

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE®



Doing 'Dad' Right

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- Father knows best (p. 10)
- Messianic truth (p. 20)

2011: Year of the Bible

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Have you seen the BA on Facebook yet? Look us up and join the community!

If you want to ask questions about this issue's content and discuss it with others online, visit the new CoG7 Community at <http://cog7.org>. The forum is open; anyone can join and post.

 When you see this symbol, visit www.BAonline.org for additional material.

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Be of Good Cheer!

It's tempting here to echo headlines of the past two months, reminding you of bad stuff that's afoot this spring at home and abroad. Let's resist it. Most of it would be old news by the time you read this, and talking heads will have moved on to something more current – maybe even more disturbing by now.

As one youngster put it, carrying his report card home for parental review, "Dad, you know how they only print the bad news, don't you?"

We can't keep all the world's junk, or the Church's, from happening, but we can keep it from jilting our joy and spoiling our spirit. Wise investments of personal time and effort can help keep us balanced and beautiful for God, even when the news isn't.

- Seize the moment for the National Day of Prayer (May 5, p. 16) and CoG7's Year of the Bible (p. 18 and 28). So far, eighteen individuals/churches have added their names to the Year of the Bible Declaration (January-February, p. 19). Also, you have until June to submit an entry on "What the Bible Means to Me" for possible publication.

- Make the most of family events this season: Mother's Day, Father's Day (pp. 10-15), anniversaries, etc. Does anyone celebrate Grandparents' Day? In the US it's the first Sunday after Labor Day – September 11 this year.

- Include the Church in your summer plans. The G. C. convention is just ahead (July 18-23) at a great family spot outside Chicago, and camp-retreat opportunities are sprinkled here and there (pp. 28-29). Be blessed and be a blessing: Plan your vacation to include a sister church on Sabbath.

- Dispatch your negative thoughts and worries through spiritual warfare and service (p. 8). Everybody's friend Dale Carnegie wrote, "To conquer fear, don't sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy."

In this issue, the BA's positive themes for 2011 continue, including fearless living in a scary age (pp. 6, 7). Don't miss our often provocative "Q & A" and "Mail Bag" features. We invite your visit to *BA Online* (baonline.org), *Now What?* (nowwhat.cog7.org), and Facebook, offering feedback or asking questions.

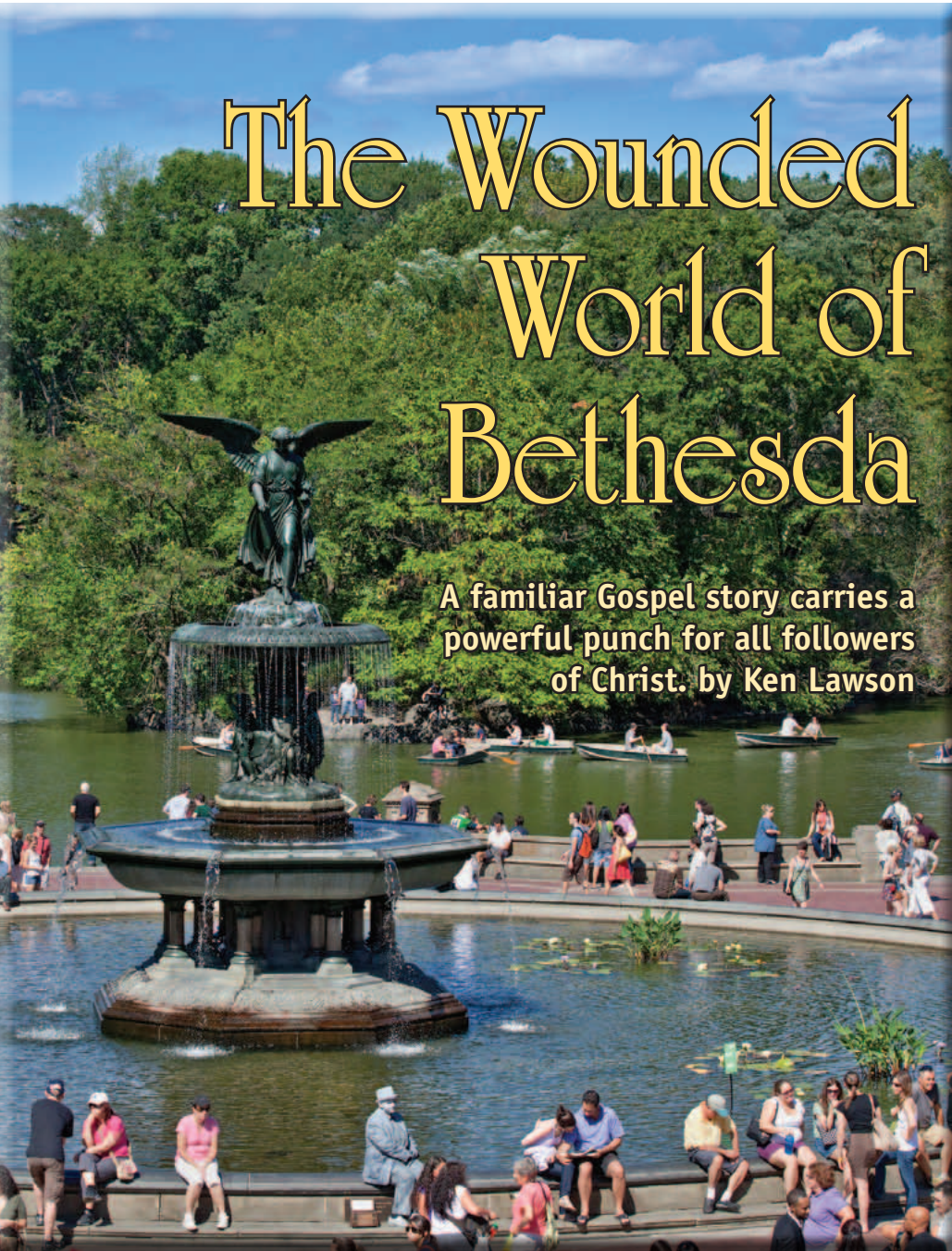
Tell somebody this today, in Jesus' name: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. . . . In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 14:27; 16:33).

– Calvin Burrell



The Wounded World of Bethesda

A familiar Gospel story carries a powerful punch for all followers of Christ. by Ken Lawson



The Angel of the Waters, Central Park, NY, NY. @ David Leindecker—Dreamstime.com

The pool of Bethesda was not a nice place to hang out. Royalty didn't go there, nor the religious leaders. Most healthy people avoided coming to this place of abject misery, and for good reason: Hundreds of disabled people lay there, crying out in pain. The place must have carried a stench of sickness.

Yet one day Jesus appeared at Bethesda (John 5:1-15). The reason He went, and the results of His being there, are timeless. The story reveals a priority in Jesus' work and in His Father's sending Him to Earth. It also illustrates what the Church's work and main ministry should be all about.

One day at Bethesda, Jesus found a man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. "Do you want to get well?" Jesus asked.

"Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool!" came the reply.

Jesus simply said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At that, the man was instantly cured. He picked up his mat and walked away from Bethesda, his misfortune overcome by a miracle on that Sabbath day.

The world is still full of the distress and hopelessness that once congregated at Bethesda. Through technology and twenty-four-hour news, we learn of hurt that exists all over our world. Through e-mail prayer requests, we become aware that a lot of suffering also exists in our church family. How did the world in Jesus' day and the seven billion-plus people on this planet get into such a predicament?

Origins

God created all things good (Genesis 1:31), but the world soon changed through sin (3:1-11). In every age since the Fall, the world has been a place like Bethesda. Because of great wickedness on the earth, the Lord destroyed most of the people once (Genesis 6-8) but saved Noah and his family to give humans another chance.

Did this change man's inherited sinful nature that came from the earlier fall into sin? No. Soon Noah's descendants again increased in sin and corruption. After the Tower of Babel, wars broke out between families and nations as they fought for such things as land, wealth, power, and religious creeds. This contin-

ues today. Why? Because we still live in the world of our enemy, Satan.

Just as Jesus healed the paralyzed man at Bethesda, so God provided a special hope for all ages. His promise for a return to the perfection of the first creation is intertwined through the story of man. This is more than a peaceful, idyllic kingdom yet future; there is help and hope during a kingdom that is now! It is the kingdom of grace and faith in the Savior promised by God — Jesus our Lord.

Through the Messiah, God promised the defeat of the serpent and the victory of the woman's seed (3:15)! God promised that in the seed of Abraham, all the world of Bethesda would be blessed (12:3; Galatians 3:7-9). The hope of our distressed, sin-sick world is wrapped in one name: Jesus! He brought salvation and spiritual change to humanity so that human beings, born again, would be made whole — spirit, soul, and, someday, body.

Fulfilled promise

This promised Jesus appeared at the pool of Bethesda asking, "Do you want to be well?" And it was done — a major part of His ministry. Isaiah had spoken of One coming who would minister to suffering people like those in Bethesda (Isaiah 61:1-3). Jesus became that promised one, the good news carrier who would use hands, feet, and heart-compassion into teaching, reaching, touching, and helping all who needed it.

Mark's Gospel is a fast-paced account of Jesus fulfilling this promised assistance. He healed

a man of leprosy (ch. 1). He healed a paralyzed man with some loyal friends (ch. 2). In Mark 5 a demon-possessed man and a woman bleeding for twelve years were delivered, and a twelve-year-old girl was raised from death. Jesus fed five thousand with a boy's lunch (ch. 6), healed a deaf and dumb man (ch. 7), and cured a blind man (ch. 8). An evil spirit was cast out of a young man (ch. 9), and a blind beggar named Bartimaeus received his sight (ch. 10).

In these ways, Isaiah's prophecy of a helper for the helpless was completely fulfilled. When John was in prison, he wondered if Jesus was the promised one. Jesus sent back confirmation by relating details of His ministry to the poor and sick and helpless. Jesus came to relieve the world of the consequences and guilt of sin. He came to Bethesda in old Jerusalem, and He comes to the Bethesdas in today's world.

Jesus was sent to the worst of humanity — the most despised, the worst sinners, the sick, the demon-possessed, those in desperation and despair, the hopeless and helpless. He touched those whom the law forbade to

touch. He ate with sinners. He walked and talked with them in their homes. He showed up at Bethesda!

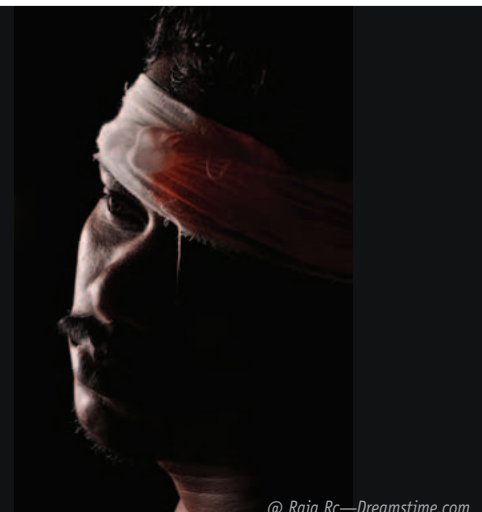
Most of Jesus' time was spent meeting the needs of people in pain. As important and valuable as His teaching was, person-to-person ministry seemed to be Jesus' all-consuming passion. He met needs!

Charge to the Church

How should the Church of God (Seventh Day) understand and apply Jesus' example? The Church has spent enormous time teaching its doctrine. In my family and home church, that was our major passion. We were on a mission to prove that our doctrine was true and theirs was wrong. We often spoke of those who disagreed with us as "unsaved." Some of us felt we would be the only ones to be saved.

We spent an unusual amount of time teaching and preaching against topics we did not believe. Rather than preach faith, salvation, and a relationship with Jesus, many of us preached and wrote and taught against what others believed. In doing that,

Jesus brought salvation and spiritual change to humanity so that human beings, born again, would be made whole — spirit, soul, and, someday, body!



© Raja Rc—Dreamstime.com

To a Shaking World . . .

The instability of our world is felt in three major ways, mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:

Wars and rumors. It is generally agreed that the twentieth century was the most murderous period in history. And the world is getting more violent. Iran and North Korea are developing nuclear weapons, added to the countries that already have them. Our world shakes with the prospect of more violence than ever.

Famines and pestilences. World food production has increased greatly, but many people still do not have enough to eat. Europe has a surplus, and we should waste less. While Westerners eat to obesity, millions elsewhere starve. Our world shakes with problems of feeding its fast-growing population.

Earthquakes. In 2010, quakes devastated portions of Haiti, Chile, and Mexico. So far this year, New Zealand and Japan have suffered the same. Millions in earthquake-prone areas live in constant fear of the earth shaking beneath them — literally.

What to do in a shaking world like ours? The Church can say that earthquakes were predicted by our Lord long ago as a harbinger of much better times to come. Instead, we remain silent about our future hope, as the world shakes in fear.

Not that the Church is totally silent. Christians are busy telling who's wearing what and fussing about makeup, pants, and jewelry in church — while the world is shaking.

We spend years convening boards, allocating resources, and laying small plans, while the world is shaking. We're busy with inside rivalry and with who gets what position, while the world is shaking. We call meetings, massage egos, and plan the next conference, while the world is shaking.

In all our churchiness, much of it good, God says, "I am depending on you to make the truth known." If we have truth as we think, we must give an account to Him for it. To whom much is given, much is expected.

Knowing God's truth is like having hot coals in your pocket: You can't stand comfortably by! God's power is available to help us teach the world. It's not about if people live or die in these disasters; it's about whether they live or die in Christ.

We may not stop the world from shaking or people from dying, but we can bring them hope. We can tell them that when everything shakes beneath them, God is still in control; that when everything underfoot gives way, Christ is the solid rock for standing firm. All other ground is shaky, sinking sand.

— Adapted from a sermon by Kevin Robinson
Birmingham, UK

we perfected presentations and writings against many topics: going to heaven or hell at death, pagan days, the secret rapture, speaking in tongues, taking the Lord's Supper too often, the Trinity, the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday morning, and many more. We spent a lot of time preaching against worldliness: bowling, roller skating, dancing, and women wearing makeup and pants. We spent little time preaching a relationship with Jesus. And we spent little time meeting the needs of the hurting and discouraged and those in misery and pain. They were sinners; we were righteous! We avoided places like Bethesda.

Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:12, 13). Some of us still need to "learn what this means."

Right priorities

I believe strongly in the teachings of the Bible. The Church's statements of faith are solid, valuable teachings of truth. However, in our world — a huge duplicate of Bethesda — our teachings should not consume us so we lose focus in meeting the needs of the hopeless and helpless around us. The man at Bethesda spoke accurately when he said, "Sir, I have no one to help me." The religious people back then were comfortable debating theology. Other people groups were too busy.

Jesus met needs first. He did not debate theology with the sick; He healed them. He did

not question the belief system of the lepers; He touched them. The man at Bethesda didn't even know who Jesus was, but Jesus met him personally. Later at the temple Jesus talked with him again. They had a basis for relationship now, so Jesus began to teach him. The man's need was met first. A relationship with Jesus began, and then he received instruction in holy living.

Today the Church's members, leaders, and pastors must spend the largest share of our time and energy at Bethesdas. There we can love and lift people, trying to bring them to a knowledge of and relationship with Jesus. Then we might lead them to a place of worship, perhaps our places of worship. The final step is to teach them Christian living, behaviors, and truth from Scripture.

If we reverse this, as we have too many times, we will discover that our distinctive teachings do little to heal pain and lead people to a refreshing relationship with the helper of the helpless, Jesus! A good order for gospel work is the one Jesus set:

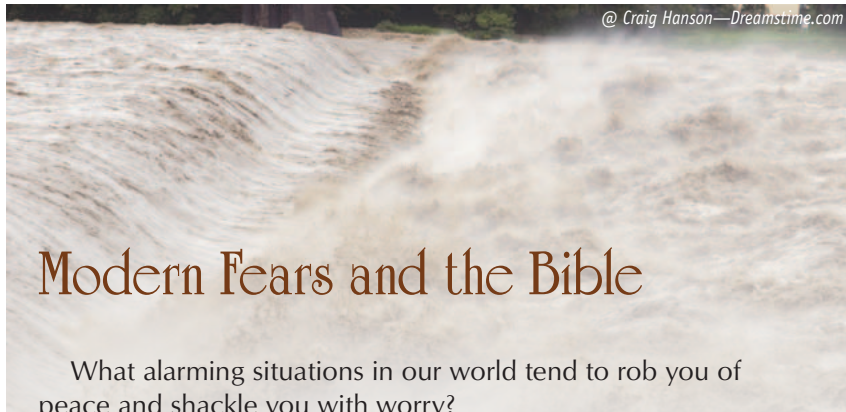
"Do you want to get well?"

"Pick up your mat and walk!"

"Stop sinning, lest a worse thing come upon you."

Jesus' teaching is in this order for a reason! **BA**

In April 2011, **Ken and Sandra Lawson** retired from serving the Redmond, OR, church. Now they reside in Cottage Grove, MN, near their grandchildren. Scripture quotations taken from the *New International Version*.



Modern Fears and the Bible

What alarming situations in our world tend to rob you of peace and shackle you with worry?

Are you fearful of being "left behind" at the rapture on May 21, 2011 – the date set with "infallible proof" by Family Radio of Oakland, California? Read Deuteronomy 31:6 and John 14:1-6.

Are you afraid you'll never regain the income or market value you had before the terror of 2001 and the recession of 2008? Read Proverbs 3:9, 10; Matthew 6:33, 34; and Philipians 4:19.

Are you distressed that America is in decline as an influence for good and for God, on its way to becoming a godless, socialist state? Are you concerned our world will never be the place it was before the sexual and secular revolutions of the 1960s and 70s, the abortion and homosexual revolutions of the 80s and 90s, and the Islamic revolutions of the 90s and 00s? Read Isaiah 8:12, 13; Luke 21:28; and Romans 8:31.

Are you fearful of the many natural calamities and human acts of crime and terror that stalk our planet? Read Psalms 46:1, 2ff; 91:5, 6; and 112:7, 8.

Are you apprehensive that the Church will lose its moorings in God's Word, too much influenced by others less committed to the truth revealed there? Read Isaiah 55:10, 11; Matthew 24:35; 2 Corinthians 13:8; and 1 Peter 1:22-25.

Are you often anxious about personal and family issues that confront you; the threat of accident, illness, or persecution; the throes of human conflict; the allure of evil to your children and grandchildren? Read Psalm 27:1 and 1 Peter 3:14.

Are you afraid of dying, especially at the hands of human beings? Read Psalm 23:4 and Matthew 10:28.

At a time of severe trouble, David wrote, "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me" (Psalm 55:5). Did he exaggerate his fears here? Maybe so (see 55:22, 23 and 53:5a)

"The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1).

— Calvin Burrell

Why do Christians suffer? Is calamity punishment from God? Learn what the Bible says about disaster in *When the Bottom Falls Out*, a tract available from the Bible Advocate Press, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; bap.orders@cog7.org.



Thought Control

Is this the final frontier in spiritual warfare?

by **J. Grant Swank Jr.**

God's way to peace of mind is for the believer to surrender each thought to God. When you have fear thoughts, surrender them immediately. The same with confusion, happiness, and suspicion — even planning and analyzing thoughts.

All through the day and into the night, yield your thoughts to God. Such opens up His guidance in your life. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Take no thought for tomorrow." He meant that seriously, practically.

Analyze your thoughts. Realize that most of your thinking has to do with the future. The past is over. The present is being taken care of in some manner.

Tomorrow consumes your thoughts because you are trying

to secure your future. You want it to be OK. You want to walk into tomorrow without any worry. But Jesus said, "Take no thought for tomorrow."

Do that. Don't move into tomorrow by choosing to surrender your thoughts right now.

When you wake up in the night, submit your thoughts immediately to God. If you are held captive by fear concerning some approaching situation, give it to God. Jesus said that God is aware of birds in flight and cares for them. He said that God knows the number of hairs on our heads. Jesus counseled His disciples in the way to peace of mind.

Jesus said that He came to Earth to do His Father's will,

not His own. That means Jesus surrendered Himself to heaven's way, thought by thought.

We should do that, too. We can do that, or else Jesus would not have said, "Take no thought about tomorrow."

In submitting our thoughts to God, we learn faith. That's the first step in trusting God with everything. Giving big chunks of life to God is not the point. Believe God is at work in your life by surrendering each minute to God. In this, God reveals His moving.

So you have something that disappoints you. Surrender it to God, believing He can work through that disappointment for your good. "All things work together for good to those who love God and are called to His purpose."

We live in a spiritually damaged sphere. However, God is greater than our sphere. You don't want to be held prisoner by this sphere. You can rise above it.

We live in uncertain times, bombarded with gloomy forecasts. This is the time to learn how to surrender every thought to God, letting Him show you how He can master your life for your good and His purpose.

Start now with your present thought, then add to that. Release your worries to God, for the Bible says, "[Cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

He really does. Let God carry you and your thoughts. **BA**

J. Grant Swank Jr. writes from Windham, ME.



After attending CoG7 awhile and reading your Statements of Faith (“What We Believe” at www.cog7.org), I have trouble understanding why you still hold to clean and unclean foods. It seems clear to me that Jesus abolished such distinctions (Mark 7:17-19). In light of this, please explain why the Church holds to these Old Testament distinctions.


Although the grace and truth of Christ erase the old lines of separation between people based on foods (Rom. 14:14-17), we are convinced (v. 5b) that good reasons remain for Christians to choose a diet free of unclean meats. Here are a few.

- Years after Jesus gave the teaching of Mark 7, the apostle Peter (who heard Jesus teach) said, “I have never eaten anything common or unclean” (Acts 10:14). Peter came to understand that the vision he had seen (vv. 9-17) was not about animals being cleansed, but men (v. 28b).

- This biblical distinction in meats (Lev. 11; Deut. 14) may have implications for nutrition (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31), even if not for salvation. These lists help us know which animals are more easily digestible than others and less likely to spread disease.

- New Testament texts still caution about unclean things (2 Cor. 6:16-18; Rev. 18:2b). No godly person in the Bible is reported to have eaten unclean meats.

- Mark 7:1-23 deals with the tradition of the elders about washing their hands before meals (vv. 3, 4). Jesus’ comments here must be understood in that context. Verse 19 speaks of purification by the digestive process, not the cleansing of unclean meat prior to its consumption.

To discuss this topic more thoroughly, please click on “Join the Community” at cog7.org or read our *BA Online* extra on unclean meats (baonline.org). 

— Elder Calvin Burrell

What is the Church’s take on brethren in the military or police service or general protective services? All manner of people are coming into the Church. Should they be refused or limited in their role because of their jobs?

Since the American Civil War (1860s), we have taught that participation in carnal warfare is not consistent with the highest standards of Christian faith. That position is based mostly on the teachings of Jesus Christ about non-retaliation (Matt. 5:38-42), about loving enemies (vv. 43-48), and about the nature of His kingdom (26:52; John 18:36). Our Lord’s personal example was in complete harmony with His teaching (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Some members do not share this view of military service. Their reasons for dissent vary and may include texts like Matthew 8:6-10; Luke 3:14; and Acts 10:1, 2. In nearly all cases, members who enlist or have been drafted for service in their nation’s military retain their good standing in the Church and continue to play important roles in congregations.

The Church’s opposition to international warfare is seldom taught as thoroughgoing pacifism, which would renounce use of physical force in protection of one’s family, for example, or in arrest and punishment of violent criminals. Nor do we discourage members from serving in local or state police services.

Readers who share the Church’s conscientious objection to war and violence are encouraged to visit centeronconscience.org.

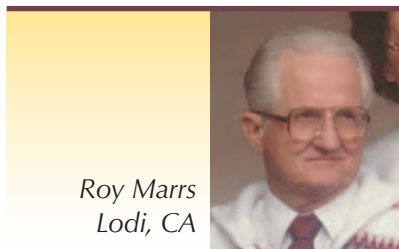
— Elder Calvin Burrell



The Minica clan (L to R): Brenda (mom), Summer, Matthew, Melody (held by dad, Nelson), Philip, Brianna, Zachary, and Courtney. An eighth Minica is on the way!

Wisdom – Man to Man

To appreciate the vital role of men in families today, BA asked CoG7 husbands, fathers, and granddads a few questions.



*Roy Marris
Lodi, CA*

What lessons has marriage taught that you wish you had known at the first?

My wife, Alvina, and I were married 52 years ago, both having lost our first companions. Before marriage, we discussed many things, like debt (useful for home and auto purchases, not for pleasure or trivial items); credit cards (pay them off each month); right and wrong ways to discuss disagreements (not in front of children and not now if negative feelings are aroused). We agreed on most everything discussed, including that we never discuss whether to go to church or not, except for serious

illness or dangerous weather.

– Roy Marris

I was married to Wilma (Pre-sler) O'Banion 47 years before her death. The best, most profitable investment a man can make in life is a total commitment to his marriage – not a 50-50 proposition.

– Delvin O'Banion



*Samuel
Holland
Hamilton,
Ontario*

Maria and I have been married 23 years. Marriage has taught me to listen and ask more questions, rather than just make statements.

– Samuel Holland



Raul Lopez
Houston, TX

My wife is Margarita, the name of a Mexican flower. We've been married 37 years, but it seems like just a few days since our first date. If I had learned earlier to hear the voice of God through her (Genesis 21:12), we'd have had fewer problems in our marriage.

— Raul Lopez

Martha (Hosteter) Cummings and I will be married 57 years in July. I wish I had known earlier what it means to love my wife, to understand differences between men and women, and to accept — without trying to change — one another.

— Artis Cummings

My wife, Brenda, and I have been married 18 years. In that time I've learned that anger is never a good or godly thing; that children are a blessing and it's foolish to delay or limit blessings; that debt makes us slaves by choice; that God has given me responsibility to teach-train my children and that I should not pass that off on any school or pastor.

— Nelson Minica

My wife, Yami, and I will soon celebrate 20 years of marriage. I wish I had learned sooner that the key to successful marriage is putting my wife first in everything. I knew I was charged to love her as Christ loved the church, but it took time to trans-

late that into a "pocket-sized" philosophy for daily use. Buying into the world's me-first mentality, I entered marriage promoting and protecting my own interests, benefits, rights, and privileges. I now realize that marriage works best when my attitude is like that of Jesus (Philippians 2:5). Growing in understanding of His grace, sacrifice, and unconditional love, I can better demonstrate those virtues to my wife.

— Erik Dunn



Carl Palmer
Spokane, WA

Row Ena and I have been married 48 years. Ephesians 5:25-33 has great insight on how to be a godly husband: Love as Christ loved. This suggests putting the desires of our wife before our own. We may need to forgo the Sunday football game on TV for a family picnic at the park.

We are to nourish and cherish our wives. *Nourish* pertains to providing adequate food — physical, emotional, and spiritual. *Cherish* suggests showing concern for feelings and needs. Sincere compliments and affirmation will reinforce a sense of self-worth.

Looking back, this was one of my biggest failures. I should have told my wife more often how much she meant to me. I should have reinforced her areas of strength and encouraged her in areas of weakness.

— Carl Palmer

Who made the biggest impact to put you on track with Jesus, the ultimate Man?

My mother and grandparents. Believing that conditions at home would make it most difficult to raise her son as a Christian, my mother decided to divorce and not remarry. My grandmother read the Bible to me most nights and talked to me about Jesus. My grandfather taught me honesty and respect, especially to elders. He was my father and provider in every way that matters.

— Delvin O'Banion

I consider my grandmother, evangelist Betty Small of Jamaica, my greatest influence. She was self-disciplined and a disciplinarian, so I didn't like her much as a child. But I grew to appreciate her insistence on precision, her attention to detail, and her complete devotion to Christ. She suffered from arthritis. In a wheelchair, she had to depend on others to do much for her.

— Samuel Holland

My mother put me on track to follow Jesus, reading to us and making sure we attended church somewhere. No CoG7 was nearby. I began reaching out more to Jesus in recent years as my health declined, and feel like I know Him better today than ever.

— Artis Cummings



Nelson Minica
San Antonio,
TX

My wife. She was sensitive to God and heard His voice at

times when I just didn't want to listen. The Setting Captives Free study course was a real breakthrough, opening my eyes to Jesus as bread of life and living water so I need not hunger or thirst for the world anymore. Other ministries with profound impact on our family have been Vision Forum, Voddie Baucham, Above Rubies, No Greater Joy, and Answers in Genesis.

— Nelson Minica



Erik Dunn
Houston, TX

Godly women set the stage for me to know the ultimate Man. My wife and my mother lived the gospel, making me receptive to it. Years before the fateful night I gave my life to Christ at a Galena Park revival, I watched the transformation in Mother's life, teaching me that faith in Christ transcended a weekend ritual. Then the Lord drew me closer by introducing me to a beautiful CoG7 girl named Yami, who was also being called to a closer walk. The power of God's work in these women and the promise of God's Word delivered by Pastor Whaid Rose led me to trust Jesus.

— Erik Dunn

How would you advise one who wants to become a godly husband and father?

The best advice I ever got was when I was ordained into ministry. Elder O. T. Whitten said, "Stay sweet in your soul." And Elder K. H. Freeman said, "He

who is careless with his own life will be careless with others." I was taught that an all-seeing Eye watched me. Others are watching, too — often a little one. So what are you passing on?

— Delvin O'Banion

Understand God's call on your life, and allow Him to be glorified in it. Base your walk with God on the measure of the Scriptures rather than on tradition or your personal comfort. Take it slow. Despite your own failure or that of others, never give up.

— Samuel Holland

Love your children. Respect them, hear their requests, and enjoy the time you have with them — precious time that you'll never get back. Take time with your spouse, hear her, and appreciate her as a real treasure.

— Raul Lopez

Deal with sin immediately. It separates you from God and others in subtle ways. Draw close to God through Jesus until you are sensitive to sinful thoughts. The slate must be kept clean minute by minute, hour by hour.

— Artis Cummings

Pour your time into your families. Too many men make themselves servants to work, sports, debt, games, and other forms of bondage. Absent in body and/or mind, they simply don't have time for their families, so they lose the battle for the home before they even get a chance to be good at it.

— Nelson Minica

Husbands and fathers are protectors. This means we are the ones to contact and confront the

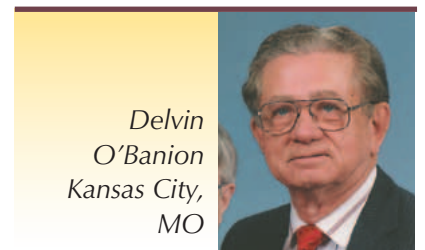
neighbor when that need arises. We should volunteer for the dirty or unpleasant jobs. We should be willing to lay down our lives for our wives and children. Jesus modeled this when He died on the cross for us.

— Carl Palmer

What strategies work(ed) best for you in raising your children to love and trust the Lord?

We have five children by birth (Alvina one, I four) and two more who call us Dad and Mom. My wife had a much better grasp of proper discipline than I — a much more kind, patient, and loving approach. I've also noticed that she was much slower than I to assume people have wrong motives. I now realize that some of our differences were what attracted me to her.

— Roy Marrs



Delvin
O'Banion
Kansas City,
MO

I had so very much help from Wilma, her parents Emmett and Mable Presler, and others. I often reminded the kids what a good mother Wilma was. She told me later that she said much the same thing about me. Coming home late with the children in bed, I would go to their rooms and pray for them, giving them a kiss. The next day they would ask their mother if I came in and kissed them. I have three children, eight grandchildren and eight "greats," with another on the way.

— Delvin O'Banion

We have two children. Seek agreement with your spouse regarding child rearing. Being a good example is more important than preaching to your children. That said, it is important to share the principles of Scripture with your children every chance you get. As they grow, become more of a cheerleader than a step-by-step instructor. Allow children to make mistakes.

Pray constantly and realize the battle is not yours, but the Lord's.
— Samuel Holland



We tried to be good examples and be consistent: church every Sabbath, youth camps, conferences, four years at Spring Vale Academy for all four children. We now have ten grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

— Artis Cummings

Biblical strategies work best! Specifically, if we love our children, we will discipline and train them. If we hate our children, we won't correct them but just leave them as they are. It is the same with the Lord: He loves us too much not to chasten us. Bible memorization is a wonderful tool for children; it's amazing what a young brain can soak up. We've been blessed with seven children, and another blessing on the way. A smart warrior wants a quiver full of arrows, not just a few.

— Nelson Minica

We always tried to be transparent with our children regarding challenges and benefits of the Christian life. Children can spot hypocrisy in their parents — a major turn-off. We tried not to raise unrealistic expectations in them that, if they didn't materialize, might be seen as God's failure to keep His promises.

We encouraged our children to develop close relationships at school, but most of their spare time was spent in the context of

church and family. We have three children and nine grandchildren.

Since good comes from God and what is negative can be traced to Satan, hopefully they will see God as on their side and wanting the best for them, not as a God of anger who wants to restrict them from fun. If we succeed in this, they are more apt to trust Him and commit their lives to Him.

— Carl Palmer BA

Final Request

As Mom slipped physically away from us that morning, her awareness of her children remained. Minutes from her last breath, she had the intuition and strength to offer, "Rick, take care of your family."

It's been years since she spoke those last words to me, yet they remain as a sort of calling card for our holidays, graduations, anniversaries, birthdays, and other family celebrations. With each event, that memory of leaning down to hear her last whispered instruction flashes as vividly as an IMAX film.

Am I doing this? Am I the parent she hoped I'd be? Have I cared, comforted, nurtured, cajoled, and critiqued as needed? Was I too harsh with my children and not attentive enough toward my wife? Was I . . . ? Was I . . . ?

As much as I wonder about my parenting skills, Mom too must have second-guessed herself. It's human nature to question one's treatment of others. But mothers have an innate ability to see beyond and envision the tomorrows. Was she prepping me for the disappointment and heartache that await me as the father of teenagers? She would have known what trials awaited me in parenting and wanted me not to give up when things went a little south. "Rick, take care of your family."

When the earthly end arrived for my mom that morning, it was serene. My siblings and I surrounded the bed and said our goodbyes — prayers and whispers of blessings for all she had meant to us.

Sad as it was, my mother left me with one final expectation, one last piece of advice from parent to child, one indelible act of love to prime me as a husband and father: "Rick, take care of your family."

I am, Mom. I am. Thanks!

— Rick Fowler

Grayson's Favorite Dad



This man may own Igneous Rock Gallery, but his real job has much greater significance.
by **Bob Wertz**

“Do you want to meet my Dad? He is right there! His name is Robert Wertz, and he works at *Ignis Wrock Garroly!*”

Meet Grayson, my just-turned five-year-old. This is the sort of thing he springs on perfect strangers. Right now is a golden time to be his dad. At this age Grayson thinks I am worthy of stopping busy people in their tracks just to be introduced to me. Who knows? Soon he may be embarrassed by parents and ask to be dropped off down the street so I can be anonymous to his friends. I'll savor his pride and fondness of me while it lasts.

Fun and games

It's fun arriving home after work. Grayson usually shouts,

“Daddy's home!” and runs to me, sometimes nearly knocking me down. Other times he plays the hiding game, and I am supposed to search for him. So far Grayson has not honed his hiding and being quiet skills. He tends to pick the same spots and can't refrain from giggling while I call for him and pretend not to know where he is. Fun game. Hugs, kisses, tickles, and roughhousing ensue.

After an evening of playing in the backyard, racing, wrestling, and some bucking bronco on the living room floor, we also play a game called “crocodile water.” Our king-size bed is a safe island, and the surrounding carpet is crocodile water. We try to push each other off the bed, and if you land in the crocodile water, you have to fight off the nasty crocs — a theatrical endeavor — then climb back up onto the island.

It seems that Grayson needs to get out the last of his energy before brushing his teeth, story time, prayers, and lights out.

Sometimes it starts by one of us looking as mean as we can and saying, “I'm going to beat you up!”

Confidence

One of Grayson's recent surprise introductions was in a hospital waiting room, where he innocently asked the others in the room, “Do you want to meet my dad? He is right there! [Points.] His name is Robert Wertz, and he beats me up every night at nine a'cwock.”

No one has called Child Protective Services, so he must not come across as an abused child!

You know the typical social awkwardness in an elevator? Grayson doesn't. When everyone watches the numbers light up, afraid to speak or make eye contact in such close quarters, Grayson breaks the ice. He is completely comfortable talking with anyone, anywhere, anytime. When we see Grayson looking at someone with the intent to speak, we never know quite what to expect.

The other night Grayson was carrying a flyer about Thomas the Train's visit to the Strasburg Railway when a middle-aged African American businesswoman approached from the other direction. We could see Grayson looking and angling toward her before stepping directly into her path. He obviously wanted to show her what was in his hand. She acknowledged Grayson, and he proceeded to inform her excitedly about the Thomas the Train venue. Pointing out the red star on the map in his hand, he invited her to join us when we go there. She thanked him warmly and went on her way with a smile.

Quality time

Like the trees in our yard, children grow. What seems like an eternity looking forward is just a flash in the rearview mirror later on. Some of our trees have grown higher than the fence where Grayson enjoys his favorite summer activity: being pushed on the rope swing tied off high on a branch of a huge oak tree. Always a thrill-seeker, he pleads, "Dad, push me really, really high — like forty inches!"

When I push Grayson with a running start, he brushes the treetops on his way to about fifteen feet off the ground. He sails over the fence in one direction and over the koi pond in the other, shrieking and giggling with pleasure the whole time.

The other night I got home late — already past his bedtime. Glad to see Grayson was still awake, I decided to let him stay up, and I pushed him on the swing until he had enough. It took a while until he confirmed

our conclusion by spontaneously singing a song, my ample reward for speaking his love language of quality time.

Actually, he started by asking me to join him in a song "about us," but since I didn't know the words yet, I asked him to sing it first.

The melody was very pleasant; I wish I could remember it. I do remember the three simple verses, each line repeating four times. I stopped pushing so high while he sang:

*You are my favorite Daddy.
You are big and strong.
We are special buddies.*

Then we sat on the patio steps, cuddled, and talked a little more. He heard me talk about how the trees are growing, and he wondered if they are older than he is. He asked what the backyard looked like before he was born and about the paver patio. I told him it was built the same week he was born, that we planned it so I could work at home and be near his mommy and him the first week of his life.

"So the patio is five too?"

"Yes, the patio is five, just like you."

Bittersweet reality

Later as he lay sleeping, I remembered how eager I had been to see our trees grow. Now I wish they would just stop growing — Grayson too — so that this magical evening could be repeated over and over. Next summer, Grayson will be heavier and taller,

I will be a year older, and the trees that now brush his feet as he sails over the fence will prevent him from swinging as high.

It is with this realization that I will savor our "special buddy" time this summer. Last night at a restaurant he proposed a great plan for after dinner. "You can push me all the way up to the air so I can catch a star!"

Instead, the three of us ended up walking the Harrisburg River Front, meeting babies and dogs and a nice older gentleman named Tom, who graciously invited us into his backyard garden. Grayson asked Tom, "May I see your boy?" But unfortunately, he didn't have one.

I thank God that I do have one, that I am his favorite Daddy, that I am seen as big and strong in his eyes — someone everyone should know — and that we are special buddies. **BA**

Bob and Beverly Wertz, Grayson's parents, own their own business and attend the Harrisburg, PA, church, where Bob is associate pastor. Grayson's adult siblings are Emily, Chelsea, and Spencer.



National Day(s) of Prayer



@ Yuri Arcurs—Dreamstime.com

The National Day of Prayer in the US will be commemorated this year on Thursday, May 5. Christians are urged to participate at home, in a nearby church, or at any public observance in your community.

In its history, the United States has observed many unofficial days of prayer. The call for an annual observance was signed into law by President Truman in 1952, and President Reagan later established each first Thursday of May as the annual date for national prayer.

Rumors that President Obama cancelled the 2010 Day of Prayer observance are false, although he did choose not to host a prayer event at the White House. Of the five most recent presidents, only George W. Bush consistently hosted National Day of Prayer events, not required by law, in his official residence.

This American tradition now operates under a legal cloud since a federal judge's 2010 ruling that a legislated Day of Prayer is unconstitutional. The Obama administration will continue to issue Day of Prayer proclamations while legal appeals to that ruling are being heard.

If your country observes a national day of prayer, please e-mail us with this information.

— BA

Top Bible Prayers

- Tops in tenacity: "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" – Jacob (Genesis 32:26)
- Tops in brevity, humility: "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" – Publican (Luke 18:13)
- Tops in transparency: "I acknowledge my transgressions. . . ." – David (Psalm 51:3)
- Tops in balance: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" – Demoniac's dad (Mark 9:24)
- Tops in surrender: "Not my will, but thine, be done." – Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke)
- Tops in blessing: "May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless. . . ." – Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- Tops for church: "To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." – Paul (Ephesians 3:14-21)
- Tops in unity: "As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe. . . ." – Jesus (John 17:21)
- Tops for healing: If God's people humble themselves, pray, turn from sin and seek His face, then He will hear from heaven, forgive their sins and heal their land. – Solomon (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- Tops for intercession: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." – Jesus (Luke 23:34). Runners-up: Abraham (Genesis 19); Moses (Deuteronomy 9:25-29); Daniel (9:1ff); and Ezra (9:6-15).
- Tops in life: "That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." – Paul (Colossians 1:10)
- Tops in death: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." – Jesus (Luke 23:46)

– Calvin Burrell

Prayer and Revival – British Style

The meaning of revival will differ from saint to saint. A consensus could be a visible manifestation of love, unity, and the miraculous, as opposed to division, rancor, and stagnation. One brother's prayer for revival at the Manchester convention (2010) came in three parts:

- healing for brethren hurt over the years
- productive deliberation among Church leaders
- encouragement of faithful servants of God

As saints ponder what needs to be done to bring about revival, a proper question is "Can anything we do bring revival, or is it all of divine appointment and timetable?"

Given the apparent blessings and presence of God among His children at the convention, one must conclude that inspired actions could facilitate unity and God's power working among His people and beyond. The love we felt there was uplifting and therapeutic. A certain atmosphere permeated the place, as though something would burst through the clouds. Could it be that the revival we all desire and pray for is imminent?

As we anticipate God's timed revival among His children, let us consider the components of the three-part prayer above. Let us continue to pray and trust that our heavenly Father will hear our prayers and do more than we can ever ask or imagine through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

– Godswill Tikili
Streatham, London, UK

Today

Today, Lord, I will spend time with You because time is as money in my hands. I'll pay out the first portion gladly, reverently. I'll place it before You as an offering. I'll choose You over the tasks and distractions. I'll take myself to a quiet place where I can filter out the woes of the world and the crushing needs all around me. I'll come first to You.

I'll praise You for who You are, for what You're doing and have done.

I'll hear what You have to say. I'll allow the truth to sink deep within.

I'll learn at Your feet in preparation for actions and interactions to come.

I'll gain strength and perspective and then, richer for the transaction, I'll turn back to this needy world and walk in Your ways.

– Jan Pierce BA

A Tale of Two Camps

Warning: A whole new perspective on problems may open up as you read this reflection on Scripture.
by Marcia Hornok

Why did everything seem to happen to Joseph in twos? The Genesis narrative begins in chapter 37 with two occasions of trouble between him and his brothers (the bad report to Jacob and Jacob's favoritism). Joseph has two dreams, and the brothers devise two plots to get rid of him: death or deportation. The next two chapters (38-39) present two accounts of sexual temptation. Judah gives in, but Joseph does not. Mrs. Potiphar even falsely accuses Joseph twice. In prison Joseph interprets two dreams of two prison mates and, after two more years, he interprets Pharaoh's two dreams (chs. 40-41). Need I mention how many sons he had?

In chapters 42-44 the brothers come to Egypt to buy food twice and Joseph tests them by returning their money twice. In the next two chapters, the brothers discover he is Joseph and have a reunion, and his father learns he is alive and celebrates a joyful reunion with him. Chapter 47 tells about Joseph providing for his family's welfare, as well as for the nation's welfare during the famine.

Next, Jacob blesses Joseph's sons, and then he blesses all his own sons (chs. 47-49). Finally we have Jacob's death after giving burial instructions ("Bury me . . . in Canaan") and Joseph's death after giving the same instructions.¹

Significance

This dualistic structure of the narrative must have a significant purpose for everyone who hears or reads Joseph's life story. Perhaps it started with something that happened to his dad.

Jacob had his "ladder" dream when he left Canaan to avoid his angry twin brother, Esau (Genesis 28). He had his "wrestling match" twenty years later when returning to the land and to Esau. We tend to gloss over another God encounter in Genesis 32:1, 2: "So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, 'This is God's camp.' And he called the name of that place Mahanaim," which means "two camps." What did that experience mean for Jacob? For Joseph? For us?

This point in Jacob's life finds him between conflicts. He has settled the one with Uncle Laban (ch. 31). However, he still has to meet Esau and the four hundred men coming with him (32:6). This can't be good. When God gives Jacob the experience of

Mahanaim, he learns the two-camp perspective. His family's camp is not the only one in the area; God's camp is there, too. He has God's presence, protection, and promises for whatever the future holds. Consequently, the meeting with Esau results in reconciliation, not confrontation.

Meaning of Mahanaim

Mahanaim reminds us that every believer's life has two realities: the one we see and do and the invisible one that God sees and does. Like Jacob and Joseph, we live one dualistic life. The co-existing physical and spiritual realms work together to accomplish God's purposes.

Joseph's life events, presented as a duet, can remind us that God works in concert with our lives. Joseph had this awareness, proved by his telling his brothers, "So now it was not you who sent me here, but God" (45:8). What helped Joseph reach this perspective? Looking back, he may have realized that God was camping with him when his brothers put him in a pit, sold him into slavery, and exiled him to a foreign land. Four times in Genesis 39 the text states, "The Lord was with him," describing Joseph being enslaved, tempted, accused of rape, and imprisoned.

After thirteen years of adversity, Joseph stood before Pharaoh (who considered himself a god)



Joseph makes himself known to his brethren

From The Doré Bible Illustrations, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, NY, 1974.

and referred to the true God five times. Then this ex-con boldly offered Pharaoh advice! Soon Joseph faced a new set of problems: ego-popping power and the stress of managing a nation's economy.

Nine years into his rule, when foreigners were coming to Joseph for food, his past suddenly confronted him: His ten brothers showed up. Joseph may have thought God was giving him the perfect opportunity for justice, what we refer to as closure. But Joseph's life verse must have been Genesis 50:20: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (NIV).

From ages 17 to 30, Joseph had lived in the camp of "You intended to harm me." He survived and thrived because he stayed aware of the other camp: "God intended it for good." Derek Kidner states, "This biblical realism, [is] to see clearly the two aspects of every event — on the one hand human mishandling . . . on the other the perfect will

of God — and to fix attention on the latter as alone being of any consequence. . . ."²

In his human camp, Joseph was a victim of his brothers' wickedness, Mrs. Potiphar's lust, and the butler's memory lapse. But with Mahanaim in mind, his life was God's story. Joseph played his part with integrity. In the pit he gained humility. As Potiphar's slave, he learned to run a large household and handle money. Prison taught him how to manage difficult people. And patience came during the butler's two years of forgetfulness. This God-designed training program landed him in the palace, where he could advise Pharaoh and save many lives in Egypt and all other countries (41:57), preserving his own family as well. In Joseph's various good and bad circumstances, God worked invisibly to accomplish His ultimate plans.

So it is with our training regimen. God uses even the evil intentions of others to prepare and develop us. What we see and feel is not the only reality. God's

camp surrounds and oversees us, whether we live in a pit, a prison, or a palace.

Satellite view

Elisha had seen the supernatural "chariots and horsemen of Israel" taking Elijah into heaven (2 Kings 2:11, 12, NIV). So when a strong enemy force surrounded the city of Dothan to capture Elisha, he told his servant, "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (6:16, NIV). God opened their spiritual eyes, and they saw a divine army camping around the city of Dothan to protect them (v. 17).

Dothan appears only twice in the Bible — here in Elisha's story and in Genesis 37:17. Dothan is where Joseph's brothers had plotted to kill him but sold him into slavery instead. His adversities had started in Dothan.


Perhaps God showed Joseph's life as a dualism to help us remember something important about our Dothan-like struggles. We are always in two camps. We may be able to feel only the pit or see prison walls, but God has the satellite view of our location and our destination. Reversals, roadblocks, and detours all play a significant role in His purposes for us. Keeping God's camp in mind helps us view our earth-camp with heavenly perspective. Mahanaim! **BA**

Marcia Hornok
writes from Salt
Lake City, UT.



1. I have amplified David A. Dorsey's synopsis in *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament*, p. 59.
2. Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, p. 207

[Comparative religion]

A close-up photograph of a hand pointing to a scroll of Hebrew text. The scroll is unrolled and lies on a dark surface. The hand is positioned in the upper center, with the index finger pointing down towards the text. The text on the scroll is written in a traditional Hebrew script. The background is slightly blurred, showing parts of a wooden chair and a dark blue garment.

Messianic Judaism

The missing link between
Jewish root and Christian
fruit? by Israel Steinmetz

In the last forty years, Christian churches have increasingly encountered the movement known as Messianic Judaism (see sidebar, p. 22). Church of God (Seventh Day) members, in particular, are met in various ways by one or more of this movement's characteristic traits:

- emphasis on the Judeo elements of our Judeo-Christian heritage
- elevation of Torah in our faith and practice
- observance of annual Hebrew festivals
- use of so-called "sacred names" and other Hebrew words
- affinity for non-biblical Jewish traditions and teachings

Most of us in pastoral ministry deal with these influences from time to time. What should our response be? How does Scripture speak to these issues? My interest is not so much to critique the Messianic movement but to offer counsel on how CoG7 members and friends might respond to its various points of contact.

To do this, let's address each of the items listed above. Hopefully we'll lay groundwork for a conceptual approach that prepares us to address other related issues that may arise.

Judeo heritage and Torah

The first item is the concern of our Messianic friends to emphasize the Judeo elements of the Judeo-Christian heritage. This part of our heritage must not be ignored. As Paul says regarding the Israelites:

To [them] belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the

temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen (Romans 9:4, 5).

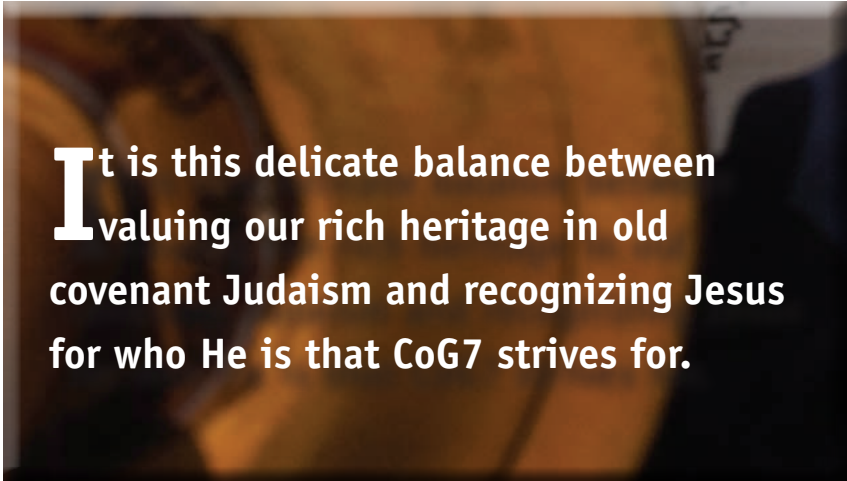
A rich heritage indeed! But, we must quickly add, an incomplete one. For all that belonged to the Jewish people in the old covenant was but a foreshadowing of what is fulfilled in the new covenant of Jesus the Messiah. It is true that this Messiah arose from among the Jews *according to the flesh*, but we do not know Him according to the flesh (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16). Rather, we know Him as LORD of heaven and earth, Jews and Gentiles alike. He must have the preeminence in all things (cf. Colossians 1:15-19), including how we understand the old covenant and all things Jewish.

It is this delicate balance between valuing our rich heritage in old covenant Judaism and recognizing Jesus for who He is that CoG7 strives for. Our Statement of Faith, for example, expresses the enduring role of the Decalogue within the new covenant community, while also affirming the deity of Christ. We seek to bring all of Scripture,

old and new, to bear upon our teachings. The full benefit of our Jewish heritage will be best preserved as we fully exalt the Lord Jesus — His person, His words, His work — while also honoring the timeless aspects of Hebrew religion. To emphasize the Jewish elements of our faith at the expense of Christ is idolatry.

The next item is the desire to elevate Torah in the life and practice of the Church. One vivid example of this is the Jewish tradition (adopted by many Messianics) of dancing around the synagogue with a Torah scroll, kissing it, and storing it in an honored place.

On one hand, we applaud the attitude behind this love for the law, seeing it echoed in Psalm 119 and other texts. On the other, caution and moderation are urged here. As Christians we recognize the law as holy, spiritual, and good (Romans 7:12), but we also recognize it as weakened by the flesh and incapable of doing what only Jesus can (8:2, 3). The law, Paul says, was added because of transgressions and was a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, imprisoning us under its condemnation. While it serves now as a standard of holiness,



It is this delicate balance between valuing our rich heritage in old covenant Judaism and recognizing Jesus for who He is that CoG7 strives for.

Brief M. J. History

Messianic Judaism began when a Hebrew named Andrew told his brother Simon Peter, “We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ)” (John 1:41). Soon, many more Hebrews confessed Jesus as their Messiah before the missionary efforts of the apostle Paul turned decidedly toward the Gentiles (Acts 13:46).

In the nearly two thousand years since, many misguided and evil individuals have persecuted Jews in the name of Jesus and Christianity. Not surprisingly, then, churches outgrew synagogues and few Jews trusted Jesus as their Messiah in this period. That began to change in the late nineteenth century.

Fueled by efforts of Jewish-Christian immigrants to the US, a movement began of Jews describing themselves as Hebrew Christians. In 1915 this group became the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America, known today as the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America.

Under the leadership of men like Martin and Joel Chernoff and Daniel Juster, the movement’s emphasis shifted from being Christians intent on rediscovering their ethnic Jewish roots to Jews who recognized Jesus as Messiah and as the fulfillment, but not the end, of their Judaism. This subtle change can be seen in how they are referred to – no longer Hebrew Christians, but now Messianic Jews.

Today the Messianic Jewish movement is alive and well. Thousands of Messianic synagogues operate around the world. Among others, David H. Stern has emerged as a leading voice in the movement. For more information, visit www.mjaa.org and/or www.iamcs.org.

Because Messianic Judaism lacks the structure that characterizes the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant branches of Christendom, summarizing its beliefs and practices is not easy. In general, it shares many orthodox tenets of the wider Christian faith from which it sprang. Messianic Judaism combines this with distinctively Jewish liturgy and tradition, varying from the strictness of the orthodox to the liberal practices of Reformed Judaism. Most fall somewhere along this spectrum.

The Messianic Jewish movement receives mixed reviews from Jews and Christians. Most Jews view it with suspicion, moving to outright disdain. Among Christians the movement is met mostly with curiosity and caution. Because Messianic Judaism is relatively new and rapidly evolving, only time will tell what place it finds within the broader family of Christianity.¹

– Israel Steinmetz

we must recognize its severe limitations as that which can do nothing to save or sanctify us. For this we rely entirely on the grace of Jesus Christ. Thus any honor given the Torah law must be carefully considered, kept in proper perspective to the highest object of our celebration and honor, Jesus the Messiah.

Festivals and sacred names

Observance of Jewish feasts is an issue recently considered by our Ministerial Council. The council declined to change the Church’s historic non-observance of these annual festivals. It also embraced those members and congregations who do observe them, provided that they do not insist on observance as a condition of salvation or fellowship, and that their promotions clarify that observance does not reflect the Church’s historic position. These are important provisions to remember. Celebrating the Messiah, Jesus, as fulfillment of the feasts given to Israel is both valid and valuable. Festival observance that stops short of this, however, is reversion to an obsolete and useless covenant.

The insistence by some that Christians should employ Hebrew language in their religious vocabulary is particularly troubling. Despite persistent clamoring on this topic, there is simply no cogent argument to require non-Hebrew speaking people to replace words in their language with Hebrew terms. God is the creator of languages. Never does He instruct non-Hebrews to speak Hebrew! His apostle to the nations, Paul, wrote all of his letters in Greek.² He certainly felt no compulsion to replace *Iesou*

Christos with Jeshua Ha-Messiah. Nor should we.

In John's apocalyptic vision (Revelation 7:9-12), he saw people from every nation and language worshipping before the throne of God. We have no indication that they worshipped in anything other than their native tongue, or that we should either.

Non-biblical Jewish customs

The fifth and final concern can be a source of confusion and danger, when folks with a fancy for non-biblical Jewish customs, teachings, and traditions teach them as normative for Christians. These include such things as Jewish weddings, Passover *seders*, and Sabbath rituals; traditional Jewish prayers and sayings; rabbinic teaching and tradition. "If it's Jewish, it must be good!" is their attitude. In response, we urge restraint and serious theological reflection.

Extra-biblical Jewish traditions came under fire from Jesus on several occasions, when they were found in conflict with God's commandments (Mark 7:1-13, for example). This should alert us to the fact that Jewish traditions must be carefully considered in the light of Scripture, with the recognition that real danger lurks in some of them (Colossians 2:20-23; Titus 1:14). Regarding Jewish customs and teachings that have emerged since the time of Christ, we must be on guard just as we are when we encounter other man-made religions.

It is not uncommon to hear the notion that God has two covenant peoples today, Jews and Christians, and that both are equally acceptable in God's sight, under separate terms, dif-

ferent covenants. Such a notion diminishes the greater glory of the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3).

God's new covenant people are not those who are Jews outwardly, in the flesh or in a show of man-made religion (Romans 2:28), but those who are Abraham's seed and God's children by faith in Jesus (Galatians 3:7-14). In Christ the dividing wall of separation between Jew and Gentile has been broken down, and Gentiles are grafted into the same plant as Jews to become a new man identified, not by race but by faith in Jesus, God's Son, as the Messiah (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). Those who do not have the Son cannot legitimately claim the Father or eternal life (John 17:1-3; 1 John 2:23; 5:11-13).

Thus the teachings, customs, and traditions of Jews since the coming of the Messiah must be handled with the utmost care and theological reflection, not indiscriminately accepted as good simply because they are Jewish.

Applause and discretion

In summary, Messianic Judaism appears to be a legitimate movement within Christianity by breaking down some of the barriers that have historically kept Jews from coming to Christ. As such it should be applauded.

At the same time, we must exercise discretion in our points of contact with Messianic Judaism. The entire book of Hebrews is an urgent appeal for those who know the excellencies of the new covenant and its Christ to not return to the dim reflections of the old. The issues considered here alert us to the need for careful

evaluation in the greater light of the gospel, and for exaltation of the Lord Jesus in all we do. **BA**

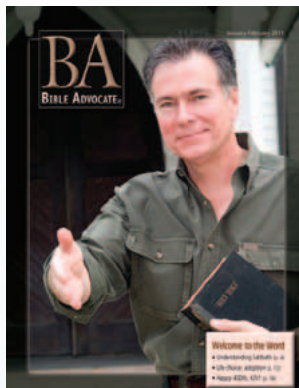
Israel Steinmetz lives in Kansas City, MO, and is curriculum development specialist for LifeSpring School of Ministry. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



The author and the BA editor welcome reader response to this introductory article at bibleadvocate@cog7.org. What is your experience with Messianic Judaism? Your reaction to the author's views? How much Jewish religion should be retained in new covenant Christianity?

Endnotes

1. While several sources were consulted regarding the history of Messianic Judaism, the author is primarily indebted to the article by K. W. Rick entitled "Messianic Judaism" in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition, ed. Walter A. Elwell, p. 765.
2. Despite the efforts of David H. Stern and others to sprinkle the epistles with Hebrew words, the fact is that Paul wrote in the common language of his day (Greek), which was understood by the multi-ethnic congregations that received them. Paul quoted most often from the Greek translation of the Old Testament!



Lasting impressions

I just read the January-February BA and am impressed, as usual. David Kidd has me thinking about the Sabbath as “poor cousin.” I enjoyed Richard Jensen’s balance [p. 4] and Michael Barrett’s thoughtfulness [p. 10]. In “Adoption Option” [p. 12] you wrote “Childbirth may result . . . about forty weeks after two persons of opposite gender merge sexually. . . .” May I point out that with the aid of technology, childbirth occurs, too, about forty weeks after a woman becomes pregnant via sperm donation.

Is this a sexual merge? I’ve seen no Church position on this, but I know one case of a Christian woman (no mate; didn’t want to fornicate) who chose that option. Is this an issue for BA at some point?

D. L.
Fall River, MA

Editor’s note: What say ye to this, readers?

I felt compelled to let you know how much I appreciate “Sabbath Principles” [p. 5]. Sabbath allows us to rest, observe, and imagine what God saw after He had done creating heaven and earth. It also gives a

glimpse into the future as an emblem of eternal rest with Christ in the earth made new.

A. W.
Manchester, UK

Open forum?

The BA has both enlightened and encouraged me. I apologize for not writing before to express my appreciation. Recently I’ve become confused. Rather than a teaching tool for biblical truths and CoG7 positions, it seems BA has become more of an open forum whose articles reflect the wide, often conflicting beliefs within and without the Church.

For example, the question posed by a reader on dealing with a deacon who worked on Sabbath was answered [over two issues without certainty. Another author wrote] that God does not allow us to use any type of violence to defend ourselves or our families from evildoers [p. 22]. Taking her position to its logical end, not only military service is excluded for Christians but also security guards, police officers, etc. Is the BA an authoritative teaching tool, or simply an open forum for any view someone wishes to espouse?

M. D.
Apison, TN

Editor’s reply: For 75 years, our magazine has had the goal of representing Bible truth taught by the Church. Prior to 1935, when doctrines were less mature, BA often used open forum as a way to probe for better understanding. On matters where the Church has not spoken, we still share opinions occasionally under a “Viewpoint” header.

The Sabbath item, I concede, was controversial. My ambiguous note with that column did not help avoid

the confusion that followed. The pacifism article was published as one member’s confession, followed by a clearer statement of the Church’s official position on warfare. For many readers, the article probably raised your question about when, if ever, we might resort to violence to protect ourselves and our loved ones. Such reflection, I think, was a healthy effect of that article.

In understanding and supporting its doctrine, the Church enjoys a high level of unity. Differences in detail among us are rarely problematic and often a blessing. Any marriage, family, church, or nation is stronger for its variety of ideas, though it means dealing with a certain level of fraternal conflict. The lack of fraternal conflict means someone’s not thinking. Unity amid diversity is a richer experience than uniformity with no diversity.

The Bible does not offer uniform, unvarying evidence on every topic. If it did, disagreement among intelligent Christians could hardly exist. Great variety — and great similarity — is revealed by the pieces of the puzzle, the texts from which our teachings are assembled. The Bible is a big multi-faceted book. Not every verse fits snugly with every other verse. With much study and the Spirit’s guidance, we still don’t fit all the pieces together perfectly.

For the magazine to print articles reflecting the diversity — even ambiguity — found in Scripture (and in the Church) does not seem improper. It helps readers escape “groupthink” and a rut mentality. It should push people back to the Scriptures to clarify and defend what they believe.

The BA’s primary purpose remains unchanged: to reflect the Church’s best understanding of Bible teaching, not to provide an open forum for its established doctrines.

A photograph of a sailboat with three masts and white sails on a blue ocean under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there are white waves crashing onto a sandy beach.

Come Back to Me

***Love, a vast traveling sea, calm me;
this ravished heart of mine has failed.***

***I beg you, guide my rafting thoughts,
afloat. Capture my winds of breath;***

***cradle them as I set sail in search
of You, my Lord. Come back to me,***

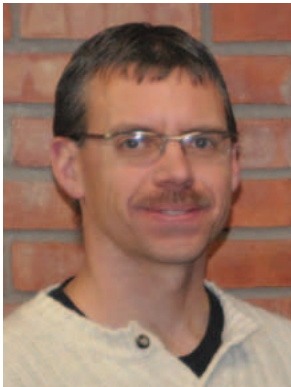
***join me in paradise, where we once met
in our dreams. Carry me away to the silk***

***sands; be inside me once more. For this
emptiness – this loss of You –
has drowned me.***

Lisa M. Cronkhite

G. C. Ministries
Emphases

National Youth Ministry



Kurt Lang, Director
See page 28

G. C. Missions



Bill Hicks, Director
See page 29



July 18-23 General Conference Convention

- Pheasant Run Resort, on 250 beautiful acres in St. Charles, Illinois – one hour from Chicago – is our home for the week.
- Our theme, “Amazing Love,” will be unpacked in sermons by Wayne Hrenyk, Bill Hicks, Jason Overman, Loren Stacy, and Whaid Rose. Children, youth, and SWORD programs are planned, along with seniors’ activities and more! On Sabbath the African Children’s Choir will treat us to a p.m. concert.
- Choose from workshops that inspire and equip: How to Revitalize Your Sabbath School; the Worship Art Technology Summit series; hour-long sessions on Love Languages, LOVEshared, The Power of Love and the Joy of Forgiveness, Love Bridges the Culture Gap, and Why Your Kids Will Quit the Church and What You Can Do to Stop It. Go to cog7.org/convention for more.
- Important CoG7 business is also on the agenda. Come be a part of *your* church’s future.

To register, visit convention.cog7.org, or call 303-452-7973 to request a packet. Do it now: **Early bird discount ends June 20.**





Death of a Saint

Nelson Caswell, 77, died on March 27 near Eugene, Oregon. He was the first of seven children born to Fulton and Lois Caswell, who joined CoG7 under the ministry of Elder A. N. Dugger near Canton, New York, in the 1930s. Though remote and isolated members at the start, this family has since made its positive presence known throughout the Church – in a dozen or a hundred different ways.

Pastor Nelson attended college in Salem, West Virginia, and graduated from Midwest Bible College in Stanberry, Missouri. He married Wilma Munro of Stanberry in 1955, and to this marriage of fifty-plus years were born two daughters (Glenda Patton of Oregon, Cindy Nienhuis of California) and three sons (Vernon of Colorado, Randy of Nevada, and Clark of Oregon). Nelson served as church pastor in Deckerville and Muskegon, Michigan; Denver, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; Kansas City, Missouri; and Marion, Oregon. He also served as overseer of the

Central District, as national youth director, and as a member of the General Conference executive board. His fervent faith in God and joyous love for people have blessed many.

Preceded in death by his parents, by his wife, and by a brother (Malcolm), Nelson is survived by sisters Hope Dais of Thornton, Colorado; Cecyl Fischer of Perry, Michigan; and Marjorie Frary of Canton; and by brothers Norman of Owosso, Michigan, and Tim of Lansing, Michigan.

Accessions to Ministry

The Ministerial Council's License and Credentials Committee has awarded the following documents:

Ministerial Credentials

Pieter Barkhuizen, Apple Valley, California; Jhabel Chagollan, Houston, Texas; Wayne Hrenyk, San Antonio, Texas; Israel Steinmetz, Kansas City, Missouri

Ministerial License

Tim Endecott, Wellman, Iowa; Scott Fischer, Owosso, Michigan; Daniel Flores, McAllen, Texas;

LITES Ministries

Leadership-In-Training for Evangelism and Service

LITES Ministries has completed its second trimester of the school year! Six students from Mexico, Oregon, Nevada, and Missouri answered God's call to be fully consumed by Him and His purposes.

As part of our passion to cultivate men and women who impact their world and church for Christ, LITES focuses on solid biblical teaching and hands-on ministry experience. In addition to Bible classes and other core curriculum, students engage in ministry positions, including youth, a special-needs school (K to 21 years), nursing homes, local ministry center, and a soup kitchen. Students also lead daily devotions for the team and serve in various roles for the local church.

Interested? The 2011-2012 LITES year will begin September 5 and end May 18, 2012. For application forms, visit lites.cog7.org. Contact us at 660-783-9544; P.O. Box 172, Stanberry, MO 64489; e-mail: lites@cog7.org.



National Youth Ministry

Kurt Lang, Director



Piece of history: At an August 1961 General Conference assembly in Littleton, Colorado, Faithful Youth Changers became the official name of the Church's youth ministry, with Elden Fischer as national director. The first FYC logo (above) was printed on an FYC manual the next year

Now, fifty years later, National FYC is changing its name to CoG7 National Youth Ministry. Its target group will be narrowed somewhat to youth from 13 to 18, leaving post-high schoolers to be served by SWORD, our young adult ministry. Our take on why this change, along with a summary of what the ministry is about, is posted at baonline.org for your information. Please read it, and support our youth financially as you note the need. [.org](http://baonline.org)

Youth workers: Please register your youth group at <http://nfyc.cog7.org/register>, using the form mailed to churches, or download a Gimme Five booklet (forms inside) at <http://nfyc.cog7.org>. Youth and youth workers who register receive a personalized National Youth card with discounts to youth events, plus a subscription to our e-newsletter and text list.

Year-of-the-Bible Challenge

Since BA declared 2011 as Year of the Bible, members in Harrisburg, Oregon have been challenged to memorize **111** verses in **2011**, starting with Psalm 119:11: "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (NIV).

Everyone age 18 and over who completes the memorization will receive a Bible bookstore gift card. Those under 18 have added incentives called "Bible bucks." For each verse learned, they receive a Bible buck. For every verse both they and a parent learn, another buck. Bucks are also earned for Bible reading during the week and in other ways. Youth can trade their Bible bucks monthly for Walmart gift cards, Christian CD's and movies, games and other items at the Church's "store." If at year's end they complete the 111-verse challenge, they receive gift cards totaling \$111!

The best reward comes from living with God's Word in our hearts for sure, but we're having fun handing out other perks, too! Our students and adults are taking and enjoying this memory challenge. Interested? E-mail harrisburgor@cog7.org, and we'll send you our 2011 Bible Challenge program.

— Kurt Lang, Harrisburg youth pastor

Brian Franks, Walla Walla, Washington; Pedro Garcia, Chicago, Illinois; Jose Modesto Gonzalez, Houston, Texas; Josias Hernandez, Elizabeth, New Jersey; Abiel Martinez, San Antonio, Texas; Sean Mills, Denver, Colorado; Jason Overman, Jasper, Arkansas; Isaac Pedraza, Holland, Michigan; Larry Rice, Syracuse, Indiana; Steve Rodriguez, Saginaw, Michigan; Herlindo Roman, Cleveland, Texas; Tim Steinhauer, Stanberry, Missouri; Dan Sweeney, Tehachapi, California

CoG7 Anniversaries

Congratulations to . . .

- Ernie and Mabel Burkhardt of Palmer, Nebraska, who celebrated their 64th on April 12.
- LeRoy and Hazel McGill of Turner, Oregon, who will celebrate their 70th on May 15.
- Adolph and Fern Fauth of Karmiel, Israel, who will celebrate their 60th on June 10.

Summer Busy-ness

Family Retreat, May 27-29

Jasper, AR, church camp-grounds; contact: 870-446-5736 or jasonoverman@hotmail.com

Southwestern Family Camp,

June 12-18

Camp Cimarron, near Kingfisher, OK; contact: 918-695-6036 or jerad.ulrich@pelcostructural.com

Northern California Youth

Camp, June 20-26

Capital Mt. Christian Camp, Weimar, CA; contact: Leah Gomez (gomez02@frontiernet.net)

Michigan Youth Camp, July 3-10
Long Lake Outdoor Center,
Middleville, MI; contact:
Aaron Coulson (*coulson_*
aaron_n@yahoo.com)

SIS-Q Meadows Senior Camp
(ages 13-18), July 24-31
Cave Junction, OR; contact:
Harold/Vona Ogren (*hogren@*
msn.com)

Dakota Youth Retreat,
August 11-14
Medina, ND (*www.csbcamp.*
org); contact: Amber Schlen-
ker (*ambermarie92@hotmail.*
com); David/Jamie Nienhuis
(701-655-3532); Jesse/Wanda
Hopewell (701-428-3667)

Ministry Opportunity

Bible Sabbath Association (BSA), longtime non-denominational ally of CoG7 in Sabbath support, seeks friends to associate (\$35 per year dues) and assist in administrative duties, which may include

- service on the BSA board, elected by the membership.
- service as BSA home office manager — in your residence. Requires clerical, computer, and interpersonal skills, a minimum of fifteen hours per week, and a small inventory of materials and equipment in your home.

Interested? Contact John Paul Howell, president (*howelljp@gmail.com*); Bryan Burrell, treasurer (580-227-4494; *bsmburrell@gmail.com*); or Ken Ryland (*tss_editor@mac.com*).



Myanmar congregation in Tahan, Kalaymyo province

G. C. Missions

Bill Hicks, Director



Missions Abroad. The Church in North America supports sister churches in forty or more countries, especially those in start-up or “mission” phases — Myanmar, for example, where Missions Director Bill Hicks recently assisted in organizing a national conference in preparation for International Ministerial Congress membership and increased service in southeast Asia.

Disaster Relief. This fund expresses compassion for brethren and friends hit by natural catastrophe. With major disasters happening somewhere almost monthly, it seems, DRF depends on faithful donors to spell relief around the globe. Recently, \$6,500 went to Kenya for famine relief.

Cristo Viene. This fund represents a best CoG7 effort to fulfill the Great Commission by supporting missionaries and evangelists in more than a dozen countries. Volunteers from Canada, Mexico, and the US are giving monthly as vital support for these grassroots efforts. Team leader for Cristo Viene is IMC President Ramon Ruiz Garza of Mexico.

SHINE. Each year a team of doctors, dentists, technicians, pastors, and support personnel donate a week helping people in the third world who need, but cannot pay for, their services — to body, soul, and spirit. This June 19-27 it's off to Ecuador for the 2011 SHINE team.

International Ministerial Congress. Our greatest Church growth is in the harvest fields of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In July our annual Change for Your World offering will help CoG7's world leadership keep up this forward momentum.

Your offering to one or more of these ministries is invited this month. For more information, visit www.cog7missions.org.



Central America and Mexico

The second Leaders Reunion of International Ministerial Congress (IMC) Zone 2 took place in Managua, Nicaragua, March 4-6. National boards of directors, ministers, and deacons representing the Church in Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama were in attendance.

Objectives of this reunion were to promote integration of these national churches with the IMC, to inform them of Church progress around the world, to offer biblical instruction, and to address the developmental needs of Zone 2 churches.

In Nicaragua a project is underway to establish a radio station for preaching the gospel. The Church in El Salvador provides help based on its experience with radio ministry. It is expected that the Church in Nicaragua, with assistance, can make this project a reality within two years.

In Guatemala the Church recently began a big health-oriented task, opening a medical center in the capital city. The focus will be on helping Church members, and the community will be served.

The Church in Honduras opened a multi-purpose hall with a capacity of five hundred people — large enough to accommodate the Ministerial Council and any other national event of the Church.

In Nicaragua the Church continues to offer meals

for children of extreme poverty in the Garden of Eden fellowship hall. Approximately fifty children eat breakfast and lunch there daily. This noble cause is accomplished by the financial support of CoG7 members in the US and with the caring service of brethren in Nicaragua.

Church leaders from Mexico continue to provide training in administration, pastoral ministry, missions, and biblical theology for Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. Soon we hope to aid in training pastors in Panama through Ministerial Training Seminary. The Mexican Church also provides two ministers to work, training pastors and missionaries in Costa Rica and Honduras. We will analyze the possibility of supporting other workers in Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and El Salvador through Cristo Viene.

On Sabbath, March 5, all attending ministers and deacons dispersed to the various churches in Managua and nearby cities to preach the Word of God and fellowship with the congregations — a blessed experience of mutual edification.

We thank the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Nicaragua for all the attention given, for its effort in organizing the event, and for its excellent hospitality and love. Thanks be to God for His grace and kindness. To Him is the glory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The third Leaders Reunion of Zone 2 is planned for March 1-4, 2013, in Honduras.

— Minister S. Carlos Cerón P.
IMC Representative, Zone 2
Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico

What Cranmer May Not Have Meant

Many in CoG7, including me, speak fondly of Church pioneer Gilbert Cranmer's declaration "My Bible and my Bible alone." And rightly so, for it served as a defining moment for many disaffected Millerites and made Bible-centeredness a pillar of the movement he led.

It is reasonable, then, to assume that Cranmer was acquainted with Reformation tenets and was taking his place in a long line of Protestants committed to *Sola Scriptura*, a motto of the Reformation insisting on the Bible's authority, primacy, and sufficiency.

But this expression means different things to different people. Closer examination suggests Cranmer may have meant something different from Luther and the Reformers.

The doctrine of private interpretation — the right of individual believers to interpret the Bible for themselves — was one principle of the Reformation. The Roman Church sought to deny this right, claiming it would open a "floodgate of iniquity." The Council of Trent declared it the responsibility of the church to expound Scripture and declare its meaning, and warned of "unbridledness and distortion" should the Bible be placed into the hands of unskilled laymen. But the Reformers thought otherwise, convinced that the benefits to be derived far outweighed the possible dangers.*

Furthermore, for the Reformers, the right of private interpretation and the responsibility of accurate interpretation went hand in hand. A subjective approach to interpreting Scripture — making it fit one's personal whims or biases while ignoring the work of those skilled in this discipline — is dangerous, to say the least, and a breeding ground for heresy. This concern drove the Reformers to establish checks and balances — rules of hermeneutics — to guard against it.

Closely related to the doctrine of private interpretation is that of the "priesthood of all believ-

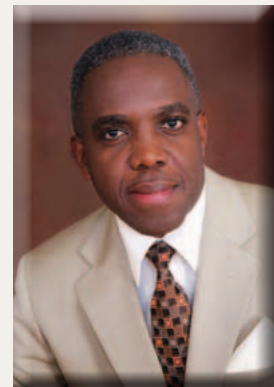
ers," which maintains that every believer plays a role in the church's life and ministry. This does not downplay the role of the trained clergy, but rather asserts that all believers — clergy and lay people alike — are saved to serve.

Cranmer and his associates lived those principles out in ways opposed to what the Reformers intended, leaning instead toward the practices of a sect called the Christian Connexion, to which they belonged. The Connexion acknowledged no founder, made the Bible its only guide, and asserted the right of each individual to be its expositor. The sect had an aversion to human creeds, prescribed modes, and church hierarchy, and it emphasized liberty and independence in relation to matters of faith and practice (*The Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 1838).

So, regarding the free exercise of one's conscience in relation to Scripture, unburdened by church dogma and control, Luther and Cranmer are in harmony. However, their differences can be seen in the ecclesiastical outgrowth of the movements they inspired. The subjective approach to Scripture led William Miller down a wrong road. And the CoG7 movement still struggles over issues of organization (independence and local autonomy versus organizational accountability) and the professional ministry (trained clergy versus lay leadership).

May our appreciation for Cranmer continue and our present efforts be informed by an accurate view of what he meant and how it has influenced the way we do church.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*
General Conference
President



*Thoughts in this paragraph based on R. C. Sproul's *Knowing Scripture*.



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Class of 2011

Back row (L to R): Taylor Morrow from Owosso, MI; Steven Roman from Willis, TX; Azael Garcia from Conroe, TX; Devin Caswell from Owosso, MI; Zac Patchen from Santa Ana, CA

Middle row (L to R): Ariana Fauth from Lodi, CA; Ashley Briggs from Owosso, MI; Elizabeth Baker from Salem, OR; Sydney Shelton from Owosso, MI; Azalie Belnavis from Orlando, FL

Front row (L to R): Rachel Klopfenstein from Kendallville, IN; Sydney Candelario from El Paso, TX; Emily Curran from Junction City, OR; Sarah Baker from Waldport, OR