

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE®



Heart and Home

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2012: Year of the Spirit

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Urgent Need at Home and Church

This BA shares a seasonal theme of home and family with our annual theme of Holy Spirit. Midway in 2012, do we know half of what we wanted to learn about the Spirit when the year began?

Closely linked with God's Spirit are the Bible's lists of fruits and gifts. Fruits of the Spirit suggest character traits — who and what we are on the inside. Longsuffering and love, humility and joy, self-control, peace, and gratitude are among the Bible's common spiritual fruits.

Spiritual gifts, on the other hand, refer to talents and skills in Christian ministry — what we do in outward service. The Bible's gift lists specify leaders, prophets, pastors, and teachers, as well as more exotic gifts like healings, miracles, and tongues.

Compare the words *fruit* and *gift*. Fruit can serve as a dessert or an ornament, implying something delectable, delicious, and delightful to the senses — apples of gold in pictures of silver. *Gift* hints at more substantial, practical, and profitable things — ability and energy for building the body.

How do we recognize people of God? Not by their gifts, Christ says in Matthew 7:15-23, but by their fruits. Skills, signs, and wonders do not a true disciple make, but good fruit is a sure sign of a good tree.

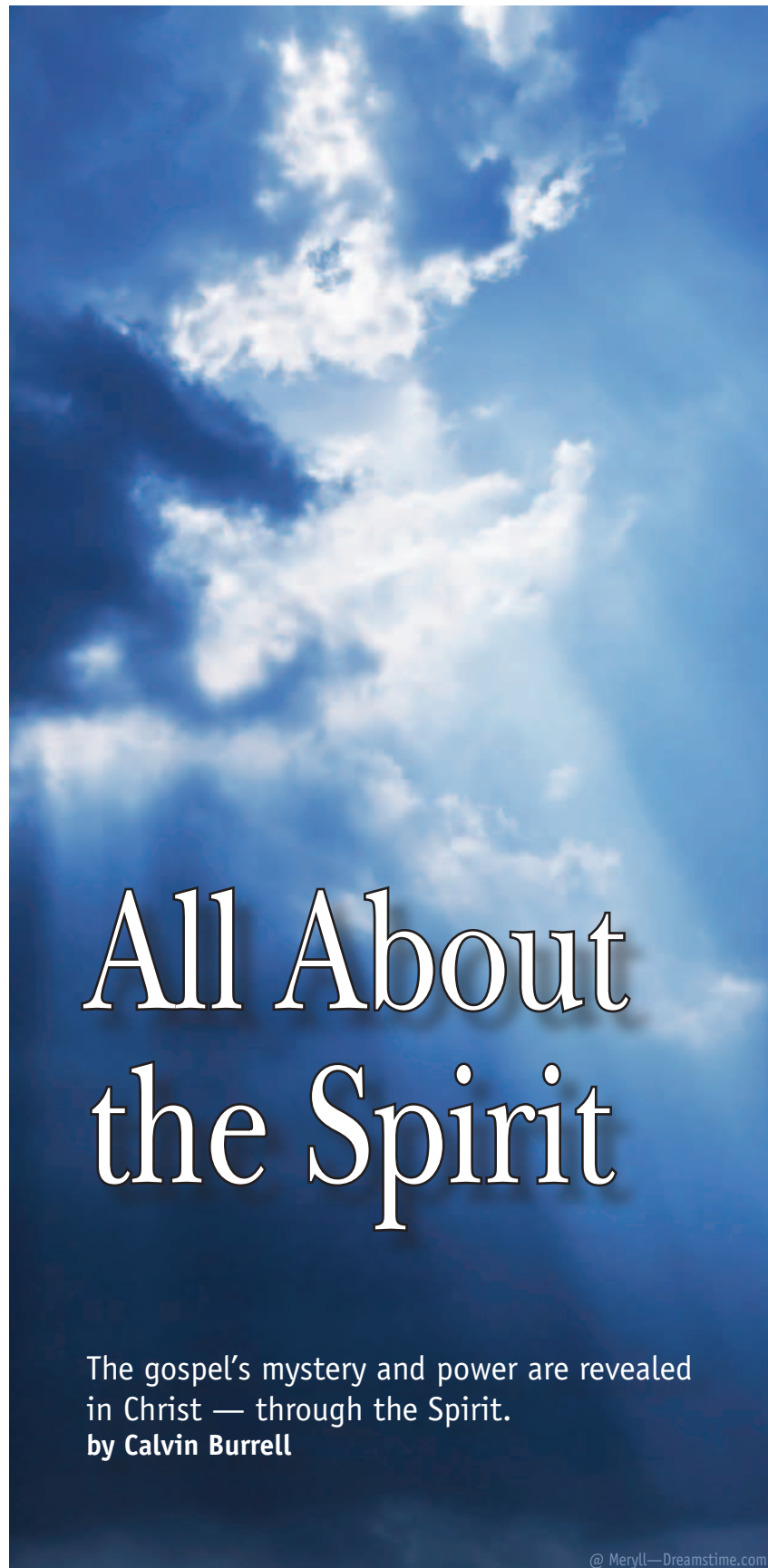
We are known as Christians by our love, not by our gifts. Top talent for ministry may be admired, but spiritual fruit that beautifies the body should be cherished.

What is true in the church often applies also in the family. An old proverb has it that home is where we love people the most and treat them the worst. Sadly, that happens at church too. A rejected leader in colonial America once said, "I would rather live with Christian savages than with savage Christians."

This spring continues to be a testing time for those who are at home in CoG7. Reflecting mostly personal and political conflict among gifted leaders, our storm has affected local members but little until now. Whether we pass this test or fail it depends less on the power of our gifts than on the maturity of our fruits. May the Spirit of peace, patience, partnership, concord, and mutual affection prevail in us now, for the sake of Christ and the Church.

— Calvin Burrell





All About the Spirit

The gospel's mystery and power are revealed
in Christ — through the Spirit.
by Calvin Burrell

What should you know about the Holy Spirit? What would you like to learn?

Let's admit here and now that there is something puzzling — something mysterious — about God's Spirit. Like Nicodemus, we easily believe earthly truths — the physical and natural kind — but struggle to understand and believe heavenly things — spiritual and supernatural truth (John 3:12).

Like God the Father (who is both holy and Spirit), the Holy Spirit is not comprehended by science or sensory experience. Rather, the Spirit is understood through the revealed Word and experienced by faith — inwardly, not outwardly. This suggests an intuitive, emotive, even romantic element (*subjective* is a better word for this) about the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).

Experience God?

Many Christians have been blest by the writings of Henry Blackaby on the topic of "experiencing God." A good case can be made that the Holy Spirit is the only divine being we've ever experienced. We've never seen, heard, or touched God the Father at any time. He is transcendent deity in heaven, far beyond our finding out (John 1:18; 5:37; 1 John 4:12).

Nor has anyone seen, heard, or touched Christ the Son, except those first disciples who witnessed His glory and humanity up close (John 20:27-31; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1-3).

Though we've never encountered the Father or Son except by faith, we have God's Spirit

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residing within, just as Christ promised. Transcending our five physical senses, this Reality enters our experience through our human spirit. Only by the Holy Spirit do we now experience the Father and the Son (John 14:16-23; Romans 8:16).

This claim to a sixth, spiritual sense that engages divinity can sound audacious to those without faith. Some “believers” make this claim in duplicity, still pursuing their own carnal opinions and actions. But neither unbelief nor hypocrisy can negate our Lord’s assurance that the Father and Son now indwell the faithful *by the Holy Spirit*, also called the Helper (Comforter, KJV). They are with us and in us, because He is.

Roots and wings

More experienced in natural human kingdoms than in God’s supernatural one, we struggle to grasp life’s invisible, spiritual realities. Let us never deny them. If the Holy Spirit appeals more to the left half of our brains, it is no less real for this fact.

This fact, however, does suggest certain cautions for our study and experience. Because *spirit*, like wind, partakes of this subjective, emotive, airy quality, it is vital that the Holy Spirit be anchored in the objective soil of God’s Word. And so it is. The inspired writings of Scripture — God’s revelation of Himself culminating in Jesus Christ — provide a down-to-earth, practical, rational, external, and empirical frame of reference for our faith and for all our subjective experiences in Christ.

Conversely, the God-man,

Word-become-flesh Jesus the Christ admits of the need for wings to go beyond the objective limits of His earthly body. And He has them — in the Holy Spirit. The limit of the human Christ is that He was anchored to one place on earth for His service and witness. The Spirit of Christ has no such limit (John 16:7).

The Spirit’s soaring is tethered only by the Word’s anchor. John recalls Jesus’ saying that, while the Spirit — not the flesh — gives life, it is the *words* He spoke

that are truly spirit and life. Later, the same apostle writes of the anointing of the Spirit, or “Holy One,” and links it closely with the truth received. The words of Scripture are, in turn, confirmed and animated by the divine Spirit within (John 6:63; 1 John 2:20-27).

Mystery and power

We see the tendency to claim Holy Spirit sanction for any belief or phenomenon that strikes

The Spirit’s Roles

Sanctifier. As the work of Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection is central to justification, so the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is essential in sanctification (Romans 8 and 12, Galatians 5, Ephesians 4, Colossians 3).

Fruit-bearer. Every disciple is called to bear much fruit, making beautiful people for Jesus. Starting with love, these qualities reflect the full character of Christ (John 15:1-16; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3, 32; 5:9; Colossians 3:12-15; 2 Peter 1:2-8).

Gift-giver. Every Christian is given one or more spiritual gifts for effective service to God’s kingdom. These gifts range from the less conspicuous, like mercy and giving, to the more dramatic, like miracles and tongues (Acts 1:8; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-16).

Missionary. The Holy Spirit energizes the work of the gospel — Christ’s cross, empty tomb, and return. The Spirit is the divine agent to convict, call, and convert sinners to a saving faith in Jesus, thus growing the church (John 6:44, 63; 15:26; 16:8-11; Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 12:3).

Teacher. The Holy Spirit opens people to Scripture’s truth, guiding them into its fullness by teaching spiritual things that could never be known by natural means (Luke 12:12; John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 John 2:27; 4:6).

Helper-Comforter. The Holy Spirit comes alongside Christians, often through other believers, to supply just what their spirits, minds, and hearts need for the present circumstance (John 14:16; 2 Corinthians 1:4; Acts 9:31b).

— Calvin Burrell

The Spirit's Names, Titles

The Bible refers to the Spirit (Greek, *Pneuma*) in many ways, including Helper (Comforter, AV; Greek, *Paraclete*); Holy One; Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost, AV); and Spirit of Christ, Spirit of faith, Spirit of glory, Spirit of His Son, Spirit of holiness, Spirit of life, Spirit of our God, Spirit of adoption, Spirit of the living God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of truth, Spirit of wisdom and revelation.

— Calvin Burrell

one's fancy, no matter how slim its biblical support. For example, one person claimed that God had healed his car when he anointed it with a can of STP. Others, in the Spirit's name, practice ministries that range from the showman to the bizarre.

While power and mystery may be related to spiritual work, must we uncritically accept all such belief and practice as from God,

lest we quench or grieve the Holy Spirit? No. The Bible counsels us to test all things, to try the spirits, to search the Scriptures whether these things are so (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 John 4:1a).

A closer look at relevant texts shows that God's mystery of eternal redemption, addressed often by Paul, is not primarily about the Spirit but about Jesus.

Key Spirit Texts

In John's Gospel, especially the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus promises the *Paraclete* (Comforter, Helper) and symbolically breathes the Spirit over His disciples (7:37-39; 14:16-21, 25, 26; 15:26; 16:7-16; 20:22).

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit is at work in the world and within the disciples, bringing remarkable expansion to the early church, along with the ability to endure suffering for Christ's sake (see especially chapters 2, 4, 8, 9, and 19).

In Romans 8, Paul teaches the Spirit's role in Christ's gospel: the way of life (vv. 4, 5); source of regeneration-revival (vv. 10-13); identifier-confirmer of God's people (vv. 14-16); foretaste of future glory (v. 23); helper with our weaknesses, intercessor in our prayers (vv. 26, 27).

In 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 Paul reflects on spiritual gifts (see also Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:7-16) and corrects their excesses.

— Calvin Burrell

The Spirit confirms and clarifies for believers the divine mystery that was once hidden but is now revealed in Christ.

Similarly, the Spirit is neither the mighty power of God nor the main sign of our faith. The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. Trusting Jesus and loving His people are the signs we are saved. Expounding on the Spirit may not demonstrate the wisdom of God, but Christ himself is God's highest wisdom (Romans 1:16; 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 2:7-14; Ephesians 1:9, 10; Colossians 1:27; 2:2, 3; 4:3).

Putting the puzzle together

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God — the divine entity, reality, and personal presence who completes the chain of Deity, double-linking earth with heaven.

Just as Christ the Son came to reveal God the Father, so did the Holy Spirit come to speak of Jesus and remind us of all Christ said and did. Just as the Son made the Father known in human terms — bodily and locally — so the Spirit makes the Son known in heavenly terms — spiritually and universally. And just as the Father was one with, and fully present in, the Son, so the Holy Spirit came to provide the presence of the Son, not to replace the absent Son (Colossians 2:9; John 15:26b; 16:13-15).

The divine chain is now complete: from God the spiritual Father in heaven to Christ the fleshly Son on earth and back again through the Holy Spirit — eternally blessed God. **BA**

by Calvin Burrell

Few Christians doubt that Christ possessed the gift of healing. He showed it during His earthly ministry, as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John attest, by curing all manner of sickness and disease among the people. Mark 6:5 reports that Jesus' miraculous ability was once stymied to some extent, due to the unbelief of His hearers. Even then, a few sick people were healed by our Lord.

Miraculous cures are recorded not only of Christ but also of the early church, although their frequency diminishes in Acts when compared to the Gospels.

Is it God's will that His church continue to exercise healing gifts comparable to those in the Gospels and Acts? A yes answer finds support in these texts:

- "These signs will follow those who believe . . . they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17, 18). Attributed to Christ, this saying may not have been part of Mark's original Gospel.

- "to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit . . ." (1 Corinthians 12:8-10). One of nine gifts mentioned by Paul early in this chapter focused on the Spirit.

- "And the prayer of faith will save the sick . . ." (James 5:13-16). The sick and suffering are told to seek healing through various means, including prayer and anointing by church elders.

Is it primarily bodily healing we should expect from these instructions? Or is psycho-emotional and moral healing also promised in response to prayers of faith? The Greek words for *sick* and *healing* in these texts have



moral-spiritual connotations, along with physical ones.

Without discouraging fervent prayers or earnest requests for prayer, I confess to having "faith-based doubts" about divine healing as often taught and practiced. Specifically, I doubt that Christ or the apostles intended physical healing to be at the core of the new covenant gospel – God's promise to forgive our sins, write His law on our hearts, and be our God forever.

If physical healing now is assured through Christ's atonement (according to some views of Matthew 8:16, 17 and 1 Peter 2:24b), then why are there so many failures to see healing – even after the elders' fervent prayers (commands?) of faith with anointing oil, per James 5:13-16? Does not the failure of prayers for healing raise doubts about prayers for forgiveness, since forgiveness is assured through the same stripes of atonement?

In many church services and prayer meetings, requests for bodily needs, ranging from minor injury to terminal illness, are many. By comparison, prayer requests for spiritual vigor, healthy homes and churches, and gospel work around the world are few. For me, this imbalance does not reflect the priorities of the new covenant gospel.

I do not question God's ability to heal bodies or doubt that He has done so often, from Bible times until today. I do question whether it is His will to heal in any and every situation where elders are called to pray. And I question why, in ministering to the sick, it's a mistake to pray that God's will be done.

Readers are invited to send their biblical understanding of issues raised here, to the Editor (see p. 3). We'll consider responses for publication in a future BA "Forum on Healing." **BA**

[Marriage]

“Submit to one another” is in the same sentence as “be filled with the Spirit.” by **Gordon S. Grose, PhD**

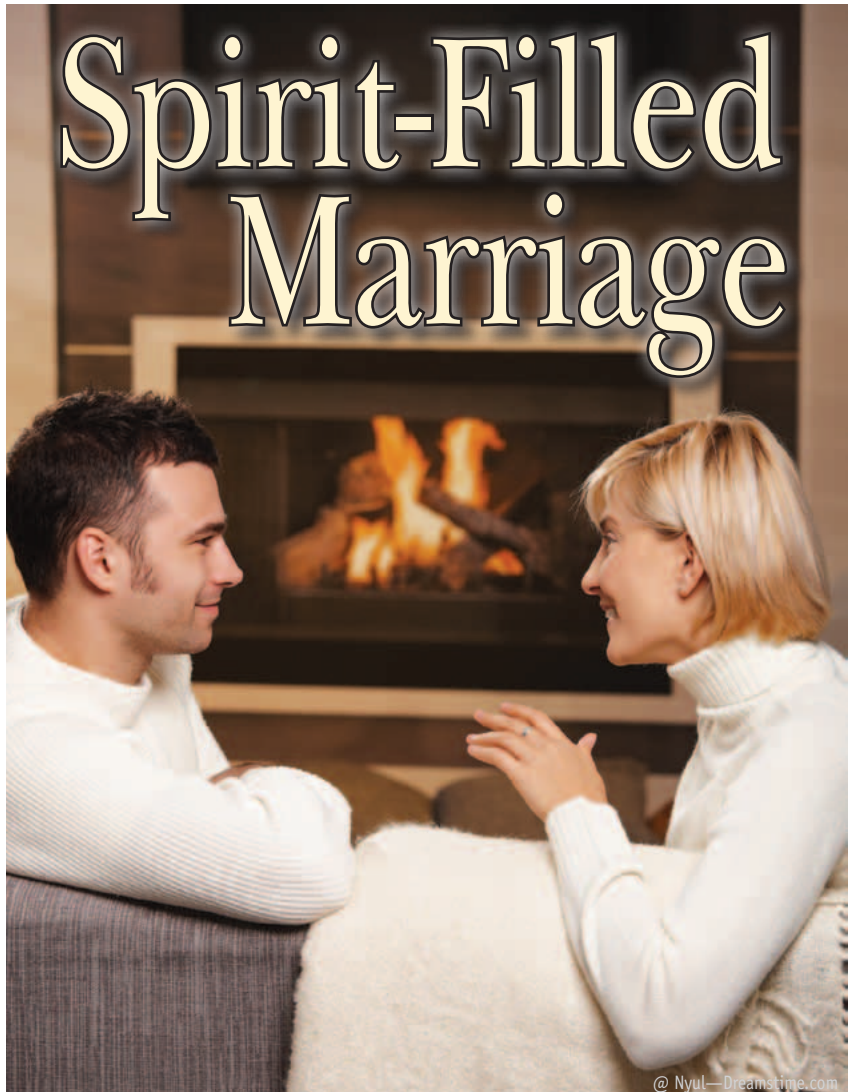
“Here, take these.” The salesman, my parishioner, handed me the car keys, then added, “Drive it home.” I came to his auto dealership to talk about buying a car. Because we had driven our VW Rabbit across the country, I thought it time to look into a newer model. I wasn’t interested in a brand new car; a good late model vehicle would do. “A teacher had it,” my friend said, reassuring me of the previous owner’s care.

Although I stalled it in traffic, I found the car drove well with lots of zip. *Nice.*

“Do we need a new car?” my wife Elaine asked when I arrived home. She often asks me embarrassing questions. Because I found it hard to justify my desire, I agreed to pray about it.

In prayer, I recalled the auto repair shop across the street. Elaine and I agreed to ask the shop owner to inspect our VW to determine if we needed to replace it. I felt sure that would be his recommendation. I drove my spunky pre-owned vehicle back, and left it.

Yielding to Elaine didn’t come easily for me. It still doesn’t. My ego, along with my male need for dominance, often leads me to run ahead of her. Yet this yielding to one another out of reverence for Christ, the apostle Paul teaches in Ephesians 5, lies at the heart of Christian relation-



ships, especially marriage. In fact, such submission is evidence of our being filled with the Holy Spirit. As much as any other measure, then, our submission index counts.

Spirit-filled believers

To understand this passage, we start with verse 18: “Do not get drunk on wine . . . Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” In contrast to previous pagan behavior, these new believers must replace their thirst for a false “high” with the true, stimulating “high” of the Holy Spirit. Paul then defines what he means with four

words ending in *ing*: speaking and singing (v. 19), giving thanks (v. 20), and submitting (v. 21). Although the *New International Version*, with justification, translates verses 19-21 as commands, Paul writes verses 18-21 as one complete sentence in the original Greek. He defines Spirit-filling by those actions.

According to this passage, we demonstrate our being filled with the Holy Spirit when we fellowship publicly with one another using the music of Scripture (psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs); when in worship we sing, heartfelt, to the Lord; when we

always express gratitude for everything (!) in the name of Jesus; and when we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Submit, a military term, means “to line up under.” Picture row upon row of men and women playing band instruments, each note timed to the beat of a drum major. Just as each marcher keeps in step and in line with every other, Paul instructs believers to voluntarily yield to one another under Christ’s leadership.

Here, then, is Paul’s picture of a Spirit-filled congregation. As I reflect on congregational conflicts I’ve lived through, I can see how easily others and I ignored this instruction to submit. Believing “I’m right” and “You’re wrong,” we wanted our way. Instead, says Paul, to please Christ, we must voluntarily discipline our wills to yield to one another.

Spirit-filled partners

Paul then applies that idea to Christian marriage. In the same way we voluntarily place ourselves under the authority of other believers, to live a Spirit-filled marriage, we voluntarily yield to one another as partners. Paul now treats each partner’s role.

Spirit-filled wives: “to your [own] husbands as to the Lord” (v. 22). By dropping a second usage of *submit* in the Greek, Paul softens the command, as military subordination may not present the most apt illustration to depict marriage. We get the point. Paul does use the word, however, in his instruction to wives in Colossians 3:18.

To your *own* husbands. In the Greek, Paul adds a separate word here (omitted by the NIV) to make sure the yielding is spe-

cific, not general. The wife yields not to men, but to her own husband.

Note it is “as to the Lord.” Would a Christian wife defy Jesus? How can a wife say she loves Jesus, yet avoid her husband’s will? In *The Vow*, the hit movie and book, Cricket Carpenter (Paige Collins in the movie) yields to her promise before God to remain married to Kim (Leo Collins) even when, because of a serious auto accident, she couldn’t recall her vow or even recognize her husband.

Wife, are you Spirit-filled? Does the Holy Spirit so control your every thought, word, and act that you willingly yield to your husband — in everything (v. 24)?

Spirit-filled husbands. Note Paul’s balance. In fact, he is much harder on us husbands, as he devotes three times the space to us. We get the point.

Paul’s original language commands husbands to “continue to love your wives.” When Jesus loved the church, He “gave himself up for her” (v. 25). Christian love goes far beyond emotion, sentimentality, romance, or sexual desire. It extends to death of self for the benefit of the beloved.

If Jesus gave Himself for His church, husbands, how can we insist on our way with our wives? How can we not give ourselves up daily to meet their needs, to do what benefits them most, and to give them the greatest pleasure?

Husband, are you Spirit-filled? How yielded are you to your wife’s will? Jesus gave Himself up for you. Can you do less for her? If we don’t translate love into day-to-day decisions to put

her needs ahead of our own, our “love” becomes meaningless. I admit my own failure here as I’ve run roughshod over my wife’s needs many times over our fifty-one years of marriage. I’m grateful for her willingness to overlook my thoughtlessness.

“Solid as a rock,” the shop owner said of our VW. What a disappointing verdict! I agreed to move ahead with another car only when I could establish a genuine need. Now I had to wait. I learned a valuable lesson, however. In a concrete way, I learned to yield to my wife.

Spirit-filled vows

If you’re a Spirit-filled spouse, why not use these vows to help you reaffirm your willingness to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”?

Wife: In the same way I yield myself to the Lord Jesus, my Savior who died for me, I freely yield myself to you, my husband.

Husband: In the same way I yield myself to the Lord Jesus, my Savior who died for me, I freely yield myself to you, my wife. **BA**

Dr. Gordon Grose writes from West Linn, OR. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



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When a Husband Doesn't Believe



You can't make a Christian out of anybody, but you can do a lot. **by Kathy Collard Miller**

Sheila shifts in the church pew, watching the man in front of her slip his arm around his wife. Fighting back tears, she prays, *Why can't my husband be sitting beside me? Oh, Father, I've done everything to bring Ryan to You. Why won't he believe?*

She mentally reviews her words, actions, and motives of the past few months, chastising herself for every little mistake she's made. Then as the service concludes, Sheila vows to be a better wife so Ryan will accept Christ.

If your husband is unsaved,

you know how Sheila feels. You probably question how much to say or do to prompt his salvation. You sometimes bungle your best intentions by worrying, nagging, or plotting too much and wonder if you should be a "silent witness" instead. Then you fear that you won't be a decent witness at all.

Comfort yourself. You're not alone. Other women have felt the same way, made the same mistakes, sought the same reassurances. Here are some guidelines to help you worry less about ushering the man you love into the kingdom.

Godly guidelines

Take the responsibility off your shoulders. The wife of an unsaved husband often believes that her behavior will guarantee his salvation. But the truth is, you are not responsible for his salvation. He makes his own choices.

You cannot save your husband; only God can. There's a difference between feeling burdened for your spouse's salvation and shouldering the load for his decision. The first leaves room for joy, the second produces misery. Your only responsibility is to live a godly lifestyle (1 Peter 3:1,

2) and accept God's forgiveness and cleansing when you don't (1 John 1:9).

Detach his actions from your reputation. If you believe your husband is a reflection of yourself, you'll be angry when he resists the gospel or acts "unspiritual."

It's tempting to squeeze an unsaved spouse into your "Christian" mold, but it's also hazardous. Nagging him toward your goal will primarily repel him. If you're too easily upset by his behavior, check your motives. Are you rattled because he's breaking God's commands or because he's hurting your pride and image?

Don't idealize Christian husbands. Having a believing husband doesn't guarantee perfect matrimony. Sometimes a wife's idea of a Christian marriage incorrectly means always having devotions as a couple, never arguing, praying together about every decision, and watching God zap away the husband's bad manners.

You can be more content with your present situation if you realize your husband's salvation won't necessarily eliminate your problems. Even Christian marriages aren't perfect. And as for your husband's basic temperament, that most likely won't change a lot even when he comes to know the Lord. Every one of us has personality weaknesses — even the godliest Christian man.

Understand submission. Since your husband isn't a Christian, you may wonder how much you should submit to him. You may be tempted to turn into a "doormat" because pleasing your husband might make him more open to the gospel. Or you may

find yourself ignoring his direction, since his life isn't grounded in God's Word.

In reality, submission doesn't mean surrendering your ability to think and work out creative alternatives with your husband. It also isn't an excuse to disregard your husband's counsel. Even though he's not a believer, God can still direct his attitudes and decisions.

If your unsaved husband wants you to do something blatantly against God, it's proper to refuse. God does not want submission to be used as an excuse for abuse of any kind. If you are in an abusive situation, don't allow yourself to be victimized even in the name of "submission." Get the support you need.

Use your conscience. What if your husband wants you to do something that makes you uneasy, but the Bible doesn't clearly address the situation? You can seek counsel from your pastor or a mature Christian friend and depend upon your "sanctified conscience."

For instance, if your husband wants you to have wine with dinner — something some Christians would accept and others reject — you may call upon the principle that "'Everything is permissible for me' — but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permis-

sible for me' — but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). If you feel sipping some wine is sinful, you need to refrain (see Romans 14:23).

Learn to communicate. One of the best ways to share a differing viewpoint is with "I" messages rather than "you" messages, which blame the other person and tell him what to do ("You make me angry when you don't pay the bills!"). "I" messages explain what you believe, feel, and desire ("I feel angry when the bills get stacked up unpaid") without attacking your spouse's behavior.

"You" messages block communication because the other person becomes defensive. Sharing "I" messages doesn't guarantee your husband will change, but it will encourage rather than undermine communication.

You may also need to share your convictions with your husband at a time set aside for talking. Often we wives are ready and eager to talk at any time, but a harried and tired husband doesn't want to converse when he first walks in the door, when he's relaxing watching a football game or concentrating on a hobby. Therefore, ask your husband, "I need to talk to you

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Even though your husband is not a believer, God can still direct his attitudes and decisions.



Partner Principles

Matrimony is not the only holy estate.
by Sherri Langton

“I need a marriage of convenience.”

My friend Brenda sat across the table from me, grinning. We both understood why she said this. Brenda was facing a hip replacement and, like me, she’s single. Her thoughts fast-forwarded past the scalpel to her time of recuperation: *How will I make it after surgery? When I come home from rehab, who will help me dress, fix meals, take out the garbage?* Maybe a husband-type could help. No “love for a lifetime” or intimacy — just someone to help a single lady when she needs him.

Brenda was joking, but I detected a subtle seriousness to her words, and identified immediately with it. Both Brenda and I are content in our singleness and enjoy our independence, but it

can present unique challenges. When we’re up against a situation where “Two are better than one” (Ecclesiastes 4:9), it’s easy to feel the weight of life without a partner.

Financial follies

This weight felt especially heavy to me recently. At the end of last year, my car needed new tires. So I forked over \$300 to Discount Tire for a set of new treads.

I barely started breaking them in when I heard a faint *clang* from the front of the car. Turning up the radio volume only masked the noise. On my drive to work one day, the *clang* became a deafening *bang* against the asphalt, and I prayed the car into the repair shop. Another \$300 to replace the exhaust pipe.

A few short weeks later, I waved goodbye to my eighteen-year-old hot water tank and welcomed a new tank into my home — for \$1600.

On top of balancing the checkbook, grocery shopping, and maintaining the rest of my life, I booked appointments with repairmen and learned more than I wanted to know about the plumbing in my place. That’s when I found my thoughts wandering in the same direction as Brenda’s. It sure would be nice to have someone share the load at times so I don’t do it all by myself.

Omission

I’ve been single all my life, and I don’t regret it. No joint decisions on what car to buy or where to go on vacation. I can

go where I want to go and buy what I want to buy. Most important, I enjoy a special relationship with God, an advantage Apostle Paul himself enjoyed and commended to others (1 Corinthians 7:8, 9, 25-35). His words brim with affirmation of the single life, and I have happily settled in it. “An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs,” Paul says. “Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world — how she can please her husband” (v. 34). In verses 32, 33 Paul says the same thing about unmarried men.

But he omits something in these verses that’s also part of a single person’s life: aloneness. While the absence of a spouse allows you to serve the Lord more devotedly than a married person does, that godly devotion doesn’t always lessen the burden of handling life by yourself.

Permanent Partner

In this negative state of mind, God whispers to me through an Old Testament prophet, “Your Maker is your husband” (Isaiah 54:5). It doesn’t matter the historical context of this verse or who the original audience was. Five simple, ancient words speak to *me*, now, and I’m set straight again.

My real partner is the One who made me and understands me most (Psalm 139:13-16). He is immortal, eternal, unchangeable, all-wise, all-knowing. He is counselor, provider, and confidante. God is all these things to married people as well, but singles are more acutely aware of them. The absence of an earthly

partner means we lean harder on God. He is all we have; there is no one else to go to. He sends help through family members, friends, co-workers, repairmen — whomever the Holy Spirit assigns the task of support. And as the Maker comes to our aid, our intimacy with Him as partner grows.

When I think about it, God is actually better than an earthly spouse. His commitment to me is unbreakable, for this life and the next. He won’t become bored with me; His love won’t cool over time. He won’t pack His bags and leave, enticed by another love, for He has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). And He won’t cash in on “Till death us do part” by physically departing this life to await the next. He is alive forever.

Finishing strong

As I read Paul’s last words written on this earth, I see that the great Apostle finished strong as a single. He had fought well, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). As Paul sat in a jail cell awaiting death, God made sure his servant wasn’t alone: Luke stayed with him (v. 11). More important, the Lord remained by him (vv. 17, 18).

That’s what singles can hold onto. We may have missed out on the “I do’s,” but we have embraced the I AM, who is everything we need, when we need it. **BA**

Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



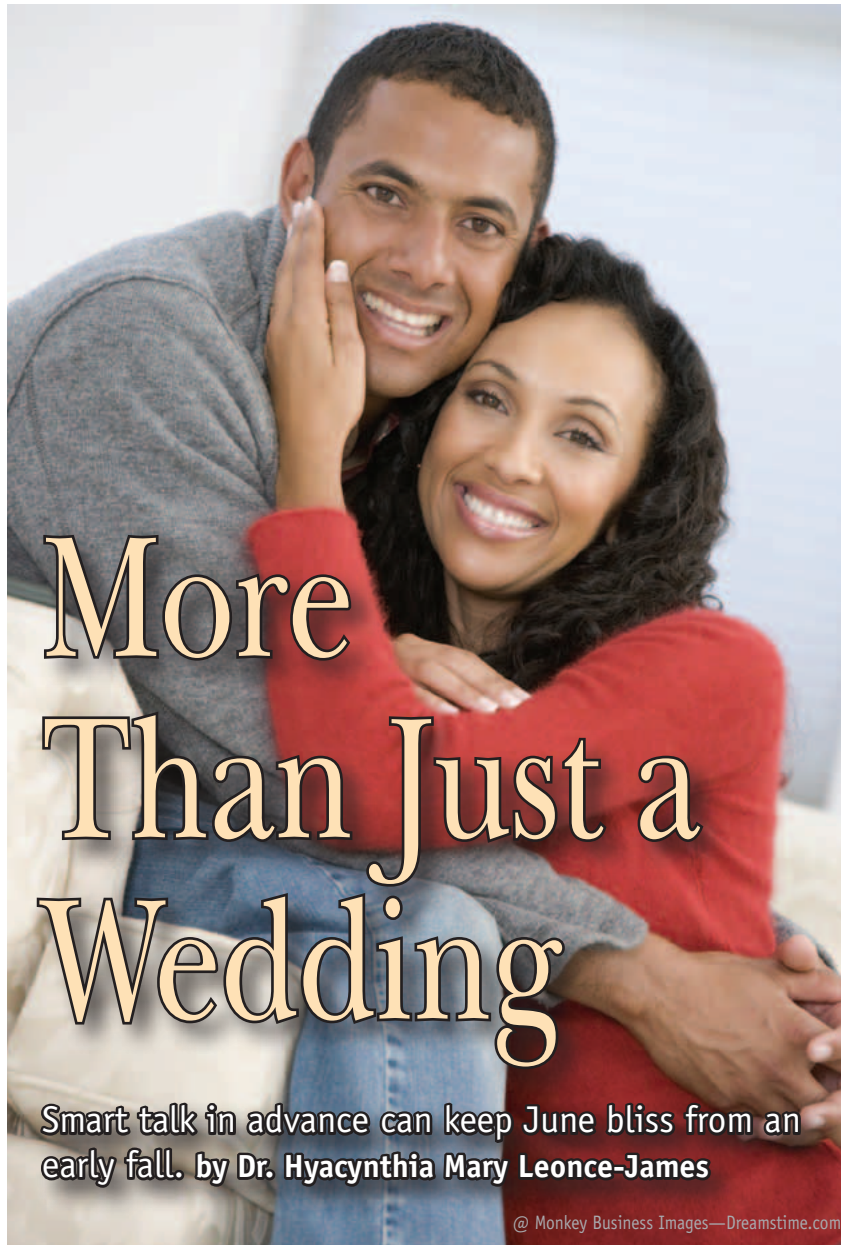
Husband of Our Hearts

Right now, a Marine’s picture sits on my bookcase, and a wedding dress hangs on my closet door. The day was supposed to have been April 16, but now there won’t be a day between the Marine and me. It was one of the hardest, most painful decisions I have ever had to make — a death of sorts. There was no death certificate, no body, no blood, but it truly was horrific.

Everyone goes through “death” in some form or fashion, sometimes every day. Depending on the circumstances, others might not be aware of it. Sometimes nobody else even realizes we are hurting. But the Bible promises that our Father will be with us even in death. The Scriptures don’t specify what type of death it has to be, so He will be with us in everything: the death of a loved one, the death of a desire, of a wish or dream.

No matter what situation we find ourselves in, He bottles up our tears and keeps them. He knows my pain, and He knows yours, and we shouldn’t be afraid to trust Him with the raw places. No one could ever treat us more tenderly or with greater care than He does as the Husband of our hearts.

— Lauren Stinton



More Than Just a Wedding

Smart talk in advance can keep June bliss from an early fall. by Dr. Hyacinthia Mary Leonce-James

@ Monkey Business Images—Dreamstime.com

The cake has been ordered, the band is scheduled, the church and hall were reserved months ago,” my friend told me, six weeks before her wedding. “Dresses have been fitted, bridesmaids and groomsmen have chosen their attire, and invitations have been mailed. What else is there?”

I looked at her and waited to hear her say that their premarital classes were going well. She didn’t say it. As a licensed coun-

selor and Christian, I believed she knew the importance of premarital education and should have already enrolled in the classes. When she said nothing about that, I asked, “Have you completed premarital education?”

“I wanted to,” she replied, “but we haven’t found a pastor to do it yet.”

Six weeks before the wedding? I was baffled, and my thoughts raced. *Premarital counseling is one of the first things*

that should be done. This friend had paid \$20,000 toward the wedding, but what had she put toward the marriage?

She didn’t realize that marriage is more than just a wedding. When people marry, they don’t envision many problems in their union. The euphoria of wedding bells clouds judgment and rationale. After about two years when the euphoria has worn off, reality sinks in. The couple usually stands before a judge, ending the marriage.

Reality check

Premarital education helps avoid this tragic end by focusing on the realism of marriage, thus increasing marital quality and decreasing the chances of divorce. It lessens stress by helping couples deal constructively with conflict. It teaches communication and money management skills. It helps couples deal with their family of origin issues and identify crucial areas so they can work on any baggage they bring into the union. Premarital education, lasting about eight hours, points out the myths of marriage and makes couples think realistically about what it takes to keep a family together.

Unfortunately, some couples do only one or two sessions with their pastor sometime before their wedding day, but research states that this has no effect on marital quality. Premarital education, on the other hand, actually helps increase marital satisfaction by 30 percent (Stanley, et al, 2006). With some saying the divorce rate is around 50 percent, even in the church, doesn’t this sound like the better option?

God saw that it was not good

for man to be alone, so He prepared a “help meet” for Adam and instituted marriage (Genesis 2:18, KJV). God wanted us to become one flesh, but because of sin, men and women struggle to relate because they are not perfect individuals. Added to this are the normal problems that married folks face in this life (1 Corinthians 7:28b).

With this forewarning from Apostle Paul that marriage will not be as we thought it would be, we should do all we can to prevent the problems leading to divorce, and that includes premarital education. The Devil is a roaring lion, seeking to devour us, and he knows that attacking homes is the best place to begin. When the marriage is broken, the children are broken — and there goes the family unit!

God’s way

Sometime after our conversation, my friend happily reported that she and her fiancé were attending premarital education and that it was helping their relationship.

I praised God with her. Premarital education can help individuals enjoy marriage the way God planned — beyond their wedding day to the rest of their lives. **BA**

Dr. Mary is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in Florida. Married eleven years, she is the mother of two and attends CoG7 in Galena Park, TX.



When a Husband Doesn’t Believe

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about something important to me. Could I have your complete attention after the game ends?” or “at 7:45 this evening?” or “after I tuck the kids in bed?”

Once you have his attention, stay on one topic — don’t bring up past irrelevant hurts. Listen to his opinion, and try to give yours without saying the word *you*. It may take time for your husband to realize that you’re communicating more effectively, but it should, in the long run, diminish friction between you.

Decide to change yourself.

As you relate to your unbelieving husband, consider these questions:

- Are you leading a life that represents Christ? Philippians 2:14-16 asks: Are you content rather than grumbling? Do you live a blameless and innocent life? Do you hold fast to the Word of life (v. 16) by studying and memorizing Scripture?
- Even if your husband forbids you to attend church services, do you continue to read the Bible and pray? Do you look for fellowship opportunities, such as women’s Bible studies during the week, that won’t conflict with your husband’s schedule?
- Colossians 4:5, 6 encourages us to season our speech with grace and salt. Are you sharing in small doses that make him thirsty for more?
- What is your motive for his salvation? It should be wanting your husband to know God’s saving presence and love, not solving your unhappiness.

- Do you know how to handle your husband’s antagonistic responses? Second Timothy 2:23-26 instructs you to refuse to quarrel and to correct with gentleness. Don’t take his attacks on Christianity personally. His battle is with God. Screaming even while defending the gospel is never appropriate. James 1:19, 20 cautions, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”

Use these questions as gentle encouragements, even prayer requests, for God to help you grow in Him. It’s not a list to harangue yourself over.

Divine work

As Sheila (mentioned at the beginning of this article) matured in her Christian walk, she changed some of her attitudes toward Ryan. One morning as she readied for church, Ryan announced he wanted to attend with her.

Sheila encouraged this budding change in her husband, and at last report he had been going for several weeks. Even though Ryan isn’t saved yet, his wife believes it’s just a matter of time, for she knows an all-powerful God is at work within them both.

BA

Kathy Collard Miller writes from Indio, CA. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



Classic Questions, Can

Paul's counsel to Christian couples in Ephesians 5:22-33 is still the industry standard. Read the replies of CoG7 pastor-husbands and their wives when asked the question "How?"

How can I respect my husband and submit to His God-given leadership?

Coming from a long line of "strong" women, I'm stubborn and independent by nature. At one point, I had to decide if I really believed God's Word. The conscious decision to believe what He said about this Bible text was a turning point. It's still a daily decision to believe that God provides for my protection and provision through my husband – the love of my life. – *Mary Jean Knoll, Eugene, OR*

Sometimes we're called to obey (submit) to something that doesn't make sense. But because we love God and He knows best, we submit. I don't always understand the direction my husband's going, but because I love him and know that God leads him, I decide to respect him and submit with confidence. Experience teaches me that God does lead our family and me through him, encouraging me to respect and submit even more eagerly.

When I submit to my husband as the family head, we both benefit. By my words, attitudes, and actions, I crown him as king of the house (Proverbs 12:4), and he treats me like a queen! – *Lois Lemley, Vancouver, WA*

First, understand the importance of respect in your husband's emotional makeup. Most men would rather be respected than loved, and have a hard time distinguishing between love and respect. If a man feels disrespected, he feels unloved.

Learning the art of respecting and submitting is a choice. We make a decision to submit to God and to established authority – parents, police, teachers, etc. (as in 1 Peter 2), including husband and wife relationships (chapter 3). These texts indicate that

respect and submission are not due only when deserved, but also in hard times. When unconditional, generous respect is given, one receives unconditional, generous love – a win-win relationship.

Since Adam and Eve, *submission* has been a difficult word. It conjures up negative images of a doormat, weakness, or something "less than." However, a person can submit in a positive sense. Jesus submitted to God's plan when He said, "No one takes My life. I give it willingly." Submitting to your husband's leadership can produce positive results for you.

For a helpful book in this area, try Dr. Emerson Eggerichs' *Love and Respect*. – *Marjolene Rose, Thornton, CO*

Some husbands believe God made them "in charge" of a meek, submissive wife. He says, "Jump!" and she says, "How high?" Such marriages are doomed.

Want to please your mate? Make him/her happy. Christian counseling with prayer and reading of Scripture helps. When there is plenty of love and respect, give and take, happy submission takes place. – *Row Ena Palmer, Spokane, WA*

As wives, we submit to the authority of our husbands out of our deep trust and love for the Lord and His commands. We trust God to have given us this command for our benefit and that of our entire household. By showing our husbands respect, we set an important example to our families and the church. We cannot ignore this healthy order and still expect peace and well-being in our church, our family, our workplace, or our souls.

With Christ as his head, a husband's loving leadership is great comfort. In an age of increasing disrespect for authority, our example of submission in the Lord becomes evermore imperative to the encouragement and spiritual growth of this generation of youth. – *Mary Chesney, Harrisburg PA*

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did Answers



How can I love my wife, as Christ loves the church?

Find out how Christ loved the church, then do the same. In the Gospels, Jesus cared about the disciples' safety and well-being; shared their emotions; encouraged their growth in faith; spoke calm, affirming words; showed patience; blessed and prayed for them; and extended them special treatment.

Jesus used the Word to cleanse His church (v. 26). Likewise, a husband shows love when he leads his wife in faithful Bible reading, study, memorization, and prayer. Jesus' end purpose was to have a holy church (v. 27). I imagine standing before Christ with my wife at His return, presenting her to Him something like this: "Here, Lord, is Your dearly loved daughter whom You entrusted to me to care for and to treat as You would have treated her." I want to hear "Well done." — *John Lemley, Vancouver, WA*

First, be ready to listen to her desires and go out of your way to provide what's in her best interest anyhow. Second, be ready to settle disagreements without quarreling. Judgment day will come soon enough! Third, even if you are head of your wife, listen to her ideas about how to run things. Jesus listens to you! — *Roy Marrs, Lodi, CA*

To surrender himself in love, a husband should set aside regular quiet times to be alone with his wife — communicative intimacy. As he gives his undivided attention, he ought to intently listen to all she expresses. She is a relational being — his soul mate. By learning her thoughts and feelings, the husband gains understanding of how she views her world, and knows better how to support and care for her. All of this reassures the wife that he is lovingly devoted to her. — *John Schott, Dundee, MI*

Do more than dream of great things, like vacations, pearl necklaces, or flowers. Remember that she is right at hand. So . . .

Look. Appreciate the fact that to you, she is the most beautiful woman on earth.

Touch. There is assurance in each touch, an exchange of energy in each embrace.

Hear. If she's quiet, ask her questions and listen to her answers. Paying attention to her is like paying attention to God (Genesis 21:12).

Talk. Have a creative compliment ready, but don't be on the phone when you give it! — *Raul Lopez, Woodbridge, VA*

Adam and Eve were created in God's image and likeness, and given choices. Eve was first deceived, but Adam accepted her choice, taking the fall and its consequences with her.

With a lifetime commitment, good marriage maintenance is essential. Every Eve needs to be given audience, to be cherished and understood. Husbands should not become bitter toward their wives, but submit mutually in Christ — upholding one another. Compassion and love promote propinquity, and vice versa. Equally shared is equally benefited. — *Nick Nimchuk, Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan*

Jesus gave up His rights for the church, and we should be willing to sacrifice for our wives. We should defend and protect her, including the physical, spiritual, and emotional areas.

We should cherish our wives so they feel valued and appreciated. We value our wives by asking their opinions and advice, by listening and acknowledging their feelings. We may be the head, but she may well be smarter. Take care not to criticize her publicly, but compliment her instead.

The wife's role as mother and homemaker is often more draining than our eight-to-five work. Helping her vacuum, prepare dinner, and put the children to bed makes her feel cherished. In all of this,

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Sara Hamilton

My Perfect Child

A Texas mom learns a new twist on being led by a child. **by Jael Hamilton**

I'll never forget the day the doctor told my husband, Scott, and me that we'd be having a baby girl. Instantly I started planning our mother-daughter relationship, envisioning pigtails, pink ribbons, cheerleading, and other girly things. I imagined a beautiful blond, blue-eyed girl who would be Daddy's girl and Mommy's best friend.

Little did I know that God had some plans of His own – not stereotypical, but those of real life.

Shattered dreams

Sara didn't cry at birth, and I sensed immediately something was wrong. After examining her, the doctors announced matter-of-factly, "We think your daughter has Trisomy 21" – better known as Down Syndrome.

Scott said nothing, maybe because of shock. All my dreams for a perfect little girl were shattered. I felt shame for imagining what she would look like, when

I should have been praying for a healthy child. What kind of future could she have? Still in the delivery room, I whispered to my sister, "God is punishing me for my vanity."

Or maybe I caused Sara's condition directly. Once during the pregnancy, I came close to being in a car accident, and gasped. An old Mexican wives tale says that gasping in fear while you're pregnant can cause birth defects.

But the doctor explained to me that the extra chromosome in Down Syndrome is a random event, and that I could have done nothing to prevent it. It just happened.

Sometimes the words of friends and family, meant to console me, stung and led me to believe we should be mourning. But with Sara's birth, God began repainting the dreams I had for her in brighter, more vivid colors. Sara would be His greatest gift to me.

Gift of truth

We took Sara home and began her care. When Scott returned to work and I was alone with her, fears of a grim future returned. *She'll never live a full life*, I said to myself.

These thoughts came when I was lonely, but not that often because I was rarely alone. Visitors came frequently, and unexpected packages arrived in the mail, containing videos and books about Down Syndrome. Some came from church members I didn't even know, from other states. Though the books were medically technical, I found solace in them. Sometimes the greatest thing someone can do for another is to give the gift of truth.

Many people expressed their opinions of why this happened, and many of those opinions disheartened me. Learning the facts about Down Syndrome, however, I gained a gradual freedom

from guilt, shame, and the lies that said God was punishing me.

Loving question

Alone one day, imagining a difficult life for Sara, I cried again. God spoke to me in my wailing: “Why are you crying?” He asked, sounding like an actual voice.

It was not as if God expected an answer. Rather, He was giving me a stern yet loving reminder that He is stronger than any situation we face. Through His infinite care and our trust in Him, we need not cry with despair. Where there is God, there is no despair.

Though only a few words, His question contained other thoughts for my clarification and understanding. God was saying, “Do you not trust Me? Am I not here with you? Trust Me.”

Immediately my tears stopped, and I put all my worries in His hands, along with my hope for a future only He could make right. Each time a thought came that did not agree with God’s promise, I did as the Lord instructed: I took the thought captive and made it obedient to Christ — not harboring the thought, but rather harboring hope in God.

New insight

While driving Sara to school one day, I was pulled over for speeding. The policeman came to my window, glanced at Sara in her car seat, looked back at me, and said, “I’m going to let you off with a warning.”

Surprised, I soon realized he wasn’t giving me the ticket because he felt sorry for me. *He thinks my life is burdensome with this imperfect child.* Upset, I told the officer, “Don’t feel sorry

for me. Give me the ticket!” Unfortunately, he did.

It frustrated me how anyone could look at Sara and think she was imperfect or burdensome. In my eyes, my daughter was every bit as perfect as any other child. She was perfect to me.

Raising children with disabilities, parents struggle with society’s view that these children are of lesser value. They’re not. I get agitated when people discriminate against my daughter because of her disabilities or her supposed “quality of life.” And yet I find myself limiting her abilities as well.

One day I prayed that God would help Sara attain better speech capability. During this prayer for a “better” child, I began to wonder if my request was right. Looking back, I laugh at how ridiculous the prayer actually was. Help Sara gain better speech? Sara has a mind, and she has thoughts and ideas. She verbalizes them in ways suitable to her. If I don’t understand her speech, then perhaps I’m the one with the disability.

Just maybe Sara is not the one with the problem. Maybe we are. Maybe I am. I began to consider that my lack of understanding was the problem. I should be praying that God give *me* understanding. Perhaps I’m the one with the disability. Society says



Sara has a speech impediment, but I have an understanding impediment.

Presence and grace

As I prayed that God would forgive my lack of understanding, He again spoke to me. “Jael, you may not understand what your daughter is saying to you, but I always understand her and I always understand you.” God is so amazing! He knows us, loves us, and forgives us in our imperfections (Romans 5:7, 8). As the imperfect one, I’ve learned that in my imperfection I most experience God’s presence and grace.

Through Sara, God has blessed me in ways I cannot express — not just in helping me learn about her uniqueness but in helping me learn about God’s as well. In my time of hurt, doubt, and fear, He became a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace to me (Isaiah 9:6) — a gift even greater than my daughter. **BA**

The Hamilton family — Scott, Jael, Cody, and Sara — live in Houston, TX, and attend church in Galena Park.



Where there is
God, there is
no despair.



Beyond Our Eyes

Trusting the ones we love most to our all-seeing God.
by Susanna Burkett Chenoweth

@ Maksim Loskutnikov—Dreamstime.com

Watching through my screened back door, I listened to my two adult daughters laughing as they finished chatting with each other from their cars. Then, exchanging final waves with me, they slowly pulled away, their tires crunching over the gravel driveway. One was driving back home to be greeted by her husband, while the other was returning to her graduate school where her studies awaited.

I turned and closed the door, smiling to myself at their exuberance. But as I walked into the now quiet kitchen to make myself a cup of tea, I felt a rising lump in my throat and a growing ache in my heart.

With my husband away on business, I opted for an early supper, then headed outdoors for

a leisurely stroll, hoping the distraction would ease my lingering emptiness. Small flocks of birds flew overhead, then gathered in clusters inside trees that bordered the railroad track running behind our house. As the sun's rays moved below the treetops, casting long shadows on the ground, the birdsong increased in intensity to a near manic dissonance. I settled myself on the cool grass beneath the tracks, briefly closing my eyes as I inhaled the summer evening's fragrance.

Strange apprehension

When I opened my eyes, I gazed toward the track above me and saw a train approaching.

Comfortable in my spot, I watched as the train grew larger and its headlights brighter. Two

loud warning blasts of its horn pierced the air, then silence. Slowly and steadily, it drew nearer. I realized the birds' cacophony had stopped, and felt beneath me a mild tremor. As the rumbling of the advancing train grew louder, the vibrations more pronounced, a strange apprehension filled me.

When the train reached the point directly above me, I felt — what? Dread? Fear? I held my breath. The train's engine passed my spot, and another sharp blast of its horn startled me. Looking up, I saw the smiling conductor waving. With a rush that felt like relief, I inhaled and waved back.

The long train snaked on by, the deafening roar of its cars rocking on the tracks forcing me to cover my ears. I tried counting the cars, but soon gave up

as their colorful blur made me dizzy. As I rested back on my elbows, the vibrations shook through me. Long seconds passed. Gradually, as the rumbling quieted, the earth's trembling ceased. I watched the last car in the long line disappear, and heard the sounds gradually diminish. Then silence.

Triggered feelings

That's when the tears flowed.

With vision blurred and warm streams running down my cheeks, I stood and started toward the house. The birds resumed their bedtime chatter, a harsh serenade to my walk. By the time I reached the back door, my eyes had dried and I'd begun to understand why the tears had fallen in the first place.

I'd been brooding about my girls, reflecting how quickly their childhoods had passed and realizing how much I still missed them. Spending all day with them had triggered those feelings anew. Then along came that train. Watching it pass by, in all its roar and rumble, had been a visceral experience. Coming in the wake of my daughters' ebullient visit, the train had affected me on a deep, unconscious level. A few hours earlier, I'd watched my high-spirited girls bid me adieu and had walked back into a suddenly silent house. When the train was gone and all was quiet again, the emptiness I'd felt before and had tried to deny returned in full force. Along with the tears.

Whenever my girls said goodbye and went back to their lives, I felt the void. Their lively, energetic presence, like the bump and clatter of the train, was

sometimes exhausting, yet always exciting. Grown now, they were no longer a daily part of our lives. Those active, precious parenting years had ended.

But in my contemplative mood, I saw that I held fears for them similar to the fears I'd had at the beginning of this parenting thing. I had concerns for them, but also for myself, as well as concerns for my husband. He too was often beyond my eyes. *What's going to happen now? Will our children be OK? Will we?*

I thought of the train disappearing into the distance. Where was it going? The engineer knew. Would it reach its station? Probably. But I didn't know.

Divine destination

I'd once read "Faith is daring the soul to go beyond what the eyes can see" (William Newton Clark). I liked that thought. But I knew I could only dare my soul to go beyond my eyes by believing that God was in that great beyond, by believing that God would be there to guide my loved ones and me.

The train had passed. I couldn't see its destination. Yet I knew it had one.

My girls, both grown, had left. Would they reach their destina-

tions? Probably. And yet . . .

As we talked about travel once, my brother and I discussed the many fast, sometimes scary, ways by which we get places, using train, plane, or car. He stated that he wasn't keen on using his chosen mode of rapid transit, but philosophically added, "I know I'll get to my destination faster this way, whatever my destination might be. Only God knows that, and I trust His judgment."

That night, in my quiet house, as I asked God to forgive my lack of faith, I felt His warm reassurance. Our children were grown and their lives now beyond our control and our humble eyesight, but I took comfort in knowing God could see. God cared for them and loved them as He does all His children.

So with dry eyes and peace in my heart once more, I slept, knowing that my kids, my husband, my loved ones, and I would all reach our journey's end. God promised, and He'd see to it. **BA**

Susanna Burkett Chenoweth writes from Danville, IN.



**Where was the train going?
The engineer knew. Would
it reach its station? Probably. But
I didn't know.**

Home Improvements?

Normal Birth!

Recent statistic: A majority of U.S. women under 30 who gave birth in 2011 were unwed moms.

Another way to say it: Over half of babies born to younger Americans last year had non-married parents.

Listen to it again: Illegitimate is the new normal in this country.

And that's a problem: Research consistently finds that American kids born apart from marriage face higher risks of living in poverty, failing in school, and developing emotional or behavioral issues.

Source: "Births soar among singles," Denver Post, February 18, 2012, p. 16A

Child Sacrifice?

More statistics: Only 22 percent of Christian parents say that their faith "very much" affects the movies or television they see or let their children see. And nearly half subscribe to the explicit premium TV channels; 70 percent of those who do, watch R-rated fare.

Professional comment on the stats: "Considering the violent, sexually explicit, and profane content of much of film, television, and internet content, this is

parental negligence of the first order. . . . In ancient times, parents sacrificed their children to appease pagan gods. . . . Today, they more subtly sacrifice their sons and daughters to pagan thought and action through irresponsible management of the media they consume." — Dr. Larry Poland, chairman, Mastermedia International

Porn Problems . . .

- Spiritual problem: **Porn** is like a cancer to the soul.
- Marriage problem: **Porn** erodes true intimacy and threatens the marriage bond.
- Human problem: **Porn** debases people by viewing them as objects of self-gratification.
- Teenage problem: **Porn** entraps youth and young adults in moral bondage that's very difficult to break.
- Artistic problem: **Porn** turns natural beauty and wonder into ashes of lechery and cesspools of repugnance.
- Kid problem: **Porn** abuses children and adolescents, stealing their innocence and inflicting irreversible damage.
- Social problem: Considered from any perspective — criminal, financial, or personal —

porn costs the culture much. Want to overcome obscenity? If you can't get free, get help. Click on the links at baonline.org to see how others, with Christ's help, found freedom.

Book Giveaways

What's happening at your house? Are you . . .

- building family ties with faith, love, and laughter?
- raising your kids to love the Lord?

E-mail bibleadvocate@cog7.org in May or June with your comment on one or more family items in this issue. We'll send one of these hardcover books . . .



. . . to the first ten responders. Both books are new releases, authored by Dave Stone and published by Thomas Nelson (English only). **BA**

by Elias Escoto

“Cursed ***** rocks!” an Israeli farmer shouted while watering his vegetables.

We thought he was cursing us, but our tour guide explained he was just angry that the rocky soil had leached all the topsoil he had spread for his garden.

The farmer’s situation was not uncommon in Israel, evidently. The guide went on to say that many people come there unprepared for what they find. This particular land, for example, was not well suited for farming.

After we admired Israel’s natural water storage system, this man’s cursing surprised us. We had been on nine thousand-foot Mount Hermon, where rocks are as big as cars, winter snows are common, and the terrain is perfect for retaining moisture. On hills with thick vegetation and clayish soil, only a little rain can be absorbed, and the rest runs quickly off and away. But on Hermon, every drop of rain or snowmelt percolates down through the coarse soil among the rocks and is stored for future use.

Further down, we came to the amazing source of the Jordan River. Water gushes from the mountain wall and forms a surface stream that joins others and flows southward into the Sea of Galilee. I’d never seen such a large artesian stream.

The next day we traveled from Galilee down the Jordan Valley. Near the Dead Sea, all became drier, hotter, and sulfur-smelling. We stopped at a place where another stream entered, and followed it uphill to a cave where David and his men hid from King Saul. The cave’s mouth had a



mossy covering so saturated that it formed a curtain of cold rain — a welcome treat on that hot day. It was surprising to see groundwater, collected from many miles away, having traveled to this dry, barren area.

These experiences caused me to examine my attitude toward things that don’t go right in my life — my rocky soil. They often involve family. Eventually I learn that those things are blessings from God.

For example, the few agonizing years after our five children grew up, they married, then rejected God and the church they had been raised in. My wife and I spent many hours praying for them, when all we could see was disaster. I found myself asking, “Lord, where are You? What happened to Your promises?” I thought the cultivating I had done in their lives while they were at home would produce strong faith in them as adults, but it didn’t happen.

We felt so helpless to see our

grandchildren suffer from the sin in their homes. I even blamed God that my family had turned away. Like the farmer, I thought my “rocks” were useless, but those rocks contained Living Water I couldn’t see. Little did I know that God was at work all along, bringing them back to Himself. They just needed a little chastisement from Him.

Each of my children came back to the Lord, bringing their mates and their children with them. I felt so ashamed for doubting Him. What I thought was a curse ended up to be the greatest blessing I could imagine. Now I embrace the words of King David: “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust” (Psalm 18:2). **BA**

Elias Escoto is lay pastor of the Madera, CA CoG7.



Classic Questions, Candid Answers

continued from page 16

To feel safe submitting to our husbands, we must first trust them. The problem comes when we realize that they, like us, are sinful and selfish beings. This hampers trust. So, we must first trust God, who loves us unconditionally and has said we should respect and submit to our husbands. Prayerful, concerted effort must be practiced. Once we give the effort to God and practice due respect and submission, we will see the results in our husbands' growth in love and leadership. — *Susan Schott, Dundee, MI*

We need to believe and understand that this is God's desire and design in marriage, even when the husband is not being the leader God wants him to be. When you obey and surrender your need to the Lord in prayer, He, through His Holy Spirit, will work in the husband's mind and heart so he can understand his spiritual role in marriage. — *Martha Molina-Muffley, Nampa, ID*

Today's women hold positions of power in industry, politics, and the religious realm. This female influx into public life is not necessarily bad, but it tends to change the dynamics of family life. It becomes increasingly difficult for women of God to find their place in the spectrum of daily life in accord with God's Word. Do we chafe at the "restrictions" the Word puts upon us as compared to the freedom the world offers? Or do we allow our husbands to take the leadership God intended?

Attitude is vital in our relationship to our husbands. The woman is the center of the home, and her attitudes ripple out and affect the atmosphere that prevails throughout the entire family. If we are devious or perverse, we run in direct opposition to the One who created us.

It is important to model right husband-wife relationships before our children, but we find ourselves swimming against the current of public opinion. As women, we can take the lead in creating home environments where our spouses feel free to take the responsibility of leadership and to reciprocate in a loving manner. What perfect harmony would exist in a home if both parties acted and reacted as God intended!

A woman with a dominant personality might un-

knowingly deprive her spouse of leadership. If the woman is jockeying for control, a weaker spouse may simply opt out of his responsibilities. The indwelling Spirit of God enables women to take on "divine nature," which, in turn, gives us the grace and acceptance to give our husbands their rightful place and our respect. — *Dorothy Nimchuk, Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan*



Classic Questions, Candid Answers

continued from page 17

you model how your children should treat a wife in particular and women in general. — *Carl Palmer, Spokane, WA*

Understanding the differences in one's purpose as a single person, versus a marriage partner, contributes greatly to marital success. After marriage, the spouse no longer finds purpose in self. The husband's purpose is his wife and the wife's purpose is her husband. Individual choices are to be based on meeting needs of the other, rather than on personal needs.

When one evaluates the quality of the relationship, the highest criterion is whether that relationship satisfies the mate's true needs. The synergy of that dynamic kindles flames that cannot be extinguished either by circumstances or by other people.

Christ's purpose in coming was to arrange for His bride's eternal welfare, requiring Him to die. Though He didn't prefer death, Jesus yielded Himself to it in love to achieve the reconciliation primarily for His bride's benefit. Likewise, what the spouse does in the marriage is done to please the mate and assure the unity of the relationship. The husband is now hers, the wife is now his.

Unconditional love always calls for doing what is in the highest interest of another. The needs and desires of the mate motivate thought and conduct. Oh, the beauty of unconditional love! It is the very nature of God and the mark to which Christian partners aspire. — *Chip Hinds, Tahlequah, OK*

BA

A sunset over a mountain valley. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and pink. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of evergreen trees. The background shows rolling hills and mountains under the sunset sky.

Renewal

When my dark, sleepless night is past and morning casts
its first sweet rays of sunshine
down my valley,
awakening mountain, rock and pine,
my soul,
transformed, becomes sublime;
the world is mine.

Weighed down by life, I bear a heavy load, but a river flows
gently over rock and fallen tree,
past my door;
its undulating song,
reminder? plea?
to not give up,
times past decree
that life is worth the living comforts me.

Weary of day, my mind appalled, evening's shadows fall
across familiar scraggy mountain peaks,
my view from home;
thus I relax, let go, stop striving, find release
from all
that brings fatigue and steals my peace,
and give myself to blissful sleep.

Debra Scherner

May Emphasis

IMC



Bill Hicks, IMC Executive Director

“Change for
Your World”
gives a global
opportunity
to support
your . . .



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2012 CoG7 International Ministerial Congress (IMC) in the United Kingdom

June Emphasis

Youth



Kurt Lang, Director
See page 29

Our numerically growing global church will meet this summer to grow in doctrinal unity and gospel outreach. The IMC is scheduled for August 25-29 near London, England.

A change in venue is announced here, due to unforeseen problems with the previous site. The new location is Whittlebury Hall Hotel, Spa Management Training Centre, near Towcester, Northamptonshire — a little further outside London than the previous site. Whittlebury Hall is an established conference centre and offers all amenities in a slightly larger and more comfortable setting, at no increased cost.

This congress faces several challenges that need your prayers. The theme is “Unity and Diversity.” The diversity of our congress speaks volumes about the nature of our global community. The IMC urges us to celebrate our “unity in Christ,” rather than insisting on “uniformity in detail” — a real challenge. Please pray about this matter.

A global meeting is never cheap, but the benefits are priceless. Our new “one nation-one vote” IMC structure — only one delegate per country needed for business — means the greatest national representation with the least cost. With some 42 member conferences and new provisional members in Haiti, St. Lucia, Cuba, Myanmar, and Pakistan, our opportunities are growing.

There are less than four months to go, and we’re in the visa acquisi-

tion process for this congress, which could see 40 or more countries represented. Our second challenge, then, is the cost of lodging, food, and ground transportation in London – about \$1,150 (USD) per delegate, not including airfare. The host conference in the UK has donated 10,000 British pounds (\$16,000 USD) toward the costs, and other national conferences are being asked to contribute. Some can cover all costs of their delegate(s), but the majority of third-world churches will need support if they are to attend.

Please help us make a way for all delegates to come, making this our best IMC ever. Send your offerings marked either “Change for Your World” or “2012 IMC.”

Thanks for your prayers and support!

Ramón Ruiz Garza, IMC President

William C. Hicks, IMC Executive Director

Editor’s note: IMC plans are uncertain at press time. Watch for further notice.



CoG7 Pastor Dies

Walter James “Jim” Kuryluk was born May 16, 1934, to Peter and Mary Kuryluk, Mannville, Alberta, Canada, and entered into rest February 1, 2012, in Nampa, Idaho. Jim married Pauline Chudyk in Vernon, British Columbia, on June 24, 1954. They were blessed with two children, Gordon and Jayne, and two grandchildren, Stacy and Wendy.

In 1959 Jim and Pauline moved to Stanberry, Missouri, to attend Midwest Bible College. He then served congregations in Marion, Iowa; Jingo, Kansas; Stanberry, Missouri; and Nampa, Idaho. Retiring as a pastor, he formed Sunshine Ministries to serve in prisons and nursing homes. He enjoyed preaching the gospel. Music was an important part of his ministry.

After 54 years of marriage, Pauline passed away in 2008. At the time of his death, Jim was engaged to be married to Peggy Jean Hanway of Nampa.

Funeral services were held February 8 in the Meridian, Idaho church, with Pastor Monico Muffley officiating.



More Harvest Laborers

These members of the NAMC’s License and Credentials Committee (top, L to R: Dale Lawson, Don Rodgers, Steve Kyner, Max Morrow. Bottom: Heber Vega, Ken Lawson, Raul Lopez) review and recommend applicants for vocational ministry. Among new licensees are Santiago Chavez of Germantown, MD; Alex Del Toro of San Antonio, TX; Andrew Fernandez of Stanberry, MO; Martin Luevano of El Paso, TX; and Rogelio Luevano of San Elizario, TX. Elevated from ministerial license to credentials were Joe Corrales of San Antonio, TX, and Oscar Mata of Sioux Falls, SD.

Revive Us Again!

Eight San Antonio, Texas churches experienced a united revival through the Spirit of God. After a six-month time for prayer (with fasting) and pastors’ meetings to seek more of God’s presence and power, we were blest with a week of services, February 26 – March 3, meeting at a different location each evening. Our theme was taken from Psalm 85:6: “Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?” (KJV).

Those services were held in the Heart of Worship, Ceralvo Street, Living Rock, Triple Trees, and Willard Street churches, averaging around 200 in attendance. Our March 3 Super Sabbath climax to the week saw 500 or more people, represent-

Spring Vale News

• Spring Vale is pleased to announce its first annual “Homecoming” event this October, with spiritual programs, fellowship, and games — alumni vs. students soccer and volleyball. Again next spring we’ll have Alumni Weekend in March — girls and guys basketball games. Make plans now to be here for both of these exciting times.

• Spring Vale Academy is looking for dedicated people to serve our church’s youth in these positions for the next school year:

Director of Admissions
Assistant Dean of Boys
Math Teacher
Director of Development
Dean of Girls
Assistant Dean of Girls



Please see the job qualifications at www.springvale.us. To apply or inquire about this opportunity, contact Mark Caswell, director, 4150 S. M-52, Owosso, MI 48867; mcaswell@springvale.us; 989-725-2391 or 989-277-8322.

ing at least fifteen south Texas churches rejoicing together in the Lord. District Superintendent Chip Hinds was the preacher. An hour-long session of anointing and prayer brought special blessings to the day. This experience brought more unity among the congregations of our city. We trust and pray that God will lead us further on this holy walk with a Holy Savior.

— Pastor Wayne Hrenyk
San Antonio, TX

Conference in Canada

The Eastern Canada District Conference will be held July 27-29 at the Kingston Banquet and Conference Centre, Kingston, Ontario. Contact: Samuel Holland (samuel.holland@cog7.org).

Dover Family Camp

For this June 10-16 event at Camp Cimarron near Kingfisher, OK, contact jerad.ullrich@yahoo.com or 918-864-5589.

Missional in Mexico

Leaders in Mexico recently presented a 2012-13 project as part of a national plan for the Church there. The objectives are for all congregations to work the Church’s integral mission in five areas: evangelism, fellowship, worship, service, and edification. The national directors of these five areas each presented plans for fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Seventy-two churches from across the nation participated in this project launch in Cuernavaca, Morelos, with 482 persons attending. These churches will model the project to all congregations in Mexico — approximately 850.

— Carlos Ceron
IMC Zone 2 Representative



National Youth Ministry

Kurt Lang, Director
<http://youth.cog7.org>

Connections. God is the source of all connections. God the Father is in tight with Jesus the Son. Add the Holy Spirit, and you have a relationship triangle. But it doesn't stop there. God brings you in to complete a perfect square. He wants to connect with you!

Add to this the human circle of relationships. They too teach us how much God wants to connect with us all. Our unity in Christ leads to closeness with others. Youth, take the opportunity of summer camps and retreats listed here to develop those connections with God and friends.

Thanks to all who support National Youth Ministry – young people linking with God through Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the family of faith.

Gimme Five. This resource gives local youth groups an excellent way to grow and maintain a balanced ministry that addresses the five purposes of the Church. Loaded with information, Gimme Five assists and encourages youth in spiritual growth and building relationships. Each year active groups are recognized with awards such as High Five for the Top Five and Jacob Solis Community Service Award.



Northeast Youth and Young Adult Retreat

June 15-17, Camp Hebron, Halifax, PA
mark.sullivan@cog7.org

MISSION POSSIBLE

June 17-24, Yakima, WA
 Kurt Lang (youth@cog7.org)

Refuge in the Rockies

June 27 - July 1, Colorado mountains
 Troy Gedack (office@cscog7.org)
 Preview: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0E7iSfpniMw

Molalla Youth Camp

June 28 - July 2, Cascade, ID
 Allison Boone (allienicole89@hotmail.com)

Michigan Youth Camp

July 8-15, Long Lake Outdoor Center
 Aaron Coulson (coulson.a.n@gmail.com)

Central California Youth Camp

July 9-15, Weimer, CA
 Larry Zaragoza (zman52@msn.com)

SIS-Q Meadows Senior Youth Camp

July 22-29, Cave Junction, OR
 Harold/Vona Ogren (HOgren@msn.com)

Dakota Youth Retreat

August 9-12, Crystal Springs, ND
 Web: www.csbcamp.org
 Jesse/Wanda Hopewell (701-428-3667)





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International Congress

West Africa



Sierra Leone

Pastor Samuel Turay (right) shares the Word with Abu Bah (left) and children in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The 1,000 members of the Sierra Leone church are mostly widows, orphans, and amputees from the country's recent civil war. Others experience polio, blindness, or other disabilities. Postwar poverty means that most members have few material resources and struggle merely to survive.

Brian Baker (Loveland, Colorado), Tom Bensen (Pocahontas, Arkansas), and Bryan Cleeton (Pueblo, Colorado) visited Sierra Leone, West Africa, late last year for a month. Their objectives were to initiate an agricultural program that will provide much needed food and economic opportunity for church members and to assist the Widows and Orphans Ministry there. The team's action-packed experience with

the Sierra Leonean church, with photos, may be read at *baonline.org*.

— Bryan Cleeton

Ghana

My experience with the church in Ghana, West Africa, was wonderful from the moment Elders Dugger and Duah met me at the airport. I was struck by the peaceful spirit of the Ghanaians and was quickly transported back to my homeland by the cultural (Anansi) stories and well-loved ackee (dish) that are part of Jamaican folklore and tradition.

In Accra we were hosted by Elder Duah and a wonderful Seventh-day Adventist family, Mr. and Mrs. Adjei Gyimah. We traveled by bus to Kumasi in the Ashanti region, then on to Offinso, where our brethren greeted us in the warm African style.

The Sabbath fellowship in Offinso was very well attended. The music, dancing, and giving were electrifying. The ministry of the

women, immaculately attired in their uniforms, was beautiful to behold and hear. The young Nigerian lawyer Nelson Dibia, who accompanied us to Ghana, encouraged and inspired the hearts of the brethren — especially the youth — with his melodious singing. I held an informal teaching session with some leaders and discussed issues with the leadership of various groups. Before my departure, five souls were baptized into the body of Christ.

It was a wonderful trip to Ghana, though the fragmentation of the Church over several issues caused me pain. The leaders there are yearning to be reunited again, so I hope to return in July for training sessions and a general reconciliation meeting, by the grace of God. Some Nigerian brethren also hope to attend and offer their support. Please remember the Church in Ghana each time you pray.

— Robert Crawford
Zone 5 IMC Representative





Open Our Eyes, Lord

There's more happening in the world than human eyes can see. Beyond what is observable, two opposing forces operate among us: good and evil, darkness and light, God's kingdom and Satan's. Those delivered from the kingdom of darkness are at the center of this epic conflict. No longer under Satan's jurisdiction, we're now targets of his warfare.

Our greatest battles are therefore not in the physical, but in the spiritual: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:3). To war according to the flesh is to engage carnal weapons against one another. In fighting each other, we fail to engage the real enemy.

This enemy is the Devil. He's called the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and is said to have the world under his sway (1 John 5:19), not because he owns or rules the world but because many in the world do his bidding. His strategy to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10) is executed by a highly organized army of helpers: "principalities . . . powers . . . the rulers of the darkness of this age . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Through maneuvers ranging from all-out attack to more subtle and deceptive tactics, Satan's helpers do much harm to believers. Demonic activity is only a small part of Satan's game plan. More sinister moves such as "divide and conquer," whereby the church's effectiveness is weakened and kingdom purposes are thwarted — "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25) — often go undetected.

Sensitivity to the enemy's ways is a characteristic of Spirit-formed Christians. Familiar with Satan's schemes, they have advantage over him and the ability to beat him at his own game (2 Corinthians 2:11). They do so in good balance,

avoiding an unhealthy focus on the Devil and his demons — often given more credit and attention than they deserve — but not ignoring them either. While aware of the enemy, their focus is Christ who, by His death and endless life, has secured the keys of hell and death (Revelation 1:18) and ensures that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18).

The work of Christ on the cross not only cancels our sin debt but also guarantees victory over the forces of evil: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15, NIV). Following a significant conquest, Roman generals paraded through town in triumph, showing off captured treasures and leading captured monarchs through the streets in open display. Paul uses this analogy to illustrate how God made a public spectacle of the Devil and his evil forces, emphasizing the absolute triumph of Christ over them.

There's more going on in the world than human eyes can see. When his servant was troubled by the vast Assyrian army surrounding them, Elisha prayed, "'Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17).

Lord, give us spiritual eyes to see that we are at war, that the battle is not in the physical realm, that we have a common enemy, that the enemy is not us, and that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*
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President



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Graduation Weekend is May 25-27

More SVA news on p. 28