

BA
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Grandparents' Grip

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2012: Year of the Spirit

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Bible Advocate Press

Calvin Burrell: Editor

Sherri Langton: Associate Editor

Keith Michalak: Director of Publications, graphics

Sylvia Corral, Raul González: Translation, proofing

LeRoy and Hope Dais, Linda Michalak: Correspondence, proofing, clerical

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Philistines Among Us

In the times of Saul and David, a thousand years before Christ, God's people lived in constant fear of their neighbors, the Philistines. These warlike folks were always attacking Israel, or getting ready to — a main plot in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

This twenty-first century feels like that. Modern Philistines are everywhere. In Mexico and Colombia, they're the drug lords. In Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, and even Kenya, they are militant Muslims. In some Latin American or Asian locales, Philistines can be entrenched Catholicism or extremist Hindus and Buddhists. In Israel, they're suicide bombers. Every country has its Philistines.

In America, too, Philistines thrive: street gangs; drunk, drugged, or texting drivers; baby killers; drive-by shooters; Satanists; those who glorify gratuitous media violence or manufacture and peddle its tools; 9/11 perpetrators; other mass murderers, like Oklahoma City bomber Tim McVeigh (April 1995) and alleged Colorado movie theater assassin James Holmes (July 2012). Practitioners of violence they are — unloving and unmerciful, barbarian and brutal.

Considering the Philistines among us and the likelihood they'll increase, what are peace-loving people to do?

We should get real with God! Repent of known sin. Trust and obey Jesus like never before. Be baptized. Let the Holy Spirit activate us in an active church. Do all the good we can for all the people we can for as long as we can.

Will that deliver us from danger, from the sudden death that lurks ever near? No guarantees — except gospel guarantees in Romans 8:

1. No condemnation. In Christ, we are fully forgiven of our sin and will never come into eternal judgment (v. 1).

2. No chance disasters. Whatever bad happens to those in Christ finds its good purposes and outcomes in God's perfect will (vv. 18, 28).

3. No separation. Nothing that happens to us can sever us from His love (vv. 35-39).

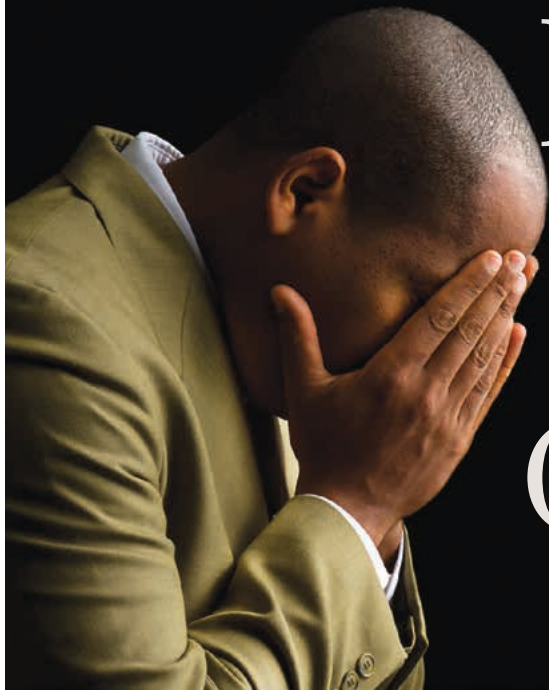
Christ's loving presence for us in heaven and with us on earth (by the Holy Spirit!) far outweighs all the hatred and violence that may yet be generated by Philistines. They lose!

No fear: Love wins!

— Calvin Burrell



[Spirit-formed]



Holy Spirit: Strength for Our Weakness

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Like us, Paul struggled. Like him, we're helped to holiness by heaven's breath. **by Whaid Guscott Rose**

Responding to the pastor's sermon series on Romans, a new convert asked, "When will we get out of chapter 7?"

The pastor responded with a smile, "Not as long as I'm the pastor of this congregation."

Keen students of this Epistle outline its chapters this way:

1-2 - sin: The whole world is guilty before God.

3-5 - salvation: Christ died for us while we were sinners.

6-7 - struggle: The battle isn't over; it's only just begun. This is underscored by Paul's question "Shall we continue in sin . . . ?" (6:1). Lest there be any doubt, he spells it out in chapter 7: Old and new natures are at war within the believer.

The pastor's response alludes to this reality. We never really get out of Romans 7 because we never fully eliminate sin in our lives. Sin is part of our old nature, manifesting itself in new ways as long as we remain in this body. Our new nature doesn't cancel out the old. Both coexist (in tension) within us, as Paul vividly describes:

For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. . . . I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (7:19, 21-24).

The answer to Paul's question is in chapter 8. The deliv-

erer from "this body of death" is the Holy Spirit. In the outline of Romans, chapter 8's heading is "Sanctification," whose root meaning is "to set apart or make holy." Here we learn that the Spirit is God's sanctifying agent, the great enabler, helping us in our weakness, giving our new nature advantage over the old. The chapter begins and ends with assurance: There's no condemnation to those who are in Christ, and nothing can separate us from His love. In between, we're given a crash course on the Spirit's role in our lives.

Work of grace

Assurance of the Spirit's help causes us to wonder why we struggle in the first place. Why not just skip chapter 7? Conforming to Christ's image is God's pre-ordained goal for believers (8:29). This means that Adam's fall didn't take God by surprise.

He saw it coming and ordained a salvation plan before the beginning of time. Furthermore, there's nothing God can't do. He has the power to "zap" us into such conformity in an instant. So why not eradicate the old nature and get the struggle over with? Why not skip chapter 7?

The plan of salvation involves what someone described as "becoming by grace what we aren't by nature." When Adam sinned, he took the whole human family down with him, making us inheritors of the sin nature. It's in our DNA. We aren't sinners because we sin; we sin because we're sinners.

Through Jesus, the second Adam, believers are justified, declared righteous while still in their sinning state. As a result, what we are in Christ (positionally) isn't what we are by nature (practically). Though complete in Him, we continue to live with the reality of our old sinful nature. So the goal is to bring what we are practically into alignment with what we are positionally.

In addition, sin is the result of Adam and Eve's exercise of their free will in disobedience. The plan of salvation therefore includes training our will and conscience toward obedience, thereby restoring God's image and the glory lost through the Fall. This is how we grow in our capacity to yield to our new nature and deny the old. God could have made robots at creation, but instead, He gave man the freedom to choose between right and wrong.

Similarly, Christians are not "born-again robots." As God's new creation, we are to train our mind, heart, and will to love God above all else. This is the focus

of the very first command: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3) because God knows our propensity to serve idols. In living out this command, we learn to do what Adam and Eve did not: master sin.

The counsel to master sin was given early in human civilization. Speaking to Cain, God said, "Sin lies at the door . . . but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). The imagery is that of a deadly beast poised for attack, used later in Scripture to describe the Devil's tactic (1 Peter 5:8). Our counter strategy is to subdue, tame, or gain mastery over the beast. It is breaking sin's hold on our lives, freeing us from its domination (Romans 6:14). The old nature doesn't go away, but it can be overruled by the new.

This is illustrated by the interplay between gravity and aerodynamics. The law of gravity isn't eradicated when a 747 lifts off the ground. It is simply overriden by the laws of motion. Turn the engines off, and gravity immediately kicks in.

Lifelong task

Aligning what we are practically with what we are positionally, mastering sin, and training our will and conscience toward

obedience are only possible through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. It is this power that propels the engines in the believer's 747. Like a pilot who engages the laws of motion so the plane doesn't crash and burn, we are to engage "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ," or we will succumb to the gravitational pull of "the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

And yet there is no quick and easy way to gain mastery over the old nature. Because of sin's effect on the ground, the gardener never finally gets rid of bindweed. And because of sin's effect on our lives, we never fully rid our lives of sin. The spiritual formation of believers is therefore a lifelong task, as Alan Redpath reminds us: "The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, but the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime." The making of saints requires the hard work of discipline and self-denial. Such work isn't to earn our way to God, but it evidences God's sanctifying work in us. God foreordained both our salvation and our sanctification, with the goal that believers bear His image and put His glory on display (Ephesians 2:7-10).

When asked how he transformed a slab of marble into the

By yielding to the Spirit's control, the inner man is renewed day by day, making us by grace what we aren't by nature.

famous statue of David, Michelangelo reportedly said, "I just kept chipping away at whatever didn't look like David." So it is in becoming God's workmanship. We must chip away at whatever doesn't look like Jesus. We're not on our own in this process; we have the help of the Holy Spirit.

Strength of the Spirit

In his classic volume *The Holy Spirit and His Gifts*, J. Oswald Sanders observes that "Comforter" is an unfortunate and inadequate translation of the Greek *paraclete* (pp. 19-20). Both words from which *paraclete* is derived, and the contexts in which Jesus

used that term, indicate that its root significance is not comfort, but strength. The former focuses on consoling in sorrow, the latter on empowering, fortifying for battle, and helping in weakness. These ideas are more accurately reflected in terms such as *Advocate* or *Helper*, used for *paraclete* in newer translations.

So the Holy Spirit is Christ in us (Colossians 1:27), the treasure in our earthen clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:7), and strength in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10). Sin takes its toll on us physically. By yielding to the Spirit's control, the inner man is renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16), making us by grace what we aren't by nature, getting us out of Romans 7 eventually, when that which is perfect has come. Meanwhile, the lyrics to Edwin Hatch's hymn "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" is an appropriate prayer:

Breathe on me, breath of
God,/Fill me with life
anew,/That I may love what
Thou dost love,/And do
what Thou wouldst do.
Breathe on me, breath of
God,/Until my heart is
pure,/Until with Thee I
will one will,/To do and to
endure.
Breathe on me, breath of
God,/Blend all my soul with
Thine,/Until this earthly
part of me/Glows with Thy
fire divine.
Breathe on me, breath of
God,/So shall I never die,/
But live with Thee the per-
fect life/Of Thine eternity.

BA

Whaid Guscott Rose, president of the CoG7 General Conference, lives with his wife, Marjolene, in Denver, CO.

Praying for the Spirit

We commonly hear prayers in which we ask God to be *present* with us as Christians. And yet, Scripture teaches that the Lord is *always* present by His Spirit (Psalm 139:7-12; Matthew 28:20b; John 14:16-18).

Indeed, one of the great privileges of being a Christian is that God has placed His Spirit within the faithful — and the Spirit remains. Why, then, do we ask God's Spirit to be present? Are what we pray and what we mean two different things?

When we ask, "Lord, may Your Spirit be *present* with us," we usually mean that we want His presence to be *manifest* among us. That is, we want God to act in a gracious, powerful, and evident way so that His presence is demonstrated and all will experience it together. We want to see and know and realize that God is at work in and through and among us all.

So we don't really seek the *presence* of God's Spirit, for that is promised to believers unconditionally. Rather, we seek the *manifestation* of God's Spirit. If this is what we mean, does it matter what we pray?

Yes, it does. Our prayers express our theology. They communicate what we believe about the God we love. When we ask God to be present with us, we suggest — unintentionally, no doubt — that His Spirit is not with us and must be summoned. Such a prayer leaves room for misunderstanding and confusion. And it misses the opportunity to confess the glorious truth that the God of the universe has chosen to dwell within us through the Spirit.

Instead of such a petition, why not pray in a way that affirms the truth of God's presence and follows the biblical precedent for calling upon the ever-present God to make His presence known. Why not pray something like this: "God, we thank You for always being with us. Now we ask that Your Spirit would be manifestly experienced among us." Such a prayer affirms our faith in God's promised presence and voices our expectation for His promised work.

Praise the Lord for His awesome presence! And let us pray that God's Spirit be manifest among us in wondrous ways!

— Israel Steinmetz

Questions & Answers

How does CoG7 explain Jesus' statement in Matthew 12:40: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?"

We believe that, after Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, He was placed in the tomb and remained there for seventy-two hours — three full days and three full nights. This differs from the common teaching that He was buried late Friday and rose early Sunday, a view requiring that any fraction of a day or a night in the tomb be counted for the full day *and* night.

To be more specific, we understand that . . .

- Christ's crucifixion occurred on a Wednesday and that He was buried just before sunset the same day.
- The next day, Thursday, was Passover Sabbath that year, a high holy day on which the Jews did no servile work (Lev. 23:5-7; John 19:31).
- The Friday following was a common work day on which the disciples bought and prepared spices to anoint Jesus' body (Luke 23:56).
- Saturday, the weekly Sabbath, was Jesus' third full day in the tomb. He was raised from the dead just before sunset, as the day was ending (Matt. 28:1, KJV, ASV).

This explanation matches the literal words of Matthew 12:40 and harmonizes with other expressions describing the time of Christ's resurrection: "on the third day" and "after three days" (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; 1 Cor. 15:4).

A sixty-page booklet on the time element of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is available from Bible Advocate Press. (Among those with similar views are *The Companion Bible*, Al Dager of *Media Spotlight*, and Chuck Swindoll in his 1996 message on the Crucifixion.)

— Elder Calvin Burrell

In northern Nigeria and Kenya, Christians have been killed in their houses of worship. We are told not to retaliate, and it won't happen again. Yet nothing is done to save us. Since army and police can't protect churches and worshipers, what should we do — fold our hands and be slaughtered like chickens?

Our hearts go out and prayers go up for the persecuted church around the world. Untold hundreds of Christ's people give their lives every day, as the Lord and Savior did for their, and the world's, eternal salvation.

A basic difference between Christianity and its enemies in extreme Islam is that we are taught to love our enemies and lay down our lives for our faith. Militant Muslims, on the other hand, are taught that Allah's will is that the world must be brought under Islamic control — by the sword, if necessary.

So what should the church and God's people in it do when and where the threat of violence is a constant reality?

First, like Paul, we should appeal for every protection afforded us by law and government (Acts 22:25-29; 25:11b; Rom. 13:1-4).

Second, we should be wise in implementing church policies and procedures that reduce the likelihood of such violence (Matt. 10:16b). Do armed guards achieve this? Such decisions rest with congregational leadership.

Third, we should read and study the words of Jesus and His apostles regarding those who do us harm. Matthew 10:16-39; John 16:1-4; and 1 Peter 4:12-19 lead the list of texts that foretell times like Christ's followers have faced often in two thousand years, and again now. If faithfulness to our Lord requires that we suffer to the point of death (like lambs, not chickens — Rom. 8:35-37), let us commit our souls to Him according to the will of God.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



Are You Spiritual Enough?

by Dr. Hyacinthia (Mary) Leonce-James

Have you ever felt you don't measure up spiritually, that you're being graded on what constitutes being the right "Christian" with the right spiritual level?

This is an important issue to consider. Christians who feel spiritually inadequate need to learn to trust God's grace in Christ. They need to know that feelings of inferiority often come from either unbiblical expectations of holier-than-thou brethren or from unrealistic, unnecessary expectations we place upon ourselves.

The inward conflict of not being spiritual enough often stems from others and what they consider right and holy. Some of them believe that going to church every Sabbath, Sunday night, and Wednesday night amounts to being spiritual. Or they think that covering their head while in church, taking the Lord's Supper every year, not wearing jewelry or pants, or giv-

ing the biggest tithe makes them spiritual. Others are convinced that going to all church functions, and being there on time, reflects superior spirituality.

Often believers' ideas on "spirituality" come from tradition, not from God's Word, and they tend to hold onto what they were taught early on in the church. If we do not worship or practice our faith the way they do, they consider we aren't spiritual enough.

Who's grading anyway? Christ or church members?

Let's learn to not measure ourselves by others. God says we are fearfully and wonderfully made, though we have sinned and come short of His glory. Our inadequacy may seem greater than another person's, but God sees the heart.

Another reason we may not feel spiritual enough is that we hold ourselves to a standard that is unrealistic and not very biblical. If we don't read the Bible three times a day with kneeling prayer, we are not spiritual

enough. If we don't pray passionately, sing beautifully, or discuss the Scripture with insight (the way others do), we are not spiritual enough.

Many Christians feel spiritually inadequate — even unclean — because of their past. In this battlefield of the mind, the Evil One has injected negative thoughts that oppose the gospel of grace. Negative thoughts lead to negative feelings, and negative feelings lead to feelings of inadequacy — of *unspirituality*.

The word *spiritual* can be a slippery term to define. Some people see it as being confident of their ministry. I can't tell you what spirituality is; I'm not a pastor. But I do know that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. I know that by grace we are saved, that Christ has gone to prepare a place for us and has sent a Comforter to guide us into all truth. Instead of letting others and our minds dictate whether we are spiritual or not, we should go back to these basics and look to Jesus.

We were all placed here for a purpose, no matter how small or great. That should be our focus. Jesus did not say, "You are not spiritual enough, so I will not give you My grace." No traditions of spirituality or comparing ourselves to others will define what *spiritual* is. Because He *is*, we are spiritual enough! **BA**

Dr. Mary is a licensed mental health counselor in Florida and attends CoG7 in Galena Park, TX.



by Pat Voyce

They used to live in the back of my closet. They lurked at the edge of my bed while I huddled in the center, waiting for Mom to turn on the lights and listen to my prayers. After she left, they poked me from under the mattress until I fell asleep.

At the grocery store with Mom, they told me, "It's OK — take that pack of gum. No one will miss it." At 16 when I sat behind the wheel of my used Mustang, one said, "Go ahead! See how fast it'll go. There's no one around." Both times they were wrong.

But they keep trying. In fact, they've been trying since Creation. They were the serpent who lied to Eve in Genesis 3:4: "You will not surely die." Paul tells us they corrupt our minds, preach another Jesus and a different gospel, and appear to be apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15g). Jesus said they can snatch the good from our hearts (Matthew 13:19).

It is in Ephesians 6:12 we learn who "they" are: not flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, and the rulers of darkness — the "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

After His baptism, Jesus encountered the Ruler of Darkness in the wilderness. Matthew 4 describes how Satan tried to use Jesus' hunger from fasting to cajole Him into sin. "Hey, if You're the Son of God," he said, "make bread from these rocks. Hey, throw Yourself off this cliff so Your angels can catch You. Look down there! It's all Yours if You worship me."

Jesus answered, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You



shall worship the LORD YOUR GOD, AND HIM ONLY YOU SHALL SERVE" — not "Oh, OK. Maybe just this once. You're probably right — no one will notice."

Although weak from hunger, Jesus was prepared. He knew what was in Satan's war chest, how Satan uses fear, doubt, and anxiety to twist reasoning. Like Jesus, we must be prepared for Satan's attack, "lest Satan should take advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

We must watch for Satan's ploys. He appeals to human logic (Genesis 3:4). He attacks during moments when we are weak or weary, offering quick fixes (Matthew 4). We therefore need to outfit ourselves for battle.

Ephesians 6 outlines our battle gear. We are to gird our waist — the core of our body, the muscles that hold us together — with truth (v. 14). Truth transcends emotion. When we know what is true, we can "[cast] down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God . . ." (2 Corinthians 10:5).

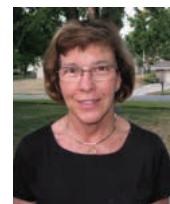
We are to strap on a breastplate of righteousness (v. 14) — a bulletproof vest that evil can't penetrate. With the shield of faith we are to block the fiery darts of fear, doubt, and anxiety that Satan launches (v. 16) so we will hold fast our trust in God during difficult times (Psalm 5:3).

We are to cover our head with a helmet of salvation (v. 17), the precious and beautiful knowledge that we have eternal life in Christ. We are to infuse our mind with the Word of God so we may wield the sword of the Spirit against Satan's attacks.

We don't need to fear whenever or wherever "they" attack. Fully prepared with the armor of God and relying on the Spirit's power, we will gain the victory.

BA

CoG7 member
Pat Voyce lives and writes from her home in Des Moines, IA.



A Grandmother's Musings

Celebrate Grandparents Day (September 9, 2012) with more meaning after reading these insights. by Hope Dais



Hope Dais and granddaughter McKenzie Stricker.

I used to think one had to feel old to be a grandparent, but no longer. I identify with the poem about how the same young personality hides in an aged body. At my grandparents' golden wedding anniversary, I was 13 and thought they were really old. Now, having celebrated our fifty-seventh, I still don't feel old!

* * * *

I have fond memories of the flannelgraph ministry of my own "Grammie Grace," who taught Bible stories — even in public schools those days — to hundreds of boys and girls. Many Bible narratives still bring her words to mind, and I can see Grammie Grace standing by the flannelgraph board, telling stories dear to her heart.

At age eleven, I rode with my grandmother to visit her sisters in New England. I recall her words of witness to a filling station at-

endant who spoke of her "luck." Grammie pointed out that she relied on her Lord's daily care. I can only hope that somewhere along the way I have planted such seeds of belief that will resonate with my own grandchildren.

* * * *

I've had to give up any idealistic hope I ever had that our family story would turn out entirely perfect and successful. At our house, we've rejoiced at the addition of each healthy baby and grandbaby. We've also mourned the loss of our daughter's twin boys, as well as our own infant. Each lived only hours.

These and other losses keep us reminded that, in a fallen world, we are not in full control. The choices of others have great influence on our lives and on shaping our children and grandchildren. I recognize that the gift of prayer is our greatest resource,

and I do lift up our grandchildren in prayer regularly.

* * * *

Some of our grandchildren enjoy highly stable homes, while others have experienced the pain of broken homes and being shuttled back and forth between parents. It's given me a first-hand glimpse into the self-doubts and conflicts experienced by children of divorce. I want to help them build and maintain the strength to resist this world's strongholds. I often feel at a loss to know the balance — influencing without imposing.

I agree with the reality, more fully embraced among us in recent years, that a Christ-centered life is priority one. In that context, I am so grateful that our four children are all committed Christians who aspire to rearing their children in a God-fearing home, though they have chosen to do so under the guidance

of pastors outside our beloved Church.

* * * *

I often take my grandchildren shopping for their birthdays. "Let's give it a try. We can always come back" has been my line when urging them to try a less trendy shop. When the venture turns out well and they have enough money to purchase two items instead of one, I've been rewarded with "Thanks, Grandma. That's really neat!" It's my hope that such lessons in practicality and frugality will influence other areas of life.

* * * *

A most grateful day in my life comports with a grandmother's heart. Two of our grandchildren decided to play in our car and managed to roll it across the street, where it settled on the lawn of our neighbor (working under his car — on blocks). Nothing was damaged and no one was hurt. Our grandson hopped out and announced, "My grandpa wants this here."

I lay in bed wide awake that night — so incredibly thankful that we had been spared what could have been a terrible tragedy.

* * * *

On one occasion, a granddaughter and her friend were with me in the car, searching for an address. I commented about whether or not the streets were in alphabetical order in this area. My granddaughter, having never heard that before, asked questions, then commented, "Grandma, how did you get so wise?"

I found the comment amusing (because I knew it was un-

founded). Still, something about her words motivates me to *strive* to become the wise person she thinks I am.

* * * *

I've tried to make it a priority to attend special occasions of the grandchildren when possible: Grandparents Day, award ceremonies, ballgames, musicals, etc. It helps to ground them, I think, just knowing there are supportive people in their lives who care and are rooting for them.

You've seen the saying: "If Mama says no, just ask Grandma." I do not subscribe to that mode of operation. A grandparent should uphold the guidelines and standards of the parents. I try to be careful to not permit them "Grandma freedoms" that would not be allowed by their parents.

* * * *

Notable to LeRoy and me is the high level of affirmation and gratitude shown to us by both children and grandchildren. We are indeed blessed. During our special get-togethers, I love watching my progeny interact. The wit is never scarce: We could film an impromptu comedy sitcom right in our own family.

* * * *

I recently came across a tiny diary my father kept when his four oldest children ranged from six months up to six or seven years. I was moved to consistently find his notation "We read to the children."

His "father's heart" spilled over to his grandchildren. Years after his death I learned from our granddaughter (who shares my dad's birthday) that she always received a birthday card in the mail from Great-Grandpa Caswell. Such was his attention to details. My children knew him as a granddad who gave them personal attention — and great hugs. They also remember how his planning was usually accompanied by the words "Lord willing."

What a legacy my parents left to be passed on! May I be like them, passing my legacy on to my children and grandchildren. **BA**

Hope Dais has served the Church for fifty-plus years as magazine editor and proof-reader, Women's Association leadership, G. C. office receptionist, and secretary to the president. She and her husband, LeRoy, reside in Thornton, CO.



I can only hope that somewhere along the way I have planted seeds of belief that will resonate with my own grandchildren.

[Grandparents Day]

Grandparenting requires the deft skill of being influential without becoming invasive.

by **Dianne E. Butts**

This generation of grandparents faces challenges previous generations did not.

Cavin T. Harper, executive director of the Christian Grandparenting Network, says, "Grandparents must deal with the effects upon our families caused by widespread divorce, strained family relationships, increased godlessness and a culture hostile to absolute truth."¹

What can grandparents do to impact their grandkids for Jesus Christ? Read the answer in these inspiring stories.

Long-distance relationships

Today many extended families live far apart, so when you get together, make the most of your time.

"Our four grandchildren do not live nearby," Barbara Ann Baranowski says. "So I prayed God would help my husband and me with the challenges of long-distance grandparenting — especially when it came to sharing our faith." Barbara was inspired to provide a camp-like experience for her out-of-town grandchildren. She offered activities, family activities, and lessons from the Bible at her "Nana Camp." Now her grandkids often ask, "Nana, when's our next camp?"

Kathie Mitchell searched out Christian-friendly destinations. She scheduled a trip with her grandsons to a museum near Cincinnati, Ohio, which shows how science and archeology sup-

Reaching Grandchildren for Christ

port the Bible. Other possible destinations could include the Holy Land Experience (www.holylandexperience.com/) in Orlando, Florida, or the Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky (creationmuseum.org/).

Other faraway grandparents bridge the gap with new technologies. Annalee Davis uses the free Internet program, Skype. Now she can talk to and see her grandchildren on her computer, and they can see her!

Non-traditional families

If the parents of your grandchildren are divorced, or were never married, grandparenting can get complicated with different parents' visiting rights, remarriage, or blended families.

When Anne Agovino's daughter, a single mom, married a Christian with kids of his own, Anne faced the challenge of a wide range in the children's ages. How could she do something fun with Hannah, a toddler, without boring two teenagers? Anne decided to invite all three to the Missouri Botanical Garden.

"You want me to get up early

to go see someone's garden?" fourteen-year-old Darryl grumbled. But all three kids loved the experience. Darryl climbed trees and fed the "radical big fish."

Other trips included a science center, the pool, picnics, and sleepovers at Grandma and Grandpa's. As they got more comfortable with one another, Anne instituted what Darryl's sister, Dee, called "Nana lectures" — friendly suggestions about cooperation, choosing friends, and God's guidelines for marriage. "I knew they were listening, even when they groaned," Anne said.

Struggling parents

Many grandparents face difficult challenges when the parents of their grandchildren are not walking with God.

Elaine Burbridge watched her thirteen-year-old granddaughter Kelsey struggle with her alcoholic mother, who often missed important dates, like planning Kelsey's birthday party. Her daughter started drinking at sixteen; she's now in her forties. "I've wished I could keep her from hurting herself, but I realized long ago it



wasn't something I could do, no matter how much I loved her.

"But as Kelsey's grandmother, I believe there are some things I can do to protect her from the pain my daughter causes. The best protection, I've found, is staying as physically and emotionally close to her as possible. I even learned to send text messages. I frequently invite her to do things I know she loves."

Partnering with parents

Perhaps you're blessed with a child and his or her spouse who don't oppose you when you influence your grandchildren to know Jesus. But it's a delicate balance to not overstep boundaries.

Rhonda Rivers took her son Todd to church when he was a child. After he married, she waited ten years for a grandchild. When Kevin was born, Rhonda was elated. But Todd and Kevin's mother, Susan, did not take him to church. Rhonda dropped hints, but they were not well received. Finally the situation came to a head.

One day Rhonda and Todd

met for lunch, and she reminded him yet again that when he was little, he went to church school. Rhonda launched into fond memories of Todd reciting scripture verses and singing Bible songs.

"We don't have time for church," Todd said. "We believe in God, but you don't have to go to church to be a Christian. I'm sick of hearing what you think my family should be doing. Lunch is over."

Todd stood, and Rhonda knew she had overstepped the boundary, but she persuaded Todd to hear her out. She reminded him of stories he'd learned from church school in his childhood. "Why would you rob your son of the richness of the Bible and church school? He's not going to get what you got by sitting at home during church."

"I know, Mom, but life gets in the way," Todd explained.

"Your son is worth the effort," Rhonda told him. "It was worth it for you."

Three weeks later Todd, Susan, and Kevin visited church. Kevin gazed up at Rhonda. "I'm a big boy now, Grammy," he said. "I go to church school."

Conduits of grace

No matter what your situation is with your grandchildren or their parents, God can show you how you can touch their lives with a knowledge of and love for Him.

Cavin T. Harper calls grandparenting "a call to intentionality – not settling for simply being good parents and grandparents, but choosing to stand in the gap and live as conduits of grace and truth for the next generations."²

Your role as a grandparent and your influence is incredibly important in the lives of your grandchildren. So no matter how challenging your circumstances, seek God's guidance in how to stay in – or get in – the lives of your grandchildren. **BA**

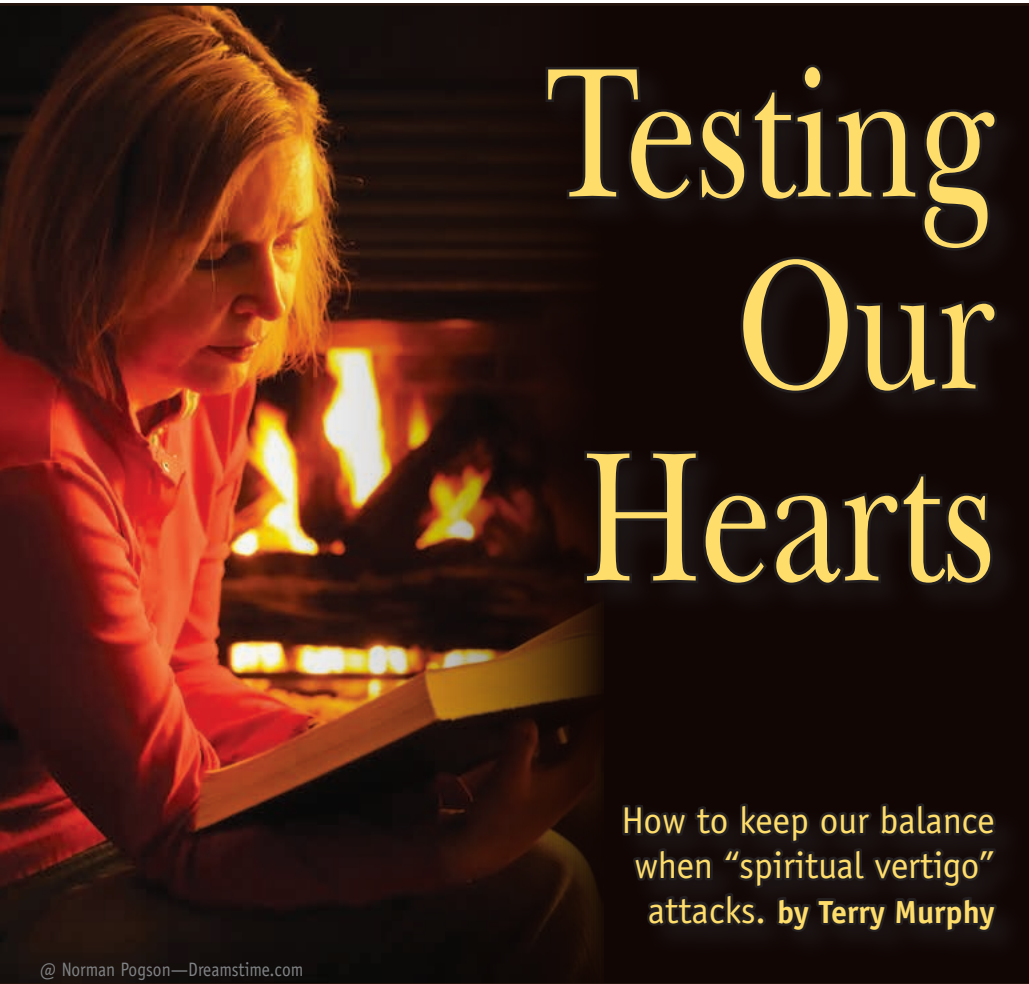
Dianne E. Butts

writes from Pueblo, CO. These stories and quotations are from her new book *Grandparenting Through Obstacles: Overcoming Family Challenges to Reach Your Grandchildren for Christ*. Some of the names in the article are pseudonyms.



Endnotes

1. Foreword of *Grandparenting Through Obstacles: Overcoming Family Challenges to Reach Your Grandchildren for Christ* by Renee Gray-Wilburn and Dianne E. Butts (Pix-N-Pens Publishing)
2. Back cover of *Not On Our Watch! Courageous Grandparenting in a Turbulent World*, by Cavin T. Harper (Christian Grandparenting Network, 2012).



Testing Our Hearts

How to keep our balance when “spiritual vertigo” attacks. by Terry Murphy

@ Norman Pogson—Dreamstime.com

Vertigo can do nasty things to a person’s equilibrium. When working correctly, the inner ear acts as a sort of gyroscope. But for two weeks recently, my inner ear lied to me, sending me reeling through the house like a tipsy sailor on the deck of a ship. The only way I could stay upright was to grab reassuringly immovable doorjambs.

Our inner ear is part of what is known in medical circles as the *vestibular system*. We have a sort of spiritual “inner ear” associated with vestibules as well, for it’s at doorways of decision that our balance is most at risk. If we’re suffering a bout of spiritual vertigo, the disorientation can send us staggering. What doorjambs

can we reach for to verify our hearts aren’t deceiving us?

Prayer

Paul warned us to test all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21). So it is with all decisions we make. We begin in that quiet place with the Lord where we come boldly before the throne to calm our anxieties; obtain the help we need; lay our requests before Him; listen for that still, small voice; and find peace (Philippians 4:6, 7; Hebrews 4:16).

This was how Paul discerned the right time to go to Asia (Acts 16:6-10). Luke tells us he had a strong desire to go, but for a time they were “kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the

word in the province of Asia” (v. 6). Later, when he received a vision of a Macedonian begging him to come, Paul knew God had opened the way for them to preach the gospel. Even though his desire was to fulfill the Great Commission, prayer and waiting on the Lord authorized and confirmed the timing and specific strategy for doing so.

Even when our desires seem obviously aligned with God’s will, we need to check for that corroborating nudge or hesitation in prayer. So our first question might be “When I pray about this decision, is my heart urging me to move forward or hold back?”

Prayer alone doesn’t guarantee we’ve grasped the mind of Christ. Especially if our prayer time has been solitary, it’s all too easy to misread our strong desires or aversions as inspired by the Holy Spirit. As Jeremiah noted, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9, NKJV). If we can’t trust our hearts to automatically lead us in the right direction, what else can we do?

Scripture

As it turns out, even our physical inner ear gets directional input from more than one angle. God equipped it with three semi-circular, fluid-filled canals, arrayed in three distinct spatial planes, so we’d have a three-dimensional sense of our orientation — the pitch, roll, and yaw of our movements.

We can test our spiritual orientation from at least three angles as well. After prayer, Scripture gives us a second plumb line.

Second Timothy 3:16 says the

Word of God is “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” The unchangeable nature of God’s written Word makes it like a doorjamb fixed in space. Its solidarity protects us against both our personal cravings and the fickle winds of popular culture. Human nature wants to test the boundaries of right and wrong, but if the nudge in our prayer time doesn’t match what Scripture condones, we can suspect our heart of wobbling. If we’re struggling to justify our heart’s desire, Scripture becomes the voice of sanity that accurately verifies which way is up.

The Bereans in Acts 17 didn’t trust just their hearts. As enthusiastically as they received the good news, they diligently examined Paul’s message against the Scriptures to see if it was true. As a result, they went beyond excitement over enlightenment to believing with confidence.

When the crowds were skeptical about what the newly Spirit-empowered disciples were proclaiming, Peter used Scripture to reassure them. “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,” he said. “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2: 16-18).

A second test of our balance is to ask, “Does Scripture confirm or contradict what my heart wants to choose?”

Counsel

Even so, we can consciously or unconsciously interpret Scripture to support the answers we

prefer. Therefore, it’s helpful to gather feedback from a third angle. Submitting ourselves to godly counsel can give a further perspective to our heart’s desire.

God never intended man to operate as a single entity (Genesis 2:18). As soon as He created Adam, God built community around him — starting with Eve and continuing with family — so help would abound. In various places, Scripture likens the church to a building made of living stones, a tree with many branches, and a body made of many members. All these analogies emphasize the expectation of believers’ interrelationship.

It’s humbling to submit our thoughts to others. It can also be scary because our community of believers may not give us the counsel we want to hear. Their advice may grate against us the way iron rubs iron. But Scripture accounts this type of test as a practice in wisdom: “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed” (Proverbs 15:22). “Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance” (20:18).

The apostles employed this device when new situations threatened to throw them off balance. When Peter’s preaching to the Gentiles became controversial, he submitted himself and

the issue to the brethren in Jerusalem (Acts 11). Because Peter humbled himself this way, the entire community benefited, and Gentiles were openly welcomed to the family of God.

So our third test of balance is to ask, “How does godly counsel (especially from mature believers who aren’t my personal friends) square with what I’m hearing in prayer and reading in the Word?”

Keeping balance

We’re so fearfully and wonderfully made that just as God provided our bodies with balancing systems, He’s supplied our spirits with support as well. We don’t have to lurch through life. God has given us firm doorjambs to reach for.

When life sends us reeling, prayer brings us peace, Scripture anchors our souls, and godly counsel adds confidence. Testing our hearts helps us keep our walk with God consistently upright. **BA**

Terry Murphy writes from Gresham, OR. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, except where noted.



If we’re struggling to justify our heart’s desire, Scripture becomes the voice of sanity that accurately verifies which way is up.

Three Splendid

1. Giving: a gift more blessed than getting.

Generosity is a cardinal Christian virtue. Say these seven synonyms aloud for *generous*: *abundant, bountiful, charitable, extravagant, free-giving, lavish, and large-hearted.*

Five examples of biblical generosity:

- The Israelites brought “much more than enough” to build the tabernacle in the desert (Exodus 36:5).
- King David gave “to the house of my God, over and above . . . my own special treasure of gold and silver” (1 Chronicles 29:3).
- Disciples in Jerusalem brought the proceeds of property sales and laid them at the apostles’ feet to help others (Acts 4:34, 35).
- The Good Samaritan gave first aid and a ride to a wounded traveler, then paid for his care at the inn (Luke 10:34, 35).
- Churches of Macedonia sent often to support gospel ministry and to relieve the famine-stricken poor (Romans 15:25, 26; Philippians 4:10-19).

Four good ways to give:

- freely, not expecting anything in return
- liberally, not sparingly or stingily
- cheerfully, not grudgingly or sorrowfully
- voluntarily, not because anyone requires it

Generous souls will be repaid, reap bountifully, and be eternally blest (Proverbs 11:25; 19:17; 22:9; Luke 6:38; 12:33; 2 Corinthians 9:6).

2. Forgiving

Forgiveness doesn’t make you a weakling. Have you noticed that the greatest conqueror in history makes even his enemies to bow? Forgiveness is the fragrance that heels that crushes it.

Christians are not perfect, but they receive a lot of slack. Forgive everybody.

It took me a long time to learn the lesson of wrongful imprisonment (*Encyclopedia*).

Of him that hopes to be forgiven it is said that he who forgives him that refuses to practice it the throne of God – Johnson (*The New Dictionary of Thought*).

From the Scriptures:

- Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. — Jesus
- We have redemption through His blood, to purify to ourselves a peculiar people, zealous of good deeds.
- If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

National Forgiveness Day

Mission: to encourage people to ask forgiveness and to gain a deeper understanding of the power of love, the joy of forgiveness.

Essence: Declare each new day joyful. Speak the truth in love and in silence. Give no permission for anger or hurt to steal joy. Stop trying to control others, being selfish. Break bad habits by saying “no” to your desires.” Ask forgiveness and forgive others. The power of unforgiveness is a curse to all believers.

Prayer: “Please forgive them. Help me to forgive them. Please remove my bitterness and restore my joy. Thank You. Amen!”

Saturday (Sabbath), October 27, is

Gifts of Autumn

a gift that keeps giving.

mean your approval of another's wrong; it does mean your emotional and spiritual release. Every enemy you make has ten friends? So speak well of your enemies. Be the one who overcomes the enemy without a blow. "When a man's ways please the LORD, He will be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

Just as the flowers breathe when they are trampled, the fragrance the violet dashes on the

ground when they are forgiven. Set the highest personal standard for yourself, then cut everyone else's out for everything!

Remember that God is not the enemy of His enemies! — Martin Niemoller, upon emerging from the Buchenwald concentration camp (from *Prison of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*)

God's love is required that he forgive. — On this great duty eternity is suspended; and to the end of mercy is inaccessible, and the Saviour of the world has been born in vain.

(Luther)

US

the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace — Paul

apostle to forgive us our sins. — John

Learn to forgive one another, while creating awareness and understanding, and the peace of humility in the hearts of God's people. Live in love. Ask good questions. Listen with understanding. Think for yourself. Restore relationships. Stop needing to be right, finding fault, or blaming. Saying, "I want to stop; I can't stop. Take away my wrong." Unconditional love and the joy of forgiveness reside in all hearts.

Please forgive me. Help me forgive myself. Please remove my

National Forgiveness Day

— Bob Moyers
Liberty Center, OH
(www.unconditionallovelive.com)

3. Thanksgiving:

a gift completed.

What personal, family, church, or community gifts/benefits are you most grateful for in 2012?

Readers are invited to submit a thanks response for possible use in the November-December BA. Submissions should be from 100 to 400 words and must be received by the editor (p. 3) by **September 30**. Thank you!

BA



Gift for All Seasons

Christ's birth can be honored in many ways.
Early fall is the most likely time for it.
by **Gustavo Guerrero**

The winter solstice is a time of happiness and good wishes for many, in the intimacy of family. In some cultures it is a renovation phase during which new hopes for the future are projected through festivity.

The winter solstice is also a season when some practice pagan customs that imply offense to God, an offense most penalized in ancient Israel. As traditionally celebrated, Christmas has roots in the "adoration of the solstice," an idolatrous cult dedicated to the birth of the sun god.

At every season, we may be grateful for the most valuable Gift humanity ever received. Let's study three biblical perspectives on Jesus' birth.

Historic: A Savior

Luke 2:6-14

For centuries, the people of Israel had awaited the news of salvation. The paradox is that its arrival was not announced to Jewish priests, scribes, or governors, but first to the humble shepherds in their field. For Luke, the birth of Jesus is a direct announcement to the alienated people who hoped to see the promise fulfilled. Jesus came with His work agenda exposed (Luke 4:16-21).

The Jews expected that salvation would free them from Roman power and improve their living conditions. Jesus tore those schemes and began a ministry to people, especially the outcasts, sick, and poor in spirit. He freed them from sin and its consequences by approaching the cross to pay the price that divine justice demanded.

The birth and life of Jesus offered more than superficial or economic change. As the world's Savior, He offered our souls salvation and hope, with good wishes of peace on earth to every man of good will.

Prophetic: A King

Matthew 2:1-12

In Matthew's report of Jesus' birth, the main players aren't angels and shepherds but wise men, kings, chief priests, and teachers of the law.

Wise men. No one knows how many wise men there were, or their names. Their notions about the birth of the Jews' King may have come through Abraham's descendants (Genesis 25:1-6), through the ten tribes that were taken captive, or through Daniel's prophecies in Chaldea. Their interest was in finding Him and offering their gifts. They did not care about the distance, time, or adversity of their voyage from the Far East to Bethlehem. What they cared about was praising the King, even if He was a defenseless child in His mother's care.

Kings, Herod, and Jesus.

When the wise men arrived, they asked Herod, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2). Here the Scriptures acquire a political dimension, for there were rumors that someone would try to take Herod's throne. The question filled him with indignation: How was it possible that he, Rome's appointed king, now had a rival?

Herod gathered priests and scribes to ask where the Christ would be born. When they said

Bethlehem, he called the wise men to gain assurance of the exact time of the star's appearance. Finding himself fooled, he ordered all children under two killed, according to that exact time.

Priests and masters of the law. At the first indication of Messiah's birth, the Jewish leaders should have gone quickly to Bethlehem to investigate. However, they passed the information to the murderous Herod. God, who controls all outcomes, protected His Son and, consequently, humanity's redemption. In the end, neither Herod with all his rage nor the chief priests nor the whole town full of people could have changed that process.

Apocalyptic: A Victor

Revelation 12:1-6

Christ's birth is also seen in John's vision — not as the celebration and good wishes often associated with "the season," but

as a scene dark and full of conflict. A pregnant woman cries out in pain, ready to give birth. And a red dragon with seven heads and ten horns sweeps a third of the stars from the sky with his tail and flings them to earth, while the newborn son is snatched up to God and His throne.

The woman. This woman, representing a family seed from which God's Son would be born, finds herself in extreme danger. In heavy labor, she also faces the stress of a terrifying and hungry dragon before her.

At the time of Jesus' birth, Israel lived in critical moments of oppression, as well as moral and religious decadence — the temporal seeds from which the Messiah would be born. The pain for the Savior's advent was evident. Simeon, for example, took the baby in his arms and praised God for being allowed to see with his own eyes how the apocalyptic woman (not Mary, but

The birth of the woman's seed brought happiness and hope, but it also brought a sword and fire.

Israel) gave birth to a Son who would be the sovereign Lord of the kings of earth. "Now dismiss your servant in peace," he said (Luke 2:29), perhaps sensing the peace that women feel after giving birth to a child.

But this apocalyptic birth was not all joy. It produced the rise and fall of many and created much opposition. John described a war in this vision (Revelation 12), a battle of unimaginable proportions that began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15). Certainly the birth of the woman's seed brought happiness and hope, but it also brought a sword and fire — a defiant struggle against the forces of evil, a battle between the sinister realm and the reign of God (Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:49-53).

The dragon. Through the Roman Empire, the dragon was ready to devour the son that would be born from that suffering woman clothed with the sun, moon, and twelve stars. Matthew

describes the infanticide that was a sample of the dragon's ferocity and hunger. Long expecting the birth of Jesus, the dragon tried to destroy the child who was born, using different plans of attack.

And what happened? Rather than winning, the Devil lost every battle. Even Jesus' disciples came back to tell Him about subduing demons. Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

The male son. After the strongest attack at the Cross, the ultimate victory of resurrection intervened, and the Child took His seat at the Father's right hand. It's not just the Savior of the world who's born but the King who would reign with authority and justice for all nations (Revelation 12:5). This is the triumphant cry that echoes in our hearts and truly excites us, giving us happiness and hope that good will finally prevail over evil.

The dragon still persecutes Christ through His mystical body,

the church, intent on completely devouring it, thus ending the war that began in Eden. This battle in which the people of God have experienced tribulation throughout history continues until this day. The dragon uses more force because he knows his time is short (Revelation 1:9; 12:12, 17; Colossians 1:24).

Cause for rejoicing

We have cause for constant happiness, excitement, and gratitude to God for sending a Savior who would offer His life for our sins (Luke 2:11). We have a great blessing that gives us safety, to know that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords — that even the wise men and the powerful bow before Him (Matthew 2:1, 2; Revelation 1:5).

And we are grateful to be part of the struggle between the woman's seed and the serpent's, initiated in Eden. It is an apocalyptic battle in which John of Patmos presents the triumph over the dragon, when the male son was snatched up to God and His throne. That war will be won, and we will be among the victors, as Revelation 17:14 says: "The Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings — and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." ^{BA}

We have a great blessing that gives us safety, to know that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords — that even the wise men and the powerful bow before Him.

CoG7 minister **Gustavo Guerrero** and his wife, Raquel, live in Irving, TX. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



by Paulo Jorge Coelho

People often question the necessity of Jesus' baptism, recorded in Matthew 4:13-17. Even John the Baptist asked why Jesus should be baptized. Wasn't He already a perfect and obedient servant, the true Word of God made flesh?

Several explanations have been given to this fact of Christ's life:

- Jesus' baptism fulfilled ritual cleansings in the Hebrew Scriptures.

- Jesus was an example for all who would believe the gospel and become His followers.

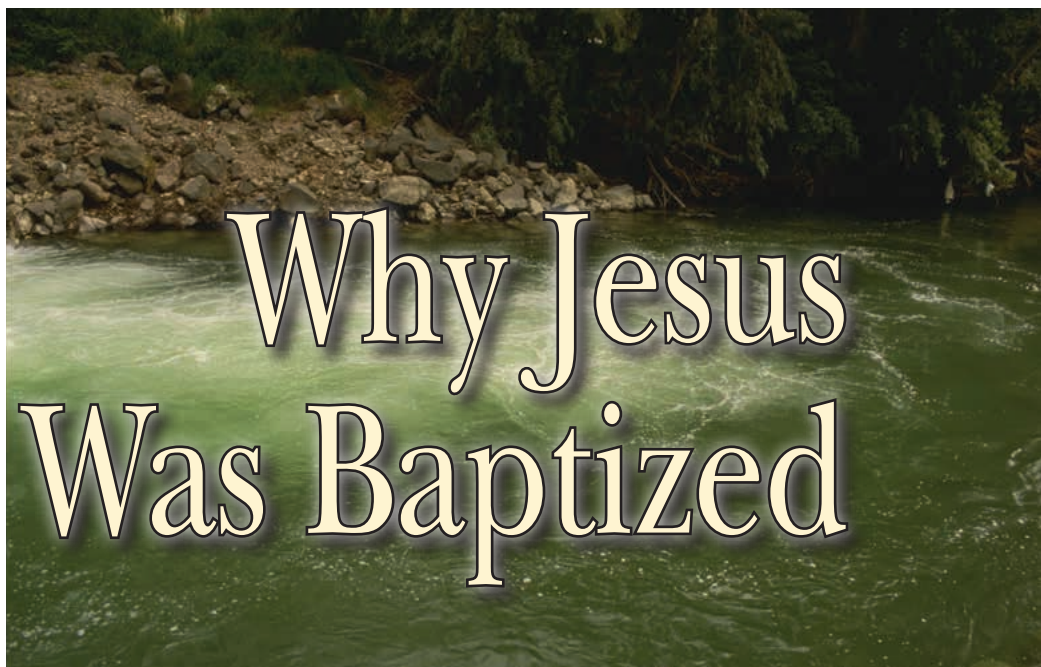
- Christ's baptism marked the start of His public ministry and fulfilled prophecy that John the Baptist prepared the way for that ministry.

- The baptism of Jesus pre-figured His own death and resurrection, as the unblemished paschal lamb. Jesus' baptism identified Him with sinners; He was taking our sins upon Himself.

These may be valid, but the reasons for Jesus' baptism go deeper still. The primary earthly mission of Jesus Christ was to complete the plan of salvation and fulfil divine righteousness.

Despite the Messiah's sinlessness, He carried upon Him the iniquity of all humanity. Indeed, when Jesus entered the water to be immersed by John, He symbolically took also the sins of every human being, including all who before and after Him would turn to Yahweh: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4a; see also vv. 6b, 11b).

By coming to earth, carrying our iniquity, being baptized, and



taking on the cross, Jesus magnified a symbolic act that went beyond the simple ritual of purification washing. Through His baptism, He confirmed the baptism of every Christian who would publicly affirm faith in Christ the Savior.

The apostle Paul says we are "buried with Him in baptism" (Colossians 2:12a). When one is baptized, this is usually understood as present tense. Since God is timeless, though, consider that everyone who has ever been baptized into Christ was also baptized with Jesus about two thousand years ago.

Imagine traveling back in time to the day of Jesus' baptism and hearing the same words of the Father: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). When Jesus was baptized, we were there. We also heard the voice of the Father!

Jesus was baptized because God planned it so. All the force of universal redemption is pictured in this symbolic act. Let

us enter the most Holy Place of communion with God through the power of the blood that Jesus shed in His eternal sacrifice. Let us have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed by the "pure water" that once baptized Christ. Since He washed us in Himself in that one eternal act of redemption, let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (Hebrews 10:19-23).

The sacrificial life and death of Christ, including His baptism, fulfilled all the righteousness of God. The land of Israel lived the experience of several "Baptist" movements similar to John's (Matthew 21:25), but only he would have the privilege to baptize the Son of God, an act that pre-figured the salvation of all God's people. **BA**

A medical doctor,
Paulo Jorge Coelho
serves the Church in
Lisbon, Portugal.





@ Lightpoet—Dreamstime.com

by Steve Krome

In my years of CoG7 membership, I've heard the term *financial compliance* used for tithes paid by members to their church and the monies paid by churches to their districts and the General Conference. We use this term to recognize the financial commitments we made when joining the local church and that the local church made when joining the Conference.

But is financial compliance what the local church, the Conference, and the districts expect from us? Or is there a deeper meaning to discover?

First, let's explore the word *compliance*, defined as "the act of conforming, acquiescing, or yielding." This suggests that we are to contribute our resources out of silent conformity and mindless obligation. If so, it's no wonder that many individuals and churches don't meet their financial commitments.

Who wants to do anything out of mindless obligation, much less give money under these condi-

tions? We should recognize that God does not expect us to be merely financially compliant but to participate in every way as partners in the gospel message.

So what is this partnership, and what does God expect from us financially? The term *partnership* means two or more people who join in an endeavor. Are we not joined together in the local church, district, and General Conference to assist in spreading the gospel message to an unbelieving world?

As for God's expectations, one only need read Philippians 4:10-19 to find Paul's commendation for their partnership in the gospel, both spiritually and financially. His expectation was that the churches participate — as partners — with him and the other apostles in sharing the gospel and the costs associated with that mission.

Paul never envisioned that his partners would commit only their spare change to cover the costs associated with spreading God's Word of salvation. He believed that they would not merely fund this mission of salvation but do

so with enthusiasm. He used the church in Macedonia as an example of joyful giving:

They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints (2 Corinthians 8:3, 4).

Paul considered it a privilege to share in this service to the Lord, and so should we.

What does this financial partnership look like today? My responsibility is simply to contribute "a sum of money in keeping with [my] income" in "the service of the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:2, 15). My financial partner has a responsibility to use those funds in a manner that best obtains the goals (spreading the gospel) upon which our partnership (church membership) was formed. If each partner does his/her part, then the goal should be accomplished.

So I urge my fellow members to become partners in the ministries of the Church of God (Seventh Day) — to become aware of, and participate in, the missions of the local church, district, and General Conference. All partners should recognize the importance of Christ's mission and hold each other accountable for faithful service to it. We should feel honored and privileged to share in spreading the gospel. **BA**

Steve Krome is Southeastern District Superintendent and lives in Chattanooga, TN. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.





Grace lesson

What a powerful grace-lesson Jenny Anklam learned and shared — her visit to a Chinese orphanage! [“A Day of Grace,” p. 8, January-February ‘12] How much suffering those children experience! How spoiled by luxury so many of us are! Because of sin, we’re all just as abandoned as those orphans in God’s eyes, but His grace brings us into His home as sons and daughters. In caring for the weak and helpless on earth, we preach the gospel, care for our neighbor, and relieve the hurting — pure and faultless religion (James 1:27). Thanks for such a good issue, the best in recent memory.

*B. F.
Walla Walla, WA*

Nothing else was so touching as this report of the plight of young children neglected by their Chinese parents, guardians, and even the government itself just because they are girls and not boys. I could not help shedding tears at Jenny’s experience. Let us all learn to value children for who they are and not what they are supposed to be in our eyes and perceptions.

*N. M.
Facebook (Kenya)*

Spell out Scripture!

How important are the words recorded in the Bible? Based on articles in the BA, I’d say, “Not very.” Most writers seem to consider what they say as more important than Scripture.

Take Proverbs 1:7 to prove a point. Now I’ll just keep writing as others do. See how important I feel my words are! My guess is that only two readers out of a hundred took the time to look up that text. Would you not have gotten more out of my article if I had included God’s words in Proverbs 1:7: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

My writing this was prompted by a very good article, “Do We Need God?” by John Klassek [p. 12, March-April ‘12]. We do need the Scripture spelled out. John did this. The Lord and I thank him.

*H. P.
Loyal, WI*

Treasures in May-June

Absolutely, it is God’s will to heal [“Divine Healing Today?” p. 7]. The one who is healed from sickness will declare His great power, and together with others who have witnessed,

will glorify God. There are also instances that the patient will remain in a serious condition, or the illness may lead to death. This we may consider trials; God has a purpose.

“My Perfect Child,” by Jael Hamilton [p. 18], is so touching the heart. There was once an SDA pastor who said to the congregation, “My son is special to me.” His boy has the same case as Sara.

When the husband is being exposed to porn, he may appreciate this evil acts [“Home Improvements?” p. 22]. He will ruin the mental and emotional aspects of his wife, and the wife’s love will turn cold. Now she will be thinking of staying away from him. As the wife bears this burden, her health is affected. Being degraded, their relation may break because of this crime that is being brought by evil. I wonder if a wife’s exposure to porn may also result in broken relationship.

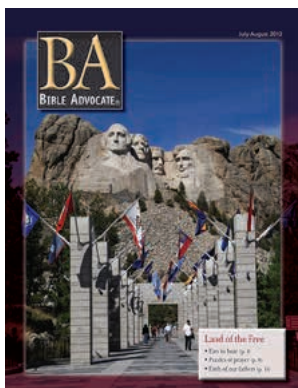
*D. C.
Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines*



I’ve been learning more on the subject of porn to recover myself and, at some point, help other men overcome this terrible action that seems to be harmless but in fact

slowly destroys your entire world! This article might have been short, but it was very helpful. It feels good to get this off my chest. Keep me in your prayers.

J. G.
E-mail



Unpardonable sin

Arlo's two suggestions of how to commit the unpardonable sin are worthy of discussion and debate ["Viewpoint," p. 21, July-August '12]. Jesus tells us to remove the sin of self-righteousness from our own eye before we can remove sin from another's. Self-righteousness taken to the extreme (only God knows what that is) is the unpardonable sin, in my opinion.

B. M.
Liberty Center, OH

The term *resurrection of damnation* (twice in the article) does not appear in Revelation 20. Jesus never used the words *resurrection of damnation* (or *condemnation*). In John 5:29 Jesus spoke of two resurrections (literally in Greek), "a resurrection of life" and "a resurrection of judgment." In John 5, the Greek

has the word *krisis* (judgment), in verses 22, 24, 27, 29, and 30.

I find it hard to understand why some translations (KJV and others) translate the word *krisis* as "condemnation" or "damnation" in verse 29 and as "judgment" in all the other verses. Several translations in various languages render *krisis* as "judgment" also in verse 29.

Many thanks for yet another beautiful edition of the BA.

E. K.
Western Australia

Tackling controversy

I applaud Brian Franks for his thoughtful article ["Hot Button: Homosexuality," p. 19, July-August '12]. God has had to transform my personal views on this subject over the years. When I am tempted to view homosexuality as worse than other sins (including my own), my Savior gently reminds me that all of us are under sin and in need of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

While homosexuality is outside God's will, it will be more tolerable for homosexuals (Sodom and Gomorrah) on the day of judgment than for those who reject the teachings that Christ has called His servants to proclaim, or who dismiss the mighty miracles that Jesus did and refuse to trust Him as Savior (Matthew 10:14, 15; Matthew 11:23, 24).

The late William G. T. Shedd, an American theologian, once stated, "A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are for." This quote can apply to the BA, which seems more and more willing to leave the safety of less-controversial articles and venture out into the stormy waters, teaching Bible truths on subjects of controversy that confront

the Christian community today. Keep up the good work!

J. W.
Folsom, LA

The July-August BA was awesome. Encouragement to the church reflects in these relevant articles. I would like to Tweet one of the articles (Calvin Burrell's "Keeping Our Balance"). Is the Church OK with this, and is it possible to add the option of tweeting articles that we find online? I'm very involved in political action but have kept a middle-of-the-road attitude, trying to bring folks together. I'd really like to see the Church move forward technologically.

C. B.
E-mail

Yes, you may Tweet anything you read in BA (limit of 140 characters), giving credit to the BA. – Editor

Seal and stamp

To me, the Holy Spirit is simple. It is what both God and His Son have, and they want to implant it right in our heart. It is His nature of fairness, justice, love, forgiveness, kindness, patience, and more — all those virtues! The old nature of bitterness, hate, etc., has to go.

That Holy Spirit is God's seal of approval to enter His kingdom. God's stamp, if you please.

J. G.
E-mail

Fruit of stewardship

I've been receiving your magazine over 15 years and appreciate all who contribute money to send it to us. God bless you all.

S. N.
Imo State, Nigeria

Fanning Out

Ceiling fan stirs air
and soul as morning
prayers loft up, piercing
spackling, tiles, smog,
and cumulus, skirting jet
trails, straight to the throne
where God circulates His
fresh blessings
to the far corners.

Gail Denham



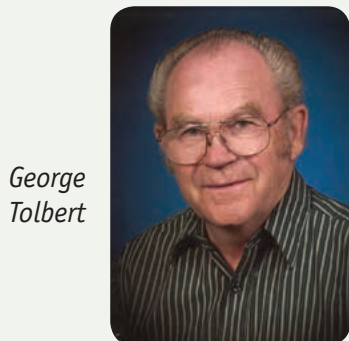
September emphasis:

Publications

LeRoy
Dais



Max
Morrow



George
Tolbert

More Than Just a Paper Pastor

"You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God . . ." (2 Corinthians 3:2, 3a).

For more than 149 years now, the *Bible Advocate* magazine (with its predecessors) has played its role in publishing the grace and truth of Christ among the nations. In this, our sesquicentennial year, we recognize and appreciate you, the readers and donors who give this ministry its audience and keep it alive.

We also recognize and appreciate those who have served as your pastors and teachers via the printed page. Most who served in the BA's first century (1863 - 1963) have fallen asleep in the Lord, but a few whose service extends fifty years or more remain alive until this day. Here are a few of them:

LeRoy Dais began work in the Stanberry, Missouri publishing house in 1956. In the 56 years since, he has served as a press operator, curriculum editor, and director for the Publications agency, as well as a tireless foreign correspondent for the Church. No modern name is more closely linked to the BA around the world in the last half-century, probably, than his.

Max Morrow served as BA editor during its centennial year (1963). Nearly 50 years later, Elder Morrow is still active in pastoral ministry (Owosso, Michigan church).

George Tolbert served as BA pressman for 30 years (1963-66; 1969-93). He and his wife, Gina, live in the Denver area and remain faithful in the local church.

The ministry of these, and many others like them, to BA readers has been mostly through the media of paper and ink. While absent from you in the body, they have been with you in the spirit — rejoicing to hear of your good conduct and the stability of your faith in Christ (Colossians 2:5).

Thank you, dear friends, for upholding this ministry now, in its 150th year.

Be sure to visit baonline.org.

Literature Days

Fifth Sabbaths are Literature Days that occur once each quarter. The next fifth Sabbath is September 29.

Small amounts of literature (under 15 pieces) are sent free of charge to all who request them. Larger requests are accompanied by a statement of costs to produce the literature and a request for payment.

Local churches are asked to receive offerings for the literature fund of Bible Advocate Press. These offerings are urgently needed to pay for producing the Church's gospel tracts and small booklets. They **do not** help pay for the *Bible Advocate* magazine.

The literature fund provides basic costs for sending the many pieces mailed each year without charge, as well as the tens of thousands of pieces sent to countries where churches can't help pay for production and postage — about half the total pieces produced. So your support for the literature fund also amounts to a missions effort that reaches thousands in other countries.

Most literature is available in both English and Spanish. Our *Statement of Faith* tract will soon be printed in French, as will other tracts and booklets if demand and funding are adequate.

Request a list of literature in English or Spanish. Write to Bible Advocate Press, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; call 303-452-7973; or e-mail bap.orders@cog7.org.

— LeRoy Dais



Two San Antonio, TX groups — Heart of Worship and Living Rock — recently merged to form one new congregation with this name.

Young adult retreat, Texas: This enthusiastic bunch put May's last weekend to good use, celebrating Christ and responding to CoG7 ministries. Many went home knowing the various ministries of the Church and knowing "where and how God wants me to serve Him."



Ministry school starts in Myanmar: The new CoG7 conference here has enrolled its first class of five students. Supported by G. C. Missions, a new school building is under construction near Rangoon.

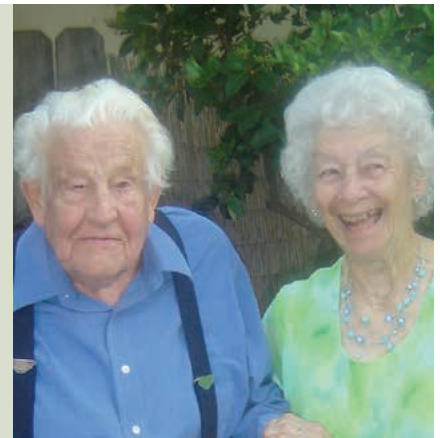


MISSION POSSIBLE: June 17-24, these young people did a four-day VBS for the children of the Yakama Indian Reservation in Yakima, WA. They also volunteered at the Union Gospel Mission and did two outreach nights in local neighborhoods. Read a fuller report of this event at baonline.org. Mission Possible is our national youth camp that majors on learning through serving.



Ruben and Monica Zaragoza of Yucaipa, CA, celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in June. Congratulations to them!

Andy and Donna Carpenter of West Covina, CA, also celebrated a 65th, and Andy turned 100 years old on July 17. More kudos!



Northeast "Leap of Faith": Young attendees from Connecticut, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia retreated in Pennsylvania in mid-June. When the weekend was over, no one wanted to leave.

PMT to Guadalajara — Again!

Pioneer Missionary Training Level 1 (PMT 1) will be held December 20-30, 2012, in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico — the third time in that city. For information and an application, contact National Youth Director Kurt Lang at youth@cog7.org. Deadline is **November 1**.

God's Grace in El Salvador Mission

by Bev Brenneise



The 2012 SHINE Medical and Dental team encountered problems. Our trip was delayed from April until June. When the team finally entered El Salvador, most of our medications and supplies were seized by airport customs officials. To these troubling events, God added His own touch and made the June 22 - July 2 mission a testimony to His grace.

When most of the medications donated by King's Highways (\$150,000 worth!) were impounded, we believed they would soon be released. Several times we took forms to the officials. Each time they were returned, asking for more. The president of El Salvador sent a request to release the medications. Instead, customs went on strike, closing its offices for nearly a week.

Then an angel appeared. Dr. Victor Saca, a doctor-chemist and owner of a pharmaceutical company contacted by Dr. Eduardo Bermudez, stepped into the breach and donated substantial amounts of medication. The clinics continued, and 3,863 total cases were seen. Some 43 team members and many local brethren attended to the routine medical and dental needs, including women's care, ear lavages, and 311 pairs of gift eye-glasses. Patients were often prayed for by pastors and team members. Thirty-one special cases (cataracts, hernias, organ problems, possible leukemia, ulcerated ankles, abnormal growths, glasses, etc.) were identified, with further diagnosis and/or treatment recommended for most.

SHINE has always worked with local medical

personnel, during and after missions. This year Rhonda Endecott observed a woman at the clinic (for a sore throat) who was also missing a lower right arm. Rhonda knew a Guatemalan non-profit that provides artificial arms at a fraction of normal costs, and connected SHINE to this group. Result: The Salvadorian woman will get an artificial limb!

More young people are taking part in the mission. Spring Vale SHINE contest winner Steffi Kendrick was part of this year's group and worked with the media team interviewing, writing stories, and taking photos. Bonds with local brethren were forged as God's love spilled over. On the second Sabbath, more than 2,500 people came together in worship in a rented auditorium on the outskirts of San Salvador!

A weak or non-existent Internet at our hotel prevented the blog of previous years, but almost 700 people became friends of this "Shine Mission" on Facebook. You can still friend us and see the stories/photos/video clips at www.facebook.com/shine.mission.

With the SHINE clinics complete and most members departed, the impounded medications and supplies — 14 suitcases full — were finally released. A doctor and dentist from El Salvador, along with CoG7 brethren, will be filling prescriptions and disbursing those meds to needy individuals.

SHINE team mission accomplished — by the grace of God.

 Read the full SHINE report at baonline.org.



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International Congress

Pacific Rim

South and east of the Asian continent, the Church is represented by a vibrant sister conference in the Philippine Islands, by a fledgling effort in Indonesia, and by a large-hearted church scattered across Australia. Pastor Phil Kordahi serves the congregation in Adelaide, South Australia, and the International Ministerial Congress as representative for Zone 6 (www.cog7aus.com).

North of Melbourne, in Avenel, Victoria, Fabian Christian McCloy serves and maintains one the best CoG7-linked websites, *christlion.com*. Here you'll find audio sermons, videos, articles, study aids, Christian books, communication opportunities, a visitor's tab, and more. Fabian's broad interest is in getting Bibles to those who don't have one — in Africa, Asia, or anywhere in the world.



Across the continent, John Klassek and his family serve the cause of God's grace and truth near the Western Australia capital of Perth. John's primary outreach is *Message-Week*, his own gospel films, and ads (thirty seconds to six minutes) that catch attention via various electronic media. His latest are *Surprise!* (filmed on W.A.'s Preston Beach) and *Sabbath Experience* (now in Spanish, thanks to Pastor Oscar Mata). Others such as *Signposts of Our Times*, *Only One Verdict*, *The 6th Day*, and *Will You Ever See Your Loved Ones Again* may be viewed at www.message7.org. John's book, *Hope of the Resurrection*, in both English and German, is also free for the asking.



six more people responded to the gospel call and will be baptized soon.

Though rainfall was rampant, all the meetings were well attended. One member paid for a tent so the services could continue. Among the topics taught were doctrines of the kingdom and the Sabbath. A senior minister in another church believed the Sabbath truth and donated a parcel of land for a new church — our fifteenth in South Nyanza, to the glory of God! They will assemble under a makeshift shade this Sabbath, on the donated land.

At this outreach, I distributed thirty-eight Bibles donated by Brother Fabian McLoy of Australia, through his Christ Lion Ministries. We also distributed *Bible Advocate* magazines and tracts to non-members and new converts who scrambled for them.

— Abrahams Wanda Odongo
Pastor and Evangelist

Africa

Kenya's South Nyanza district planned and led a gospel outreach in the Omoya area May 23-26. We witnessed the saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sabbath morning, ten souls went to the river for baptism by our guest, Pastor Celestine Lyamayaga of Tanzania. After the sermon by Patrick Ogolla Omollo of Nyangweso church,



Spiritual Formation

The term *spiritual formation* has become a buzzword in Christian circles. Its focus is the believer's growth into full spiritual maturity. It would be absurd to expect an infant to figure out life on his own, to grow up without parental nurture and guidance. It is equally absurd to expect babes in Christ to figure out the Christian life on their own, to grow up without the spiritual input of others. This thought process drives spiritual formation, and a plethora of books, conferences, seminary courses, and degree programs give evidence that it is in vogue.

This focus took center stage near the end of the last century as many Christian leaders succumbed to moral failure. *Building Below the Waterline*, Gordon MacDonald's new book, says that it's the work done in one's soul — worship, prayer, devotion, and discipline — that most determines a person's spiritual fortitude. MacDonald writes from experience, having succumbed to such failure himself. His ministry now focuses on helping Christians shore up the foundation of their lives.

But caution is needed. The term *spiritual* means different things to different people. Both Christians and non-Christians recognize a spiritual side of human existence — inner, non-physical, such as heart, mind, will — and engage in shaping it. For non-Christians, this is *spiritual*.

Furthermore, emphasis on shaping the inner person isn't new. Ancient sages and philosophers, eastern religions, and those given to monastic lifestyle have long emphasized this way of life.

In addition, concerns about legalism and a "works mentality" naturally lead to skepticism about spiritual disciplines. Such concerns are valid; proper motivation for practicing the disciplines is critical.

The disciplines have their place. Denying self and taking up our cross are Jesus' criteria for true discipleship (Matthew 16:24). Paul exhorts us to discipline ourselves for godliness (1 Timothy 4:7) and uses the rigorous discipline of an athlete to illustrate the commitment required to finish life's race well (1 Corinthians 9:27).

But Christian spiritual formation is much broader. It is a process of whole life transformation, with the goal of becoming like Jesus — conformed to His image. It is dealing with our dark side, bringing it into the light of God's love so that our public life is merely a reflection of our private life. It is having an undivided heart, oneness of soul and character; dealing with our dysfunctions; finding inner healing through forgiveness and reconciliation; becoming emotionally whole; submitting mind, soul, and body to God's will; opening our lives to the scrutiny of spiritual leaders and mentors; valuing spiritual authority and submitting to its counsel.

This isn't about perfection. The closer we get to Jesus, the more of our imperfections we'll discover. We never reach the end of dying to the flesh, for sin always manifests itself in new ways.

Rather, it is a quest for godliness. It centers on Christ, giving our utmost for His highest. It is a life of repentance, becoming men and women after God's heart.

This year's emphasis on "Spirit-formed" is raising awareness of spiritual formation in CoG7. Let's fan it into flame as God shapes people and forms His church.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference
President



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