long was false, whereas genuine guilt feelings are a direct result of a sin we've committed and our inability to forget it. When I

have displeased God, the words of David in Psalm 103:12 offer me a great deal of comfort: "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

When I earnestly seek God's face and ask for forgiveness, He frees me from any further guilt. What an amazing gift! To forget this and allow myself to wallow in my past mistakes and relive them repeatedly is to deny the blood of Jesus Christ, who has set me free. The words of John ring powerfully in my mind: "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

The turning point in my life occurred that night during the Bible study, when my sister in Christ encouraged me by saying that, as believers in Jesus Christ, we have been called to a life of joy, not guilt. She reminded me that I wouldn't feel guilty for not remembering to tell my dad something, so why did I feel so guilty about forgetting to tell God something? She said that our whole "job" as Christians is to joyfully serve the Lord. I realized then that I had been serving Him, but certainly not with much joy. Because I was so focused on me and my perceived shortcomings, I had become a totally inef-



fective servant for Christ.

In that seminal moment, I began to realize that I had allowed false guilt to dominate my life and have free reign over my thought life. I did not actively fight it but allowed it to sprout and grow into a monstrous weed. I didn't have the energy to reach out to others because I was so preoccupied with my own issues and interests. How much Satan revels in robbing us of God's blessings! I have begun to fervently entreat the Lord to remove my feelings of inadequacy and replace them with a sense of security and unconditional love for others. I can almost physically feel Satan losing his power over me. Praise God!

My journey has been a difficult, confusing one for me, but I thank God for allowing me to finally release myself from my shackles. He has helped me realize that I was holding the key all along: Jesus himself! We must believe that He can release us, and ask Him to do so.

If you find yourself facing guilt or anything else that keeps you from fully surrendering yourself to Jesus Christ, I urge you to stop it now before it gains any more ground and you lose yourself to it completely. You should utilize your energies to do good, encourage others, and grow in your walk with Christ, not to cower

at Jesus' feet or chastise yourself in the vain hope that you will impress Him.

Jesus Christ is waiting to heal you. He has already paid for your sins, and He wants you to live a life free of needless guilt and negativity. Won't you accept His gift today?

Jenny Silva, her husband, Joe, and their two small children, Sammy and Savannah, attend CoG7 in Visalia, California. A high school English teacher by training, Jenny says staying home with the children is her biggest job.



HONORING PASTORS

... by Hearing Them

Remember those who . . . have spoken the word of God to you . . .
(Hebrews 13:7a).

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October is Pastor Appreciation Month. In recognition of all who serve the Church in Christ's name, the BA asked questions of several CoG7 ministers and received replies:

Pastor Pablo Barrera of Nueva Vida Church, Houston, Texas
Pastor Allan Crawford of Brooklyn Community Church, New York
Pastor Kenneth Lawson, serving the Church in Redmond, Oregon
Elder Roy Marrs of Lodi, California – retired
Pastor Wilson Nascimento, serving in Orlando and Miami, Florida
Elder Nick Nimchuk of Fort QuAppelle, Saskatchewan – retired
Pastor Glen Palmer, serving the Church in Harrisburg, Oregon
Pastor Gustavo Salcido, serving the Church in Arlington, Texas
Pastor Michael Vlad, serving the Church in Thornton, Colorado

BA: Tell about your call to ministry.

Marrs: My father, uncle, and grandfather being ministers resulted in my considering ministry even prior to conversion. Baptized at age twelve, I then began thinking seriously about it.

The drumbeat of preaching in those days was that the Lord would come so soon, I ought not prepare for ministry by institutional study; just get to know the Bible thoroughly and begin preaching. Back then, clouds on the horizon caused us to wonder "Is this the day of His appearing?"

I enjoyed farming, and ministry was what I daydreamed about on the farm. An army buddy with whom I'd had Bible studies haunted me after my discharge with this: "Roy, if you feel the Lord is calling you to be



Pablo and Hermelinda Barrera



Allan Crawford



Sandra and Kenneth Lawson

a minister, why do you keep talking about farming and sending money home to buy farm equipment?"

Nimchuk: By the time I was twelve, my parents had moved from Roman Catholic to Jehovah's Witness to Seventh-day Adventist. With great passion, a pastor spoke on the need to be converted and follow the total teachings of the Bible. I felt within myself that was what I wanted to do. Some twenty years later I went to Midwest Bible College, graduated in 1968, and preached until 2002.

Barrera: Like Moses, I never wanted to be a pastor or leader, and never looked for that. Most times, I refused it. Finally God defeated my reluctance for this work.

Lawson: I never had a special dream or vision or heard an audible voice. I received an overwhelming impression in my heart that I could not shake: to enter pastoral ministry and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I did that and have no regrets. I would love to do it all over again, another forty-five years.

Vlad: My call was very clear at age eighteen. That call was in the form of an urgency to enter full-

time ministry. Now that I'm sixty, the call is just as urgent, though keeping its clarity in these changing times is a challenge.

Palmer: No flashing lights, no ringing gongs, just an unrelenting confidence that God wanted me in pastoral ministry. I was sixteen or seventeen then, seeking His will for my life.

Nascimento: My father was a pastor, and it was always my wish to follow his steps. One day I was touched by the Lord, and He gave me the desire to work for His kingdom, wherever it was. My ministry started in Brazil and is now here in America.

Crawford: My mother told me that her husband, then a minister, returned from a successful crusade and felt the desire for a son to preach the gospel. Both prayed about this, and I was born some months later. So Mother instilled in me from childhood that I was born for God's purposes. However, it wasn't until I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and experienced conversion that the urge to serve in ministry became a conviction. I committed to training as a lay preacher and began doing the work of an evangelist.

BA: What aspect of ministry do you most enjoy?

Barrera: I love to see God's supernatural presence, with lives transformed by His power.

Salcido: The most rewarding and challenging experience in ministry is my family. Today our four daughters, their husbands, and children are serving the Lord, and our only son teaches Bible to youth. My wife is a most valuable partner. We have pastored two churches in twenty years. When we came to the Dallas area, there was no church in Arlington; my wife knew God could open doors. Today, after two years, we are hitting the fifty mark. Praises to our Lord. Jesus reigns!

Lawson: Baptisms – four hundred twenty of them! When I baptized anyone, the impact of what it represents – the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ – always left me in awe. All those sins washed away! Wow! Our God is awesome!

Vlad: The mentoring/discipleship ministry is most rewarding to me. To watch men grow, change, and eventually become your equal in ministry; to know I have been instrumental in impacting another man's life to that point is pure joy for me.



Alvin and Roy Marrs



Wilson Nascimento



Dorothy and Nick Nimchuk

Palmer: Pulpit ministry has been my joy. I also love sharing the Word in a study setting. When the Word of God is explained and applied, the change it makes in human lives is exciting.

Nascimento: The ministry of Bible education. My pleasure is to see people who understood nothing about God's Word, after the teaching, become true possessors of the real truth.

Crawford: Winning souls and seeing lives transformed from sin to righteousness. This accomplishes the Church's mission and glorifies God!

Marrs: Studying the Bible and teaching what I've discovered. This is more faithful to my concept of ministry.

Nimchuk: Presenting messages from the pulpit was my passion. I wanted to preach the Word in the clearest way possible.

BA: What aspect is most challenging or frustrating to you?

Marrs: Finding a way to gain the interest of unconverted people and get them to take time to seriously consider their need for Christ.

Nimchuk: People can be very high maintenance. Some members expect the pastor to do all the work.

Barrera: To see believers go back to the sinful world is the greatest hurt.

Lawson: It has been frustrating to see many members give up and drift off to other churches. Also it is difficult to win the battle with college students. When evolution is taught so strongly and accepted so readily by the masses, too many gifted youth lose faith in God as creator, drifting away from the Scriptures. Still, the joys of pastoral ministry will override any disappointments.

Vlad: Motivating people to think outside the "modernity box," to realize that we must function as a missional church in a post-modern world, is difficult. Most people find it hard to make that leap and want church to function as it did when they grew up. It doesn't work to be a 2009 church and function as we did in the 1980's or 90's. If we do, we'll be irrelevant in a constantly changing world.

Palmer: Trying to keep up with changing times. People's motivations are different now.

Nascimento: The problem of continuous fidelity. I get frustrated when a person fails in their relationship with God and becomes weak in spiritual life.

Crawford: Dispute management, grievance handling, and problem solving.

BA: What changes have you noticed in pastoral ministry since you began?

Nascimento: At the start I thought I had to demand exemplary behavior from each Christian. With time I learned to be patient with the weak and spend more time with them, hoping to see life transformation.

Crawford: That pastors should not only be good preachers but also good administrators. Essentially, pastors should grow to be acceptable general managers, with the desired professionalism.

Marrs: The change from preaching the Bible to discussing social issues as counselors, and a lot less preaching of prophetic issues.

Barrera: I've discovered that God wants my intimacy more than my work.

Palmer: The increased value



Barbara and Glen Palmer



Gustavo Salcido



Michael Vlad

of time. People's schedules have become filled with all kinds of activity. Finding ways to meet needs without treading upon time is a challenge.

BA: What would you say to someone considering the call to ministry?

Lawson: Never has CoG7 needed its young men and women to answer God's call to gospel work like today. Oh, how we need young men to stay true to the Word, preach the gospel, and enter pastoral ministry. Answer the call now, while He still calls. I could never have been as happy and fulfilled as serving Jesus through being a pastor.

Marrs: Be sure you are ready to follow the Lord, in the world but not of it. It's not a call to riches and not just another job.

Nimchuk: Take a deep look as to whether they were called or not, because calling is a lifetime commitment and hard work.

Palmer: Be certain of His call, then go for it with all you've got! Trust Him to direct your course.

Nascimento: Don't be afraid, and never give up on God's call, no matter how difficult. The result will be rewarding.

Barrerea: Be sure God is calling you, and not just your own desire. Pastoral ministry is a blessing and honor, if you honor your God calling.

Crawford: Conversion, training, and development are fundamental factors of the call, as well as availability. Since the church is the highest institution on Earth and will be for eternity, its ministry is the greatest vocation in life.

BA: What message is most vital for the Church to hear and take to heart in 2009?

Vlad: It's the same that has prevailed through the New Testament Scriptures for two thousand years: Jesus Christ came to redeem human beings from their sins. Belief in Jesus, repentance, and acceptance of His sacrifice is the only way to experience forgiveness and eternal salvation. The proof of our experience is continued growth — becoming like Christ.

Palmer: That God and His Word are trustworthy. We are becoming a skeptical society due to the loss of integrity in leadership. People need to know there is an anchor that will hold them secure. God is not "way out there"; He is here with us now.

Nascimento: As chosen people in this generation, we must pray much to overcome the problems of the current worldwide crisis.

Crawford: The Church must be most aware of the increased activities and devices of the antichrist and false teachers, being strong to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Marrs: Be wary of viewpoint Bible translations. The multitude of translations has impacted taking one's Bible to church. We need to re-think the need for people to be in Sabbath school classes, not just worship services.

Nimchuk: Jesus is coming again! We should get excited about that fact, share the excitement with others, encouraging them to commit their lives to Christ and share in the joy of His soon return.

Barrera: Love God; love the lost.

Lawson: Hold on to your faith in God, His Word, His Son Jesus. Hold on to the hope of the eternal kingdom! He's coming back, and a huge crowd of the faithful will rise to meet Him in the air. Let's do that together! **BA**

Project Heartbreak

by Joshua Cummings

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Honestly, I'm no expert in the social justice movement. I hardly consider myself an example of those who want to self-sacrifice and eagerly serve the needs of the suffering. I never felt that pull myself until "the moment" — a supernatural, heartbreaking experience that I hope and pray will speak or relate to you, someday.

A couple of years back, I attended a youth workers convention hosted by Youth Specialties. Besides the great worship, thought-provoking speakers, and educational workshops, a gallery of booths was set up by various organizations involved in missions and social justice. I walked by each one and grabbed so much literature that, by the end of the first day, my shoulder was sore from carrying a bag full of pamphlets, brochures, DVD's, and other forms of information on these organizations.

Throughout the convention I found myself walking by those booths again and again, saying to myself, *This is it. This is my time to help change the world, the moment I become an action-taker.* But when I got back home and looked through all that literature, I realized that I **had no idea where to begin!!** This discouraged me, and I felt I was letting the world down. My conviction began to fade, and I went on my way.

Shortly after, I went to a worship conference hosted by Hillsong United. There was a song, familiar to many of you, called "Hosanna." During worship, I was floored by the lyrics to the bridge of this song that talked about breaking my heart with what breaks the heart of God.

As I sang those words, I fell to my knees, and tears flowed freely down my face. That was it. That was my moment — the time I felt my true connection to God, when God's conviction took full hold of my heart. A broken heart is where I sensed God's call.

I realized that when the children of God suffer, His heart breaks. If my life was to truly be connected to God, then the things that influence His heart should influence mine in turn. If I am to be called a real Christian, then my heart should break as well. This is the science behind a solid connection: What happens to one end of the link always influences the other end. This was the answer to my question after the youth workers convention "Where do I begin?" My starting place was a broken heart.

I stopped seeing the homeless under the bridge and wondering what they would do with the money I handed them, and began feeling broken by their circumstances. Since then God has opened doors for me to get involved in helping those in this world who need my help.

In the summer of 2008 I was introduced to Matt Shepperd and his active, helping organization I Am Change. One of its many global projects, Hydrate Hope, provides clean water to people dying of preventable diseases just 'cause they can't get a clean glass of water to drink.

Through my experience with I Am Change, God gave me a vision for an organization dedicated to speaking to those who ask themselves the same question I once asked: "Where do I begin?" This vision was shared by my good friend, Emmanuel Chavez. Together we helped transform the vision into a reality.

This organization is called The Solution Project. Our goal is to not only share tangible resources for people to begin their work but also emphasize the fact that it all begins with the heart to serve, and that this heart is developed through connecting theirs to God's. This is a responsibility given to every Christian — to experience a broken heart for those who need our help and to follow that heart in serving the need in the most effective way we can, based on our talents and skills. This is the overall goal of The Solution Project: to help connect God's heart to His people and, in turn, to inspire them to serve together.

God's call is different for everyone who seeks Him. Not everyone is called to drill water wells in Africa or feed impoverished children in India. We are called to see the world through God's eyes and then desire to do something — anything that helps. I hope that my experience will help you to find *your own way* to serve the needs of others, and above all, enhance your connection to God.

More about The Solution Project is available at www.thesolutionproject.org.

What's happening with NFYC?

- *cn u txt me bk?* We'd love to hear from you! Let us know how your day is going, ask for prayer or for some advice. We'll send you daily Bible verses, thoughtful quotes, jokes, encouragement, and other stuff. Send your first and last names, cell phone #, and cell provider (Verizon, Sprint, etc.) to 541-517-1079. TTYL! (U.S. and Canada only.)

- National Youth Ministry is looking for a few bright, young individuals to serve as national youth officers. Got skills on Web design? Want to help lead worship, give your testimony, share your gifts at a camp or retreat? Contact Kurt Lang at nfyc@cog7.org on how to be a part of the team.

- Special **thanks** to the youth groups that participated in our '09 Hunger Lock-In fundraiser: South Miami, FL; Fargo, ND; Wister, OK; Harrisburg, OR; El Paso (Central), TX; Pharr, TX; and San Antonio (Ceralvo and Triple Trees), TX. Together we raised over \$1,000 to support the Dreamland school in Ghana. If other groups or individuals wish to contribute to this construction project, our goal is to raise \$5,000 by December 31. Contact Kurt Lang at 541-517-1079 to see how you can help!

SW District Winter Retreat

December 31, 2009 - January 3, 2010
Salvation Army Camp Hoblitzelle in Midlothian, TX; contact Jason and Rose Rodriguez: jandrrodriguez@att.net

Western Canada Winter Retreat

December 31, 2009 - January 3, 2010
Island Lake Conference Center, Crowsnest, Alberta; contact Cisco and Debbie Chavez: fm.chavez@shaw.ca

Get your friends together and join us for some awesome experiences with each other and with God! Check out our calendar of events at <http://nfyc.cog7.org>.

WE ARE FAMILY



by Amos Ballesteros

Your brother is running all over the place. Your mom is yelling at him to go to his room, and your dad is busy telling you, “Go help your mother.” The whole time you’re going through your own problems, and no one understands. It’s a familiar scene in many homes, with very different individuals trying to be one family.

The family of Christ works a lot the same way. People are going through so many different situations while trying to deal with the world around them. It seems like too much to handle. And it might be for anyone without Christ. He’s why believers pull through where others fail.

Some rifts in the church are obvious. Whether it’s a generation gap, cliques that don’t understand other groups, or the socially outcast, the only way to bridge them is to accept and care for each other. Try to understand that we may not understand another’s problems. We may not know his past or upbringing. We are called to accept people as the individuals they are and not who we want them to be. We live in a world of diversity that clashes with the desire for conformity.

When I talk about being our own persons, I don’t mean that we’re free from the laws of God. I don’t mean we can keep all our bad habits or be rebellious. I’m speaking of our identity as Christians.

Those in our families are often the ones we struggle with the most just to get along. But through all the fights, the snitching, and the nagging, we always

come out loving our family in the end. It should be no different in the family of God.

To make this happen, we need to realize that love isn’t emotion. It isn’t that fluttering feeling you get when you see a stud-of-a-man on the movie screen. Love isn’t the urge that makes you want to flex in front of the foxy lady at the mall. Love is deeper. It’s what you pull from the endless well of power in the Holy Spirit to show kindness to your enemy. Love is a choice to do what’s right in God’s eyes. It’s the kind of love Jesus showed to undeserving people who sent Him to His death (1 Peter 4:8).

If you’re a teenager, the question of why you need to interact with people at all — much less your family — will pop into your mind. But in the daily battles, temptations, and persecutions of Christianity, we need to be prepared. Just as “steel sharpens steel,” so we need to keep each other aware and ready for anything that comes our way. The church as a family, and our families at home, need to stand together through the raging storm called life. We all work toward the same goal. We are the stones God uses to get us there, built on the foundation of Christ. A family is the embodiment of unity. United in Christ, we are stronger than any opposition that comes our way.

We are in this world to bring light where people thought it couldn’t shine and hope for another chance through Christ. How is it that we hope to bring the world together if we can’t get together ourselves?

As a Christian, you may have undertaken an exercise to “discover” your spiritual gifts. After answering a series of questions like “Do you enjoy meeting new people?” or “Have you offered to keep people in your house?” (presumably relating to the gift of hospitality), you tally up the points you receive in each gift category to indicate your spiritual gift.

The exercise is fun. We can identify our strengths or gifts and be encouraged to develop them. However, such tests also raise interesting questions and may even divert attention away from a more biblical understanding of spiritual gifts.

Are we ever exhorted or commanded to discover our gifts? If God has given us a gift, would it be obvious to us or to others that He had? If all Christians have at least one gift, when did we receive it? At the same time we received the Holy Spirit or later? If God entrusts every Christian with a spiritual gift, how does He determine which we get and when? Can we have any influence over the gift we receive? May we speculate over whether what we have is a God-given natural ability or a spiritual gift from God?

The following verses provide important light on these questions. First Corinthians 12:11 says that the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to each person individually as He wills. Despite the Spirit’s overriding discretion, Paul still exhorts Christians to “earnestly desire [covet] the best gifts” (v. 31) and to “desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (14:1). The repetition in 14:39 of “desire earnestly to prophesy” emphasizes the importance of fervently wanting

Desiring Spiritual Gifts

by David Kidd

a spiritual gift or gifts, rather than merely “discovering” them.

The conduct of the Corinthian church in relation to spiritual gifts displeased Paul (see chapters 12–14), although their zeal for spiritual gifts was to their credit. Paul sought to redirect their zeal to excel through spiritual gifts so that the church, not just the gifted person, would benefit. Verse 13 of the same chapter further supports the notion that our sincere desire for a spiritual gift bears upon whether we receive it. There Paul, by instructing the brethren to pray for the gift of interpretation of tongues, obviously indicates that it is appropriate to ask God for a particular spiritual gift.

As a young person, I had a strong desire for a bicycle and even tried to make one for myself. With my poor manufacturing skills, only a few spare parts, and living atop a very steep hill, this desire did not bode well for me. My parents noted my great desire and were moved by it. Eventually they granted it just before I was about to take my contraption on its maiden ride.

Our heavenly Father too can

be moved by the earnest prayers of His people. He wants to see our zeal in serving Him through the church. He also loves to see us properly equipped to serve. Just as my father did not want to see me go down that steep hill on the death trap I was building, so our Lord does not want us ill equipped in His service. He will supply our need, taking into account our desires for spiritual gifts. Let’s first show an earnest desire to see the church prosper.

While God in His wisdom has not granted me every spiritual gift I have asked for, I believe He has granted me the one I have desired the most. I pray that this will be your experience too. Let us eagerly desire and pray for a spiritual gift and that the gifts of the Spirit will be spread throughout the church. **BA**

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



Taught by Time

by Harvey D. Fischer

“Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so we may grow in wisdom” (Psalm 90:12, NLT).*

Happiness and satisfaction in life are much influenced by home and work. As families suffer in this culture, emphasis on work becomes greater. Whether this stress on work is activated by needs and wants of today’s home, or whether work becomes an escape from home life, is up for debate.

Current economic concerns highlight the need for priorities. The choice of how we spend the resource of time allotted to us becomes more critical. How does one decide what’s best for now, with a good impact on the future?

When my wife, Barbara, and I decided to spend the rest of our lives together, we did not have a long-range plan with goals and timelines. We simply knew we loved each other and agreed that, whatever comes, we would find a way to work through it together. We had committed our lives to the Lord and had a group of friends we knew we could depend on, should we need it.

These friendships took time and effort, but the dividends were huge.

It took time to realize that God’s great gift to us was *time*. We had the same allotment as everyone else; it was up to us to use it wisely. We could spend it, invest it, or just use it. Only later in life did we appreciate the difference. Time invested in family, friendships, and value-building provided the most substantial dividends. Time spent in careers and finance-building were important but proved to be less dependable.

Where have I learned how to become who I really am? What are the values and standards that shape me, that I cling to, that sustain me when the going gets tough? Where are these values established, and how?

We must learn to control our time rather than let it control us and allow our schedules to make us victims.

As we grow older and our schedules empty out, we can feel more alone and isolated. Some-

times we want to talk to someone but may not feel that we fit in anymore. Times change and so does the way things are done. We find it necessary to identify new areas of service where our skills are still needed. This is so much easier when we are close to God. He knows our heart and paves a pathway for service.

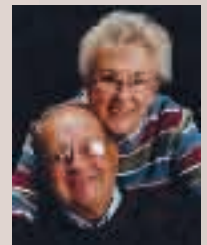
Our upbringing and investment in values become more important as we age, serving and sustaining us well. With fewer distractions, our personal relationship with our Creator deepens. We get to know God better as we learn to know ourselves better. Our steps are more often on solid ground. On reflection, our journey becomes valuable as we learn to appreciate the experiences God allowed. At the time, we may have taken those for granted. Now with gratitude in our hearts, we see the road map God has chosen for us.

Prayer time becomes more personal as well. We better appreciate the blessing of quiet, a time to reflect and meditate with fewer interruptions. It provides a time to be “real” with God and continue in our growth and appreciation of God’s goodness to all.

Time: What a wonderful gift!

BA

Harv and Barb Fischer enjoy retirement on their acreage near Grass Valley, CA.



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Praise for July-August

Thanks for another excellent issue. "First Word" was well received. The "Man Without a Party" message was outstanding [p. 14]. The first-person testimony of Ralph Hanahan was great reading. The interview with Chuck Bentley was on target. Great questions. Great answers.

B. M.
Liberty Center, OH

You have no idea the encouragement I received from "On Stem Cells" and "On Abortion" [p. 15].

One great fear I have is that in the near future, the only messages we will hear from our pulpits will be "God is love." He is, but too many times we forget He also is a God of wrath. We need to preach/teach the "no-no's" of God's Word as well as the love.

Now I'll get off my soapbox! Just wanted you to know how much I appreciate your magazine.

D. S.
Tipton, OK

Contrary opinions

The latest issue of the BA [July-August] just arrived, and I read it through with my customary eagerness. Unlike so many other issues of that excellent magazine, I found

some of the articles troubling enough that I have taken time off work, and now write into the wee hours of the morning to craft a timely response. I write this more developed response, rather than a brief "pot shot," to convey what I hope will be perspective-changing ideas in a manner that will do some small measure of justice to the topics: "Stem Cells," "On Abortion," and "Justice and Generosity for All" [p. 22].

Editor's note: The lengthy, thought-provoking essay that followed will be sent to readers electronically, upon request.

R. J.
College Place, WA

I took exception to the NIV text ["The Body," p. 31]. There will be those who disagree, but the other versions are always lacking. As far as I can tell, they are written to make the Bible easier to understand. That is not a good reason. There is no good reason to decry or disparage the *textus receptus* (KJV).

V. K.
Springfield, OR

Thanks a lot for your kindness to send me BA free for so long a time. I have published a bimonthly Christian magazine in Greek for more than 20 years, without thinking myself [as] unemployed; I meet the needs of my family of six working with these hands.

In "I Am a Member" [p. 19] are three errors:

a) Areopagites were not a group of some kind, but they were the members of the highest court of the city of Athens.

b) Areopagites were not believers of the Greek god of war (Ares),

but they were named so because this court took place on a hill of the city named by this god.

c) The Areopagites did not meet to "discuss ideas and philosophies" but to judge various social matters. Paul was taken to Aeropagus to be judged (Acts 17:19).

Being an Athenian myself, I thank God for this preaching of Paul in my town. Please inform your readers so that they know the real story (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Areopagus>).

B. B.
Athens, Greece

Realities of job loss

I appreciate "What You Don't Know About Job Loss" [p. 8] and the sidebar regarding "How the Church Can Help." [My husband] is laid off a job he held for 21 years, working his way up. [With many recent medical expenses], we are feeling at a loss. Yes, we are trusting the Lord for our daily needs, or we would be overcome with everything.

When I did mention it to some church family, the standard answer was/is "Things are tough for lots of people right now." We've not asked for financial support, but are just desirous of fellowship support.

Name withheld

The articles about unemployment helped me identify some emotional dynamics I was unaware I was going through. They also showed me how I could honor God and bless others even in the midst of being without a job. I'm sure the articles were helpful to many people in a similar situation. Thank you.

A. H.
Springfield, MO



**Sun and clouds together
surrounded by silver and blue,
warmth and wind together,
leaves, green and golden, too.
Hills, emerald with winter wheat
or drab from harvest gleaning,
like this aged farm, to
summer's memories clinging.
Lovely, but lonely, this life could be
if I had never come to know
that in all things and seasons
our Creator speaks to me.**

Carmen F. Hicks

Did you know . . .

- that our CoG7 schools (LifeSpring School of Ministry, Spring Vale Academy) are part of General Conference Ministries, along with Bible Advocate Press?
- that our youth (NFYC), our young adults (SWORD), and our women's (NAWM) organizations are all part of G.C. Ministries?
- that our missionary efforts around the world, called Missions Abroad or Missions Ministries, are also part of General Conference Ministries? (Don't miss the Missions interview on p. 28)
- that a different G. C. Ministry is featured on this page each issue?



General Conference Ministries

Whaid Rose, President

Four blind men were introduced to an elephant. "He's like a wall," reported the first, exploring his side.

"No, a snake" said the second, pulling his tail.

The third grabbed his leg and yelled, "He's a tree."

"You're all wrong," said the last, feeling the force of his trunk. "He's a fire hose!"

Like an elephant may be experienced in different ways by those not seeing the whole animal, so it is with our church. Some see it as sweet fellowship at conventions or camps, and so it is. Others see it as 200+ local churches organized into seven districts across North America; it is that too. The Church is also an army of Christ-loving men and women in more than thirty-five nations of the world.

Here's another way to see our General Conference in the U.S. and Canada: It's all of us putting our hands to the same gospel plow, doing together what we could never do separately. The plow serves to publish CoG7 literature, including the BA. The plow prepares young men for pastoral ministry and other positions of service. The plow harnesses our youth, our young adults, and our women for personal spiritual growth and service. It reaches unreached places with the good news of Jesus and His love.

This gospel plow, called here General Conference Ministries, is near the essence of who we are as a church. Rather than go it alone, you and I hang together in the Church, doing what our Lord has called us to. The tithes and offerings of our members and friends keep CoG7 plowing on.



Elders Bill Hicks (in Nigerian garb) and Robert Torre of Randazzo, Italy, on the island of Sicily.

Missions Ministries

To better appreciate the mission work of the Church of God (Seventh Day), BA asked a few questions of Missions Director William C. "Bill" Hicks. In addition to his ministry with missions, Bill serves as pastor of two small congregations near his home in Blountville, TN.

BA: As G. C. Missions Director, what do you do?

Bill: My primary duties are to oversee all facets of our G. C. Missions, including Missions Abroad that provides literature, training, and finances for our sister conferences and missions around the world. A growing number of Missions Ministries (Disaster Relief, Cristo Viene, Change for Your World, Medical and Dental Missions, Orphans and Widows Fund, Pioneer Missionary Training, and others) are also coordinated through this office. In addition, I am responsible to help us focus on Church Planting and Home Missions, still in the developmental phase.

I travel in the mission field about two or more months each year. This year I worked in New York, Pennsylvania, El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil, Colorado, Oregon, Australia, the Philippines, Oklahoma, Germany, Texas, and Mexico (October) on behalf of CoG7 missions.

The communications and promotions required

by these efforts means hundreds of e-mails, phone calls, regular mailings, missions presentations in our churches, as well as video production, hosting the www.cog7missions.org Web site, and reporting through the biennial *Harvest Field* magazine.

BA: How does all this relate to your work with International Ministerial Congress (IMC)?

Bill: The work of the congress goes hand in hand with Missions Abroad. What's good for one is good for the other. Two years ago, IMC's executive committee asked me to serve as its executive director, to develop global infrastructure within the congress. In most of my foreign travel, I accompany IMC President Ramon Ruiz Garza. Elder Ruiz's IMC salary is underwritten in part by donations from the U.S. and Canadian Conferences. Change for Your World offerings help with IMC administrative expenses as well. Still, the lion's share of Elder Ruiz's travel is covered by Missions Abroad, and the two entities are closely interrelated.

BA: Is CoG7 making headway in taking the gospel to the world?

Bill: Yes! Much of the world Church is getting a clearer focus on preaching the gospel of Christ, and our IMC infrastructure is developing to better coordinate efforts in this regard. God is opening doors that allow us to go where we've not gone before. The workers are few, but their number is growing — thankfully! Please pray for our Father to send more workers to this harvest.

BA: Is our world Church growing?

Bill: In terms of both quality and quantity, we are growing. We are maturing in our understanding of the gospel and by God's grace, and numerical growth follows as we do what's needed. This can include bringing within the organization what God already has within His organism. Our IMC works with some 300,000 members, an understated figure. As our efforts to reach around the world grow, we have growing influence on other Christian organizations and movements.

BA: How can a member with a heart for missions help with this God-sized task?

Bill: The first way is by praying the Lord of the harvest to provide workers. Second, look around and see what avenues for sacrifice and service the Lord has opened, and become actively involved

in those. Third, be prepared to take the next step: maybe becoming more active in your local church outreach or moving into an unchurched area to help establish a new congregation. By continuing to take the next step in sharing the gospel around the corner, you may find yourself going around the world as God opens doors.

BA: How can readers contact you or contribute financially to Missions Ministries?

Bill: Folks are invited to contact my office at 423-546-0374 or office@cog7missions.org. Contributions may be sent to Missions, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. Up-to-date missions information is available at www.cog7missions.org.

Condolences to . . .

• family and friends of Minister Manuel Rodriguez, who died July 23 at age 87. A minister in Mexico for many years, Brother Rodriguez completed his service to the Lord at the Spring Branch church in Houston, Texas.



Spring Vale Academy's fall semester has begun, and the campus buzzes with 60 students. With financial assistance, more would attend. With nine baptisms last year, SVA continues to impact the lives of students, alumni, and their families. For more about the Owosso, MI, school, go to www.springvale.us or phone 989-725-2391.

The Jasper, Arkansas, church invites you to its 21st annual Octoberfest Family Retreat, October 16-18. It will be held in old-fashioned campmeeting style, chock full of stimulating study, good music, homemade food, and sweet fellowship. Bring your Bibles and warm bedding; all the rest is on us. Let Jason or Stephanie know you're comin': 870-446-5736 or jasonoverman@hotmail.com.

Congratulations to . . .

- Clifford and Deloris Tuttle of Fargo, North Dakota, married 50 years on June 30.
- James and Kathy Sawyer of Topeka, Kansas, married 50 years on August 8.

Please notify the editor of any CoG7 golden anniversary couples not previously listed here.

- Godwin Prospere of Orlando, Florida; Gregory Crayton of Uniondale, New York; and Edgardo Navarro of Houston, Texas. Each was recently granted ministerial license and membership in the Church's North American Ministerial Council.

Attention to . . .

- BA readers in the Atlanta, Georgia, area interested in a new Sabbath fellowship group (English-speaking). Please call or e-mail Steve Krome: 423-710-3911 or sdkrome@yahoo.com.
- BA readers in the Salt Lake City, Utah, area. A Spanish-speaking church meets on Sabbath at 3450 S. Main St. (62, 64). Call Pastor Gerardo Murga: 801-808-1347 or 801-908-6607.

International Tour

Europe

May 30 was a day of prayer for International Ministerial Congress' Zone 7. The goal was to dedicate one day praying in favor of the Church's international work and to give presentations on its efforts in Europe and around the world.

About 300 to 350 brethren from Germany, England, Holland, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Mexico, and the U.S participated in the German CoG7 Conference, June 26-28. The Sabbath worship in song was a wonderful international experience (see video at www.cog7missions.org). Messages on the gospel and the victorious Christian life were broadcast live via the Internet to brethren around the world. On Sunday morning an open-air prayer and work session was conducted for national delegates. Each country expressed its areas of greatest need so we could pray for one another in the days ahead.

The Portuguese Conference of the Church operates an annual campaign to achieve financial support for the work of the International Ministerial Congress.



Some of the international participants who met in Munster, Germany, June 26-28 (L to R): Paulo Coelho of Portugal, Jair Moreno of Mexico, Nicasio Román of Spain, Enrique Patzer of Argentina (living in Italy), and Roberto Torre of Italy.

The Italian Conference, small in number, is active. God blessed the tour of Pastor Roberto Torre to visit several groups. Other good news from Italy was the return of several members who were separated some years ago. This return was complemented by the addition of other members from an evangelical background who have now joined CoG7.

On Sabbath, July 11, IMC Zone 7 representative Paulo Coelho visited a group of brethren in Paris, France, who form a community called Communauté Chrétienne "Foi et Oeuvres" (CCFO). He had opportunity

to make presentation on the IMC work around the world, followed by questions and answers about the possibility of future collaboration between the groups.

The main issues for IMC's leadership regarding future action in Europe are . . .

- how to share the gospel of Jesus in a deeply secular society like this.
- how to differentiate the CoG7 message from others available here.
- how to overcome ethnic and language differences in this multicultural and multiracial society.
- how to make CoG7 visible in each country.
- how to start contact with other groups in other countries that share a similar vision of God's Word.

• how to work together to improve our efforts in Christ and minimize the limitations of our small size.

The heterogeneity of IMC Zone 7 (Europe, including Russia, Baltic States, and the Middle East) is a great challenge to the relationship of the several national groups of the Church. It can be overcome only by the power of God (Acts 2:4-12; Revelation 7:9-10).

— Paulo Coelho and Bill Hicks



Worried?

If you're inclined to worry, there is plenty to worry about!

North Korea, Iran, and nuclear weapons; the economy, taxes, and the loss of jobs; tea parties, town hall meetings, and

health care reform. Just watching the evening news these days can scare you half to death – literally! Dr. Charles Mayo of the Mayo Clinic is widely quoted as having said, “Worry affects the circulation, the heart, the glands, the whole nervous system. I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt.”

A leaflet about fatigue published by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company advised, “Hard work by itself seldom causes fatigue which cannot be cured by a good night’s sleep or rest Worry, tenseness, and emotional upsets are the three biggest causes of fatigue. Often they are to blame when physical or mental work seems to be the cause” (*How To Enjoy Your Life And Your Job*, by Dale Carnegie, p. 31).

Leo Buscaglia observed, “Worry never robs tomorrow of its sorrow, it only saps today of its joy.”

It should not surprise us, therefore, that our gracious and almighty God tells us not to worry and what to do instead. “Do not be anxious about anything,” God’s Word instructs, “but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, NIV). Verse 7 adds God’s promise: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (NIV).

“Your hearts and your minds.” Isn’t that interesting in light of Dr. Mayo’s comments? Heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure — aren’t these maladies common among modern people?

Jesus himself had much to say about worry in His Sermon on the Mount:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? . . . So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:25, 31–33, NIV).

There’s that pattern again! Admonition: Don’t worry. Alternative: Look to God. Promise: He’ll take care of you.

An Old Testament passage complements these from the New. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV). I find four verbs, or action phrases, in this passage: *trust*, *lean*, *acknowledge*, and *will make*. The first three are actions we must take instead of worrying. We must *trust* in the Lord. We must not *lean* on our own understanding of whatever we face or of how best to deal with it. Rather, we must *acknowledge* God. Then, once again, there comes God’s promise. If we will do our part, He’ll do His. He *will make* a way for us, even in these worrisome times.

— Loren Stacy

Editor’s note: At the urging of the board of directors, General Conference President Whaid Rose has agreed to take a brief sabbatical in the interest of securing his long-term availability for effective service to the Church. Elder Rose has experienced significant vision impairment in recent years. This sabbatical provides time for him to pursue recommended medical treatments and some writing projects. Elder Loren Stacy, G. C. board chairman, has agreed to provide the “Last Word” until Elder Rose returns.

Pioneer Missionary Training

Ever hope to do a short-term mission trip, to be involved in CoG7 Missions Abroad, but not sure where to start? Need motivation and practice to witness for Christ and the gospel? Then PMT '09 may be the event for you!

It's "pioneer" because it's the first step to missionary work. No overload — just enough to get your feet wet. It's "missionary" because the mission field exists everywhere. It's "training" because it involves both classroom and field experience. This PMT is led by the Mexican CoG7 to aid participants in reaching their world for Christ.

Our next PMT trip will be to Guadalajara, Mexico, December 21-31, 2009. Applications needed by November 1. Call 303-452-7973 or go to www.cog7missions.org.

