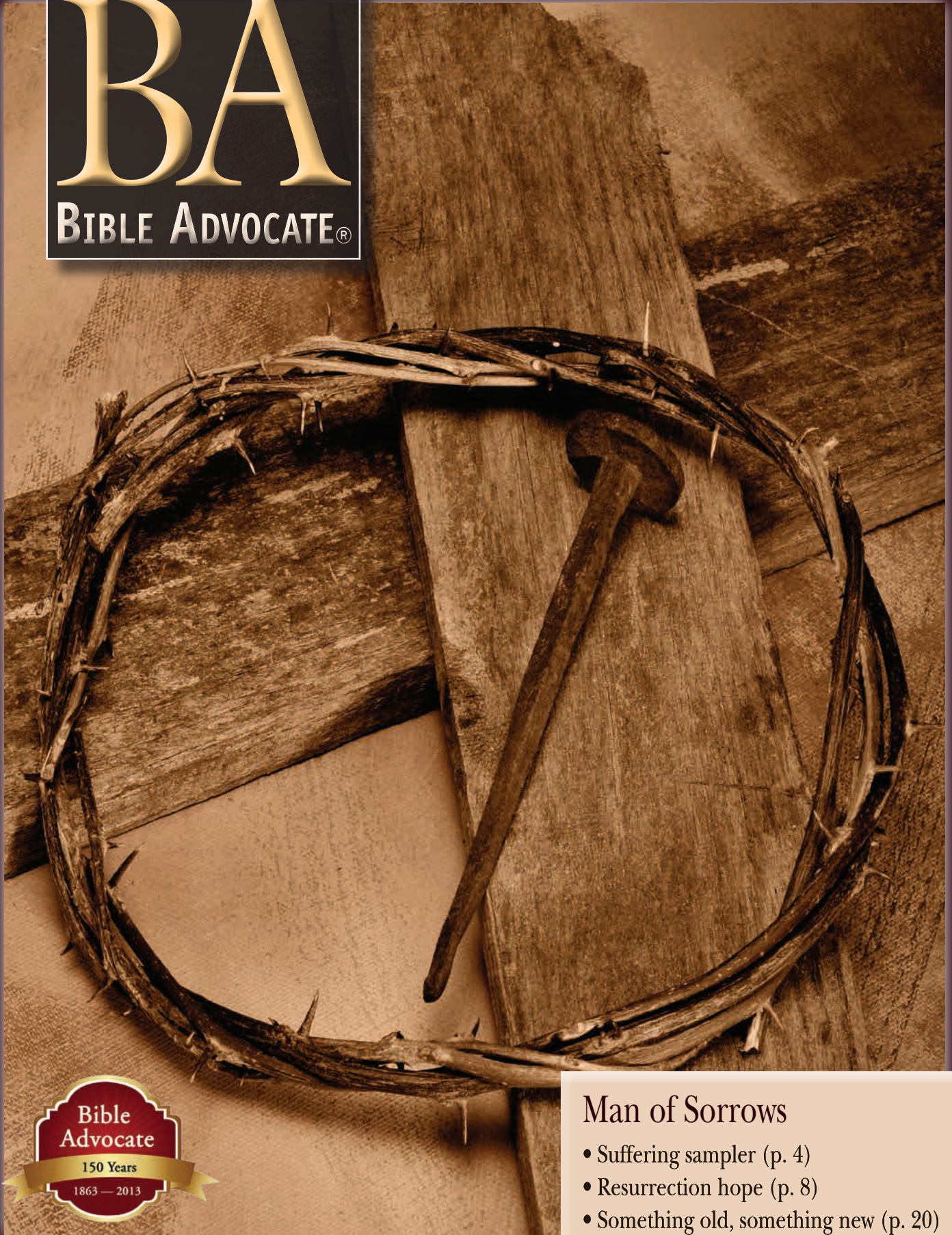


BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE®



Man of Sorrows

- Suffering sampler (p. 4)
- Resurrection hope (p. 8)
- Something old, something new (p. 20)



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2013: Year of the Spirit's Fruit

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And don't forget the BA Online (www.baonline.org) for extras you can't find here. We look forward to seeing you online!

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A publication of the

Church of God (Seventh Day)

This magazine is published to advocate the Bible, represent the Church, and glorify the God of grace and truth.

Volume 147 • Number 2

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The BIBLE ADVOCATE (ISSN 0746-0104) is published bimonthly by Bible Advocate Press, 330 W. 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80023. Periodicals postage is paid at Broomfield, CO, and at additional offices. Subscription is free to any who ask. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bible Advocate Press, Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233-0677.

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Bible Advocate Press
P.O. Box 33677
Denver, CO 80233-0677
phone: 303/452-7973
fax: 303/452-0657
e-mail: bibleadvocate@cog7.org
orders: bap.orders@cog7.org

Notice: Send all address changes and other correspondence to the address above.

Publications Agreement No. 40042428

The Bible Advocate Online appears at www.BAonline.org.

Cover photo: @ Juan Moyano—Dreamstime.com

The Cross: A Reflection

The cross is the center point of faith, the touchstone of life. From it pours love, acceptance, and forgiveness from heaven to earth and from man to man.

It is the crux and proof of Father's holiness and grace. Consider His dilemma: God could not be holy and just unless He had punished sin with the death it deserved. And God could not be fully gracious unless He had produced a way to love and forgive sinners. He has done both in one bittersweet stroke to the Son, thus solving the divine dilemma for good and forever.

As long as heaven's standard is heard in God's Word and man's sin is seen in its rejection, so Christ's cross is our eternal hope and righteousness. There our sin-debt was paid.

As long as man's inhumanity to man echoes in malice, venom, hatred, and rabid attack, so will the sublimely gentle Jesus in suffering and death be our best example, our truest peace.

The cross of Christ declares the ultimate defeat of evil — of debauchery, debility, decay, deception, decline, defeat, defect, defiance, deficiency, deformity, degradation, dejection, delusion, demolition, demonism, denigration, depravity, depression, dereliction, desecration, desolation, despair, desperation, despondency, destitution, destruction, deterioration, devastation, and death.

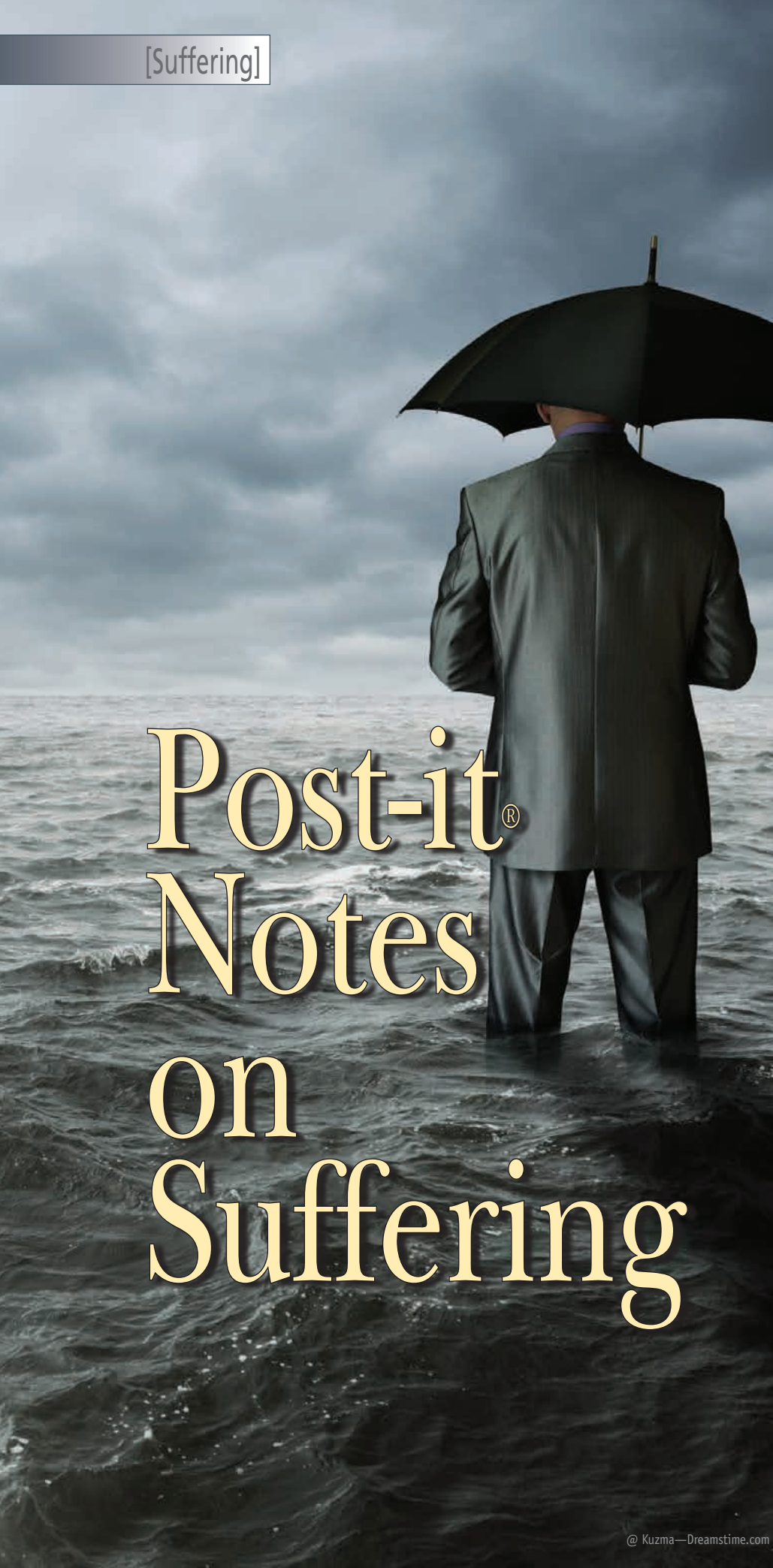
The cross of Christ foretells the triumph of all good — of reassurance, rebirth, reception, reclamation, recognition, reconciliation, recovery, reconstruction, recuperation, redemption, reformation, refreshment, regeneration, rehabilitation, relief and release, remission, renewal, renovation, rescue, rest, restoration, resplendence, and Resurrection.

The cross is the hot anvil of God's wrath against sin, the humble boast of repentant sinners so judged, and the enduring pledge of unquenchable divine love. It is foolishness to the perishing and offense to the unbeliever, but glory and peace to those who trust Him dying there.

Words fail to describe the Awesome One who left heaven's glory and bore earth's burden at Calvary. Behold Him there, praying forgiveness, bleeding grace. The agony of the cross was followed by perfect mercy and justice fused in resurrection. Forsaken by friends and flanked by criminals, the dying and risen Lord means our life, His suffering our joy.

— Calvin Burrell





Post-it[®] Notes on Suffering

If your walk with the Lord is rocky and steep, you're in good company.
by Calvin Burrell

Announce a session on suffering, and people will stay away in droves.

Pain is not a topic designed to attract our pampered and self-centered attention. It is, however, a topic the Bible says much about, one that goes deep into the essence of what it means to be alive — and to be a Christian.

We spend our time and money to avoid suffering, and rightly so — but with limited success. Our efforts to deny or kill the pangs of reality often mock us, and sooner or later we are forced to admit with Job and Scott Peck, “Life is difficult.”

What's written here is not full-orbed coverage of suffering. In three pages, it couldn't be. What's here is a sample and summary of the Bible's material on the subject — scraps of truth and grace posted on suffering's wall.

Categories and counsel

A glimpse of the big picture unfolds when we divide it into types.

There is universal suffering — misery and travail for all. Most natural disasters, many accidents and illnesses, the aches and pains of many years, and eventual death can be traced to little more than our common humanity. We begin life with a squall and end it with a whimper. The time between is full of struggle.

Suffering is in the natural order of things, not always tied to our

own or another's conduct. Scripture says the whole world groans and travails in pain together until now (Romans 8:22) — the "ouch" of every creature under heaven.

How should we respond to the troubles that come just because we are? Join the human race (1 Peter 5:9b, 10); do good to all (Galatians 6:10); hope for the promise to come (Romans 8:18).

There is particularized suffering: man's inhumanity to man. Daily news confirms that our human capacity to inflict anguish upon others is unlimited. All the wars, crimes, misdeeds, and mis-words of history have meant endless pain and distress — both small and great — for people, both the guilty and the innocent.

We often think of occasions when we've suffered at someone else's hands. Harder to recall, but no less real (or frequent, probably), are the times our failures have brought injustice or hurt to others.

Seeing the massive interpersonal hurt among our human family, what should we do? Forgive everybody for everything, seek forgiveness of those we've hurt, and feel the misery lighten.

If anyone's suffering at the hands of another, including one in authority, rises to levels of abuse or bodily harm, seek relief through proper channels. If it does not rise to that level, gently appeal, remembering, "When you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God" (1 Peter 2:20b).

There is gospel suffering, for the sake of Christ. The cross is the most recognizable symbol of our faith, for good reason: It represents not only suffering but

also a willingness to lay down one's life for whom we believe. Consistently Jesus taught that His followers would take up their cross (Mark 8:34) — a verbal image of their willingness to suffer and die for His sake.

Countless millions of faithful men and women have taken up their cross — been ridiculed, imprisoned, exiled, tortured, burned, beheaded, and drowned or subjected to dozens of other indignities and extremities because of their faith — for two

thousand years. They understood that such is the school into which Jesus calls His disciples (2 Timothy 3:12).

Caution: A common mistake of our cut-rate Christianity is to think we are suffering for Jesus' sake when we are only suffering for our own stupidity or selfishness. As 1 Peter 2:20 slyly says, we should be patient during self-inflicted trials.

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Sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ

- From eternity: "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9; see also Philippians 2:5-8).
- Foretold: He would be "despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He would be wounded, bruised, chastised, and beaten with stripes — all for our sins, our peace, our healing (Isaiah 53:3, 5; Acts 3:18; 26:22, 23).
- Resisted: Jesus said to the disciples the day before His death, "Now My soul is troubled . . . save Me from this hour?" (John 12:27; 13:21). His personal struggle in the garden the night before is described as "being in an agony" (Luke 22:42, 44).
- At the trial: For hours, Christ endured vehement false accusations, taunts, reproaches, denials by friends, spitting, a blindfold, random cuffs, blows to the head and face, an official flogging (39 lashes), nakedness, mockery, a thorny head piece. . . .
- At the cross: Roman crucifixion was among the most horrific of punishments and tortured deaths. The Gospel writers give us a mercifully brief account of this one: "They crucified Him . . ." (Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:18).
- In retrospect: Christ "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously . . . who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree . . . by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:23, 24). This, Peter says, is not only our salvation but also our example (v. 21).

Christ and Cancer

by Sherri Langton

This is not a place I thought I'd ever be — the oncology ward in a hospital. But for the second time in three weeks, here I am, undergoing five-day, 24-hour chemo treatments for a surprise invader: lymphoma.

I don't mind the word *lymphoma*. It sounds less threatening than *cancer*. Not in *my* body. I'm healthy, committed for years to a regimen of walking and swimming and eating a healthy diet.

But last August a growth swelled in my throat and gradually wrapped itself around my thyroid and vocal cords. Surgery successfully removed the growth. But when I awoke in recovery, I learned that lymphoma had pushed its way into my life and would alter it for several months.

Now I walk the loop around the oncology ward with my pump (I've named him Fred) connected to a port in my chest. *What am I doing here?* I ask myself with each step. Turning the corner near the nurses station, I

notice a large wall hanging with larger-than-life letters printed in the center: HOPE. I keep walking.

But on one loop, I stop and study it more closely. It's a quilt with messages from cancer survivors written in squares around the edges. Among them . . .

I hope you dance.

Laugh, smile.

Courage.

These words do not encourage me. There are days I don't dance; I grieve. I don't laugh and smile; I cry. I don't have courage; I'm afraid. Though I trust God in this unwelcome challenge, though He walks with me through my treatments, depression sets in. I just want my old life back.

Eventually my eyes travel to a square at the top of the quilt. This one's message grabs my attention: *All Jesus*.

This makes me think. At the top of hope is Jesus!

But what do I hope for in Jesus? Healing? Certainly. All signs so far point in that direction. I've

made good progress and am tolerating the chemo well. But what if that nasty invader stubbornly stays or returns one day? I can hope for healing, but God could say no.

I can hope that Jesus keeps side effects to a minimum, that He prevents infection from setting in when my white blood cell count takes a nosedive. But these may not happen either.

So what *can* I hope for in Jesus? Something that has taken on more significance for me: the resurrection. These days His victory over disease and death bring personal meaning to John's words: "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

There will come a day when everything that seems so permanent to me will become "former." I will gain a new body, freed from "Fred." No more oncology wards and PET scans and blood draws. There will be a new heaven and a new earth — and a new me.

This, of course, is ultimate healing and hope. For now, to endure the present, I have the hope of His strength (Philippians 4:13), of His peace (John 14:27; 16:33), of His rest (Matthew 11:28), of His presence (Matthew 28:20).

I return to my room, my body tired but my heart lifted. Hope is not about me — dancing and laughing and smiling and bolstering courage. It's all Jesus. **BA**





What was nailed to the cross? Some say it was the Ten Commandments and all the laws.

Jesus himself was nailed to the cross. This “who” answer to a “what” question gives confident hope of forgiveness and eternal life. The gospel is about Christ “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree . . .” (1 Peter 2:24a).

With our Savior’s body, was anything else nailed to the cross? Only one verse says so: Christ, “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us . . . has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:14).

This text isn’t about laws being nailed with Jesus. The Greek words for “handwriting of requirements” here speak of the certificate of our debt to God, the record of sins that required our death. That IOU document — our death sentence in heaven’s handwriting — was nailed to the cross with Jesus. Now those who trust Him need no longer fear being judged with the sinful, unbelieving world.

A parallel text in Ephesians 2:15 says that Jesus “abolished in His flesh . . . the law of commandments contained in ordinances. . . .” Based on context (see vv. 11-18), this refers to added Mosaic laws that created enmity between Jews and Gentiles. The Ten Commandments did not separate Jews from Gentiles, nor were they “contained in ordinances.”

No law or commands can erase sins and earn salvation as Jesus did by giving His life on the cross. Still, the Ten Commandments play an enduring role as over-arching moral standards for the conduct of people in all generations. They remain today as guides for human conduct and as pointers to Christ for salvation.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

Where I live there is no true church. What if you are not in the true church and doubt the one you attend?

We believe the Bible teaches that . . .

- God’s true church is a spiritual organism composed of all true-hearted disciples who confess their sins, trust Christ for forgiveness, and follow Him as the Holy Spirit leads through the Word.

- Members of the true church of God are known only to Him (Matt. 16:18; 2 Tim. 2:19). No earthly membership roll lists them all.

- Some groups are nearer to God’s standard for the church than others. Still, Christ has people in other “folds” (John 10:16).

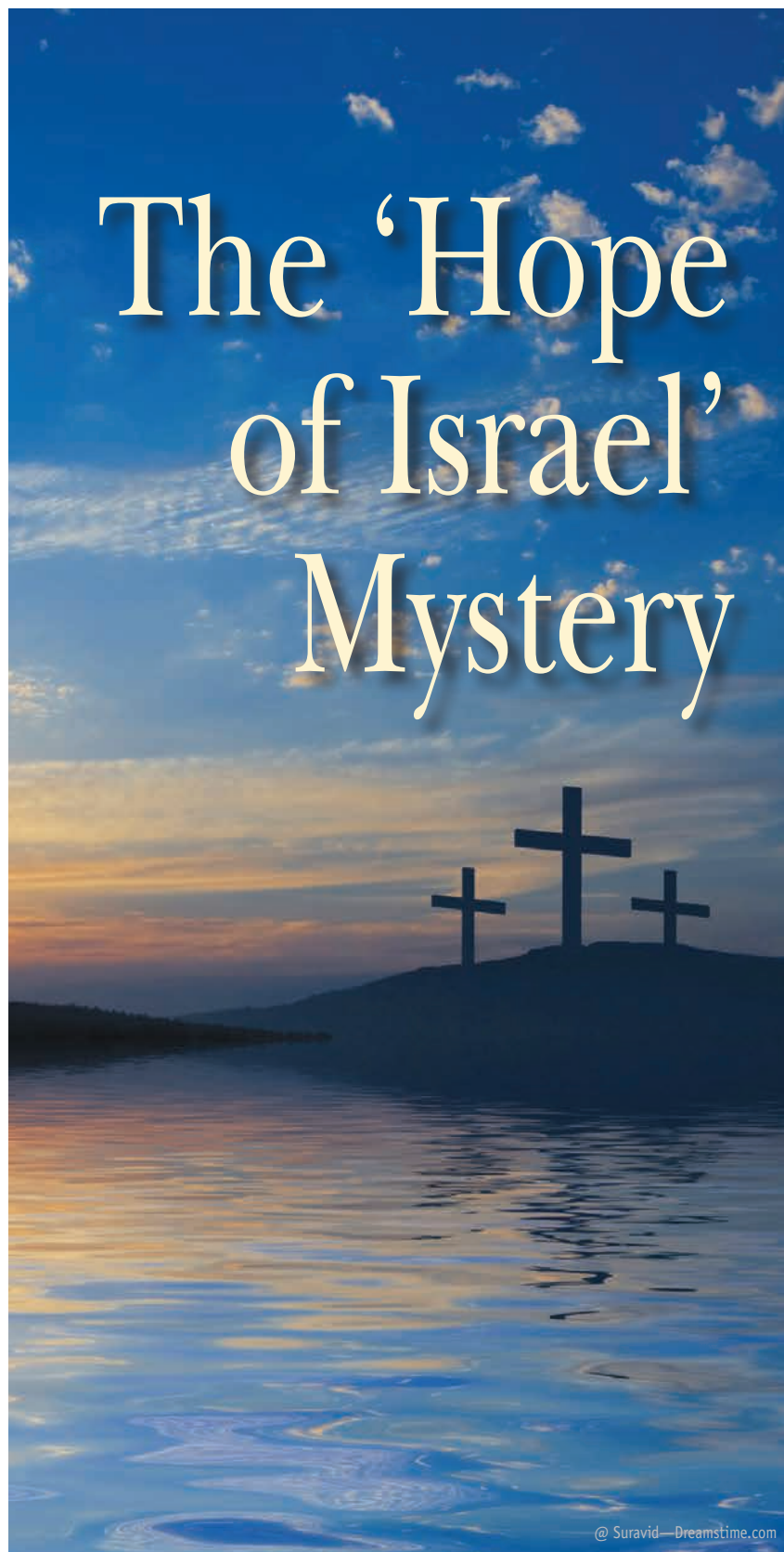
- Some groups may be nearer to a false church than to the true. Still, God has people even in them, and He calls them out (Rev. 18:4).

We do not believe that God extends grace based on church attendance, nor that one organization is fully approved of God while all others are judged as false churches.

Regarding any denomination as the only true church creates real doubts. Assurance that we are God’s elect children with our names written in heaven comes not from being in the right group on Earth. Rather it comes from trusting the Lord Jesus — His loving grace, His words of truth.

Find the true church in the true Savior. Then find a group of fellow believers who teach the doubled-edged truth of God’s Word: faith in Jesus for salvation and obedience to God’s Word and commands as good evidence of it. As you grow and serve in such a group, it becomes a true church for you.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



The 'Hope of Israel' Mystery

What relationship has this magazine's first name with our Lord's resurrection?

by Calvin Burrell

In August 1863, leaders of the Church of God (Seventh Day) selected *The Hope of Israel* as the name for the periodical they would publish and mail to like-minded Christians. The first issue was mailed from Hartford, Michigan, to 42 addresses, mostly in Michigan, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

As editor of the Church's 2013-model magazine, I'm curious: What were those men thinking when they opted for *The Hope of Israel* — a name that has evolved over 150 years to *Bible Advocate*, or simply BA?

Two facts

The former title conveys Bible content, so let's look there to find its meaning.

My concordance shows that the four words *the hope of Israel* occur one time in the King James Version, the dominant English language Bible in nineteenth century America. In Acts 28:20, speaking from prison to Jewish leaders in Rome, Paul says, "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

Two facts about *the hope of Israel* emerge from this verse. First, this phrase was understood by Jews. Second, it aroused their opposition to Paul's gospel, resulting in his imprisonment. That's helpful, but if this verse were our only clue, we'll still be

unsure about the mystery. Thankfully, more is near.

My Bible's center margin reference points me from Acts 28:20 to Acts 26:6-8, where Paul speaks of "the *hope* of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, *hope* to attain. . . . Why should it be thought incredible by you that *God raises the dead?*"

In these three verses, Paul mentions *hope* twice, a hope in God's promise that Paul and Christians share with Israel's twelve tribes. This text connects God's promise to Israel (and to Christians like Paul) with the resurrection of the dead, especially the raising of Jesus the Messiah. To cement that connection, see Acts 13:32-37, where Paul again mentions God's promise to Israel's fathers and cites resurrection prophecies in Psalm 2:7 and 16:10.

Hope and resurrection

Two more texts in the same neighborhood of Acts confirm our suspicion that Paul has the dead being raised in mind when he speaks of "the hope of Israel." In 23:6, Paul cries out to the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, "I am a Pharisee . . . concerning the *hope* and *resurrection of the dead* I am being judged!" This shows the central role that hope in the resurrection played in the faith of both Paul and the Pharisees, if not the Sadducees, of Israel.

And in Acts 24:15 Paul said to Roman Governor Felix in Caesarea about his Jewish countrymen,

"I have *hope* in God, which they themselves accept, that there will be a *resurrection of the dead*, both of the just and the unjust."

Both these texts, as well as Acts 26:6-8 above, closely link the word *hope* with God raising the dead. Further, in all three texts, the hope of the resurrection is addressed in a Hebrew (i.e., an ancient Israel) setting.

Paul knew that conservative Israelites (Pharisees) and believers in Jesus as Messiah share the blessed hope of new life in a new body, beyond the grave. He says so in three chapters (Acts 23–26). And in the book's final chapter, he names this blessed hope of all who plant their faith in the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures as "the hope of Israel" (28:20).

We conclude, then, that Paul equates the hope of Israel with the resurrection from the dead. This may surprise some who would expect that Israel's hope had less to do with the Messianic sub-theme of resurrection, mentioned rarely in the Hebrew

Scriptures, and more to do with the oft-promised Messiah himself.

True hope

Given the centrality of Jesus' resurrection in the Gospels and its dominant role in the apostolic preaching (Acts), Paul likely saw *resurrection* as a useful synonym for all that the Messiah taught and did. Testifying before Jews (Acts 23–28), he might well have chosen that language — less inflammatory than direct reference to Jesus — to build common cause with his fellow Israelites.

Thus, the motif of resurrection as "the hope of Israel" is repeated several times in the final chapters of Acts. For Paul, of course, that hope was confirmed and ratcheted to reality in Israel's Messiah. Indeed for him, the crucified Messiah and resurrected Lord — Jesus! — had become the only true "Hope of Israel." ^{BA}

The creators of *The Hope of Israel* named their paper for the Christian hope of the resurrection that they believed was also shared by the forefathers of Israel. They said, "The first number of the Hope of Israel is now before you. The author of its title was the Apostle Paul. . . . This [the resurrection] Paul says was his hope. For this he endured all trials, all his afflictions and sore persecutions: and for this he finally laid down his life" (Acts 24:14,15, 21)." (Enos Easton, *Hope of Israel*, Hartford, Van Buren Co., Michigan, August 10, 1863, p. 2).

— Robert Coulter
CoG7 Historian

Keeping Hope Alive

by Joe Corrales

www.comstock.com

One cornerstone of our hope is the resurrection of Christ. The great number of eyewitnesses to the Lord after His resurrection is often overlooked.

An early record of Christ's appearing alive after death was written by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. The apostle appealed to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Jesus had been seen by more than five hundred people at once. He reminded them that most of those five hundred were still alive and could have been questioned.

Dr. Edwin M. Yamauchi, history professor at Miami University in Ohio, emphasizes:

What gives a special authority to the list (of witnesses) as historical evidence is the reference to most of the five hundred brethren being still alive. St. Paul says in effect, "If you do not believe me, you can ask them." Such a statement in an admittedly genuine letter written within thirty years of the event is almost as strong evidence as one could hope to get for

something that happened nearly two thousand years ago.*

Take the five hundred-plus witnesses who saw Jesus alive after His burial and place them in a courtroom. If each of them was to testify for only six minutes, including cross-examination, you would have an amazing fifty hours of eyewitness testimony in what might turn out as the largest and most lopsided trial in history.

Professor A. N. Sherwin-White, an eminent historian of Greek and Roman times, writes: ". . . the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. Any attempt to reject [the New Testament's] basic historicity, even in matters of detail, must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."*

According to him, sources for Roman history are usually biased and removed one or two generations, or even centuries, from the events they record. Yet, he says, historians reconstruct with confidence what really happened.

Sherwin-White chastises New

Testament critics for not realizing what invaluable sources they have in the Gospels. The writings of Herodotus show that even two generations is too short a span to allow legendary tendencies to wipe out the hard core of historical facts. When Professor Sherwin-White turns to the Gospels, he states that for these to be myths, the rate of legendary accumulation would have to be "unbelievable" — more generations needed.

Most New Testament scholars agree that the Gospels were written and circulated within the first generation, during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses. Indeed a significant new movement of scholarship argues persuasively that some of the Gospels were written by the AD 50s. This places them as early as Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Given their equal reliance upon prior tradition, they ought therefore to be accorded the same weight of historical credibility accorded Paul.

The point here is that our hope for now and for the life to come is based on the reality of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Because He lives, I have hope in a good outcome for whatever I am going through.

What have you based your hopes on? Shouldn't they rest on the real thing — the resurrection of our Savior? Because Christ lives, we too shall rise! **BA**

Joe and Martha Corrales enjoy their grandchildren and their service with New Hope United CoG7 in San Antonio, TX. Joe is also a computer science professor at Palo Alto College.



* Quoted by Josh McDowell, "Evidence for the Resurrection."

Sabbath, Then and Now

Customs of Jesus' time can trigger healthy reflection on our own day. **by James McBride**



Corel Photos

It's late on the sixth day, toward evening. The narrow unpaved streets of Nazareth are buzzing with activity in preparation for Sabbath. The carpenter lays aside his tools, while across the road the blacksmith finishes sharpening a scythe. In a few courtyards the oven still smolders from a final batch of fresh-baked bread. The potter's wheel is stilled, and field workers scurry back to town.

Nazareth itself covers barely six acres, a tightly packed community of tiny homes perched on a hillside, clustered around the synagogue. It is an unwallied farming village of perhaps two hundred people — mainly poor folks living in simple, one-room houses with hard-packed mud floors and flat roofs.

* * * *

As the sun passes its midday zenith, the final countdown to Sabbath begins. Women and girls draw water from the well and prepare the Sabbath meal,

eaten around sundown. An array of simple foods is spread on the low table — almost the only furniture in the room. Hands are washed for eating (by hand), and diners recline on straw mats spread on the floor. It's the best meal of the week, with bread, fruit, and sometimes meat.

The room is now dimly lit by a few flickering oil lamps set in wall niches. As bedtime approaches, rolled-up pallets for sleeping are pulled from storage. Adults and children, in their day wear and covered only by their cloaks, snuggle in until dawn.

* * * *

Sun up. Life renews at day-break on Sabbath. Beds are stowed away, animals taken out. Synagogue is at the heart of today's activity. The entire village will be there, perhaps several times. Public prayers, readings from the Scriptures-on-scroll, an address from the resident or visiting Rabbi, and open discussion (see Luke 4:14-21).

A Sabbath meal has been prepared and will be eaten at some point. As the sun declines and darkness falls, the end of Sabbath ends another week.

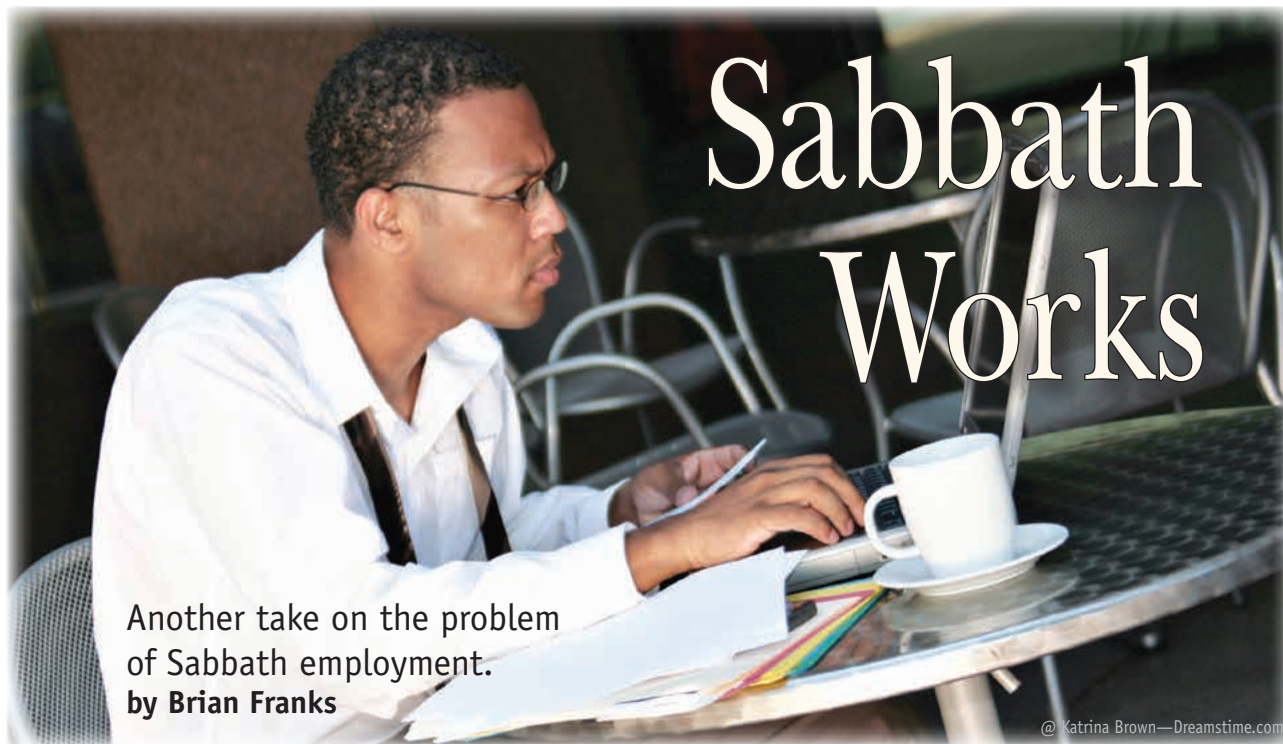
While zealously seeking to do God's will, some Christians fail to heed the counsel "Do not be overly righteous" (Ecclesiastes 7:16). In modern terms: Lighten up. We should consider this in regard to our observance of the Sabbath.

* * * *

Some bind themselves by a collection of Sabbath rules: Don't shave, don't cook or eat out, don't turn on lights, don't watch TV — and a dozen more. Such a series of negatives can blight what God has said is a day of joyful rest from routine business, a day of fellowship and recuperation, a day for focus on the spiritual.

Misunderstanding about Sabbath observance often derives from blind acceptance of the

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Another take on the problem of Sabbath employment.
by **Brian Franks**

@ Katrina Brown—Dreamstime.com

Let's work on the Sabbath. Now put the pitchforks and torches down. I don't mean let's work as in breaking the fourth command. I mean let's figure some things out regarding Sabbath, since it's so important to our church. With many others, I struggled mightily in passing up jobs because they required regular work, or availability, on the Sabbath.

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work," says the Lord in Exodus 20:8, 10, "but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work. . . ." Our focus is rightly drawn to the seventh day, but the other six set the stage for the best. After working the first six, we remember just one day to keep it holy.

This sounds simple, until we hit the real world. America's economy is dominated by the service industry. Our culture lives and breathes instant gratification.

We want it now. That's why so many 24/7 service jobs. Saturday is a huge day for busines. If some places weren't open on the seventh day, they wouldn't open at all.

Different path

Most of us have come to the same fork in the road: a choice between keeping Sabbath according to the commandment and a Sabbath-breaking job. I suggest a third option: Make our own jobs. Instead of being limited to hope and prayer for Sabbath-friendly jobs, let's be more intentional before we reach the fork.

God can certainly find us Sabbath-friendly jobs in the 24/7 world. But couldn't He just as easily bless a different path that counts the cost and plans ahead? Being at the mercy of men in the matter of Sabbath observance is not our only option. Given the choice, let's be ready to forge

our own path when we come to the Y.

In my small Washington town with a large concentration of Seventh-day Adventists, I have seen this plan work. SDAs here do not leave their Sabbath freedom to others. Many of them work at the university or other Adventist schools, at the hospital, grocery store, credit union, or one of several other member-owned businesses. Others are self-employed. This amounts to a ton of Sabbath-friendly jobs.

Can we too adopt a philosophy of making our own jobs? With our own businesses, CoG7 folks will have opportunity to serve their staff and customers in many ways. This is not isolationism, nor should we be reluctant to take other jobs. Rather, we should augment them with more of our own, thus increasing our freedom to observe the Sabbath.

If someone comes to knowledge of the Sabbath but his job

is not Sabbath-friendly, he has come to that Y in the road. He can quit his job or keep looking while he works and goes against his new conviction. With our own businesses, we could offer the third option.

For youth and young adults, available jobs are often at fast food restaurants and other places that need the most workers for their busiest times: weekends. With our own businesses we could provide an alternative to these youth who might otherwise be stuck at the Y.

Proper preparation

Let's move in this direction, not from sheer Sabbath legalism but because we appreciate God's gift and want to celebrate it right. If we can decide our days off and help others do the same, then we can joyfully keep Sabbath as God intended. Just picking any day of seven for rest totally misses this major implication of the seventh-day Sabbath. It is not just a rest day but *the* day for the whole church to come together. It is the day God chose, not men. He made it for us.

So let's "work on the Sabbath" by preparing now. Let's help create Sabbath-friendly jobs so we won't be scrambling to make right choices when that fork in the road comes for us or for others. Let us take some steps now to ensure we don't miss God's best then. **BA**

Brian Franks pastors the church in Walla Walla, WA. He and his wife, Jessica, have two children.



Simple Sabbath Truths

The seventh day was blessed and sanctified by God at the end of Creation week (Genesis 2:3). No other day has ever been treated that way.

Jesus declared that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27), so it's not just Jewish. It is a memorial of creation and of redemption (Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15).

Isaiah revealed that God wanted Gentiles to observe the Sabbath, too (Isaiah 56:2-7). He wanted the Sabbath to be a delight (58:13). It will be observed in the new heavens and new earth (66:22, 23).

Some say the Sabbath command is not repeated in the New Testament. James says that the Ten Commandments are an indivisible whole: If you break one, you break them all. "For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder'" — and on the same occasion, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (James 2:11, 12; Exodus 20:3-17).

Some say, "Jesus is our Sabbath" (based on Hebrews 4:1-11), indicating that what was once a day is now a person. However, the Greek word for rest (*sabbatismos*, v. 9) literally means "keeping of a Sabbath."

Somebody will say, "We are not under the law but under grace." To which I say, "Hallelujah!"

Does "under grace" mean we are free to sin with impunity? Paul says that's a horrible thought. God forbid (Romans 6:1, 2). We are saved by grace, God's unmerited favor, but we are not saved to keep practicing sin.

Under grace, we become beneficiaries of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 10:15-17). God writes His laws in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27). God's grace not only forgives us but also changes us so we don't stay with our old self-destructive sins. By His grace, God etches His own nature and character into us.

God once used the Sabbath as a test to check His people's attitude toward obedience. It may be a good test yet today. Can we really trust Him to meet our needs as we walk with Him in this matter?

— Wilbur C. Dornberger
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

Satan's Masterpiece

by Dirk Anderson

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Satan has painted a false picture of our heavenly Father, based not on Father's true image but on Satan's. Astonishingly, Satan sells this deceptive masterpiece to unsuspecting Christians, many of whom do not realize they are worshipping a portrait of Father that is based partly upon Satan's character.

Satan has painted Father as a super-tyrant, worse than the cruelest dictator the world has ever known. He has painted Father as one who demands our servitude upon pain of torture — the torture of roasting alive in the fires of hell.

Anyone who has burned a finger knows how severe that pain is. Satan has convinced many that God has something far worse in store: an eternal torture chamber, heated and ready for all who disbelieve.

Imagine a torture chamber in constant action, without a second of relief. After years, decades, centuries, millennia, and even a billion years have elapsed, this relentless agony will have only just begun. It can only be described as brutal, monstrous,

evil, savage, and satanic — beyond human description!

Not even the most depraved of men have exhibited such a penchant for cruelty. And those humans who do torture others are regarded as the most vile, debased, and immoral — the lowest dregs of humanity. Yet Satan would deceive Christians into believing that Father is a monster crueller than Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Pol Pot combined.

It has always been Satan's purpose to misrepresent Father's character because he knows that most people will not trust a cruel tyrant as their king. Few if any rational souls can love a God who punishes people for eternity. A God who does that is frightening beyond belief.

Different picture

The most famous verse in the Bible paints a different picture: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

No Christian who reads the

Bible should be fooled. The most important verse states plainly that everlasting life is only for believers. What happens to non-believers? They perish. They do not have eternal life in hell. They have the opposite: eternal death. The Greek word for *perish* means "to destroy . . . abolish, to put an end to, ruin" (*Thayer's Lexicon*).

Shattering the picture

Father did not create people to exact continual pain upon them; that is Satan's desire for us. Satan is the one who desires to torture people forever. He is the one who causes eternal pain and eternal loss.

Satan will influence some of Father's created children to be lost, and Father will suffer their loss forever. The memory of those precious lost souls who might have been saved, but refused: that scar may live inside the Father's heart for all eternity. This is the unfathomable cost of sin.

The one central purpose in all of Scripture is to know God (John 17:3). It is critical, it is life eternal. Justice and punishment are consistent with a loving Father. However, an eternally burning hell is neither just nor loving. It is totally inconsistent with the full picture of Father in Scripture.

It is time to shatter Satan's picture of Father and reveal to the world the true picture found Scripture: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). **BA**

Dirk Anderson is local leader of a CoG7 congregation in Jacksonville, FL, and the author of six books.



Does Hell Burn Forever?

Jesus said the wicked would go into “everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46). This can be understood in two ways: the *punishing* is to continue eternally or the *effect* of the punishment is eternal.

To ascertain the correct interpretation, we must examine other texts. Not one verse in the Old Testament speaks of an eternally burning hell, but some do describe a fire that annihilates:

“The wicked shall perish . . . Into smoke they shall vanish away” (Psalm 37:20).

“For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven . . . all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch. . . . You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet . . .” (Malachi 4:1, 3).

In the New Testament, Paul said the wicked “shall be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Notice that the punishment is “everlasting destruction,” not everlasting torture. It is the *effect* of God’s punishment, not the *experience* of it, that lasts forever.

Jude 6 and 7, in describing the “judgment of the great day,” says “Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” These cities burned until their wicked were destroyed, then the fire went out. Thus “eternal” fire does not mean endless burning but describes a fire with eternal results.

Revelation 14:11 describes those who receive the mark of beast: “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever.” This verse does not say that the wicked are tormented in hell forever. Even if it implies that to some readers, consider other uses of the word *forever*.

Describing the Lord’s vengeance on Zion, Isaiah 34:9, 10 says, “Its land shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night or day; its smoke shall ascend forever. . . .” Immediately, Isaiah goes on to say the same land shall be occupied by animals, birds and plants (34:11-15). How could birds nest, plants grow, and beasts

inhabit a land afire? The fire Isaiah describes, whose smoke ascends forever, is obviously only temporary.

Even after a fire goes out, smoke can be observed in the sky for hours or even days afterward. When the Bible says their “smoke shall ascend for ever,” it means that the evidence or effect of the punishment will be seen forever, not the punishment itself.

Revelation 20:10 says the Devil, the beast, and the false prophet will be tormented in the lake of fire “for ever and ever.” From this, one could think that hell burns forever, except that word does not always mean “without end.” In other texts it refers to periods with a conclusive end. Consider the following examples.

In Exodus 21:6 Moses commanded that the slave “shall serve him [his master] forever.” Does this mean that slaves will be serving their same masters in God’s kingdom for all eternity? Of course not! In this case, *forever* means only until the slave dies or is released from service.

In 1 Samuel 1:22 Hannah said she would bring her son Samuel to the temple to “remain there forever.” Is Samuel still serving in the temple today? No, he served there only until he died.

Proverbs 29:14: “The king who judges the poor with truth, his throne will be established forever.” Does this mean a good king will rule eternally? No, it means his throne will be established until the king dies.

Jonah described his descent into the ocean as “forever” (Jonah 2:6), but he was only in the belly of the fish for three days and nights.

Therefore, the word *forever* in Scripture allows its reference to events that are not eternal. While Revelation 20:10 indeed says the Devil will be tormented “forever and ever,” the same chapter also refers to the lake of fire as the “second death” (v. 14). Thus it is reasonable to believe that the Devil will be tormented until his death, not for all eternity.

— Dirk Anderson



My Journey

“Do the Right Thing”

by Mike Wallace

Young, healthy, full of fun, and ready to take on anything that would come my way. Trusting God as a youngster, on the swim team and church softball league. Great church friends. At age 16, my whole life lay ahead. If I had known the nightmare that would soon envelope my journey, would I have done anything differently?

My body trembles and tears come as I recall sitting on my father's bed a couple days before he died. “Son, do the right thing,” he said. Throughout his battle with cancer I fed, bathed, helped him with the toilet, gave him morphine shots, and read the Bible to him.

This horrible memory of what was left of his once-muscled body remains imbedded: spindly bones protruding through fleshless skin, sunken eyes staring nowhere. *Was this how Nazi death camp victims looked?* His cancer was rotting him from the inside out, and he had an odor like death. The bedsores on his back oozed, causing him pain. I cleaned them and gave him more morphine.

Death and desertion

After eleven months of suffering, my father died. Two weeks later, my mother left our California high desert home and traveled to Montana to grieve with her family.

With no siblings or other family near, I felt abandoned. My mother did not return for three months, so I was completely alone. I made my way by getting up at 4:45 a.m. every weekday for high school swim team. As a senior, I went to school, did my homework, bought the groceries, made my meals, cleaned the house, fed the dog, paid the bills — and maintained an A average.

Every Sabbath I drove fifty-five miles to church, alone. The Worldwide Church of God became my family and support. Often they would have me over for a meal, offering hope, encouragement, and the guidance a young man needs. They sent me to an international youth camp in Texas and made me their youth leader. This congregation showed faith in me and in my emotional recovery. I began to feel not so much alone anymore.

By myself in the remote high desert, no one would know if I

brought girlfriends over or used the alcohol left in the house. I could do anything I wanted.

In my anguish I had to choose between life and death, blessing and cursing. Recalling my father's counsel to “do the right thing,” I turned to the life and blessing that I knew my dad — and God — wanted for me. I proceeded to baptism into God's family the day before my eighteenth birthday.

Finding answers

Four years after my father's death, I began to understand why he died so young. While he was alive, I had prayed for his healing and cried myself to sleep through a year-and-a-half of high school. Why was he not healed? Why the pain and suffering for my family? Why was I left alone? Why me?

I found the answers I needed in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23: “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (NIV).

In that text I saw that we all die. God does not give a date for our death, but He does give

a promise of eternal life with His faithful people.

I also saw that physical death is not the end of our journey. We, like Jesus, live, die, and will be resurrected by God's grace, to live with Him for eternity. For my father and me, resurrection will be the beginning of forever, together.

My mind and soul began to heal, and I felt less alone. Believing 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23 became my John 3:16 moment. We have life forever in His joyous kingdom because one Man died and rose again.

New life

Attending Ambassador College, I met my future wife, Bonnie, and our friendship began to develop. But the college announced its closure the next spring, and my life was again thrown into chaos. I moved to Wheatland, Wyoming, and lived with a WCG family for the summer. When Ambassador did reopen, Bonnie and I both returned to Pasadena. We were married in 1979 and continued college as poor married students, finally graduating in 1982.

We had our first child in 1986, left California, and began a new adventure in Montana. I started work as an insurance agent. My mother never remarried and never fully recovered from dad's death. She spent her last thirteen years with us in our Montana home. Our five children are nearly grown, and we were blessed with our first grandson in 2012.

When the World-wide Church collapsed, my wife and I searched patiently for what to do. Isolated from others who felt as we did, we practiced our faith at home for years. Visiting our daughter at Colorado Christian University, my wife found Church of God (Seventh Day) on the Internet, and we slowly gravitated that direction. We have attended Sabbath services with CoG7 in Colorado Springs and in Spokane, Washington. Never once has anyone been judgmental or critical of us. This is refreshing.

Heroes

I'm so grateful for my father's advice long ago to "do the right thing." Heeding it kept me in the church during my darkest days, and that led me to the truth of Christ's death and resurrection and to a whole new life.

Feeling down at times, I find a quiet corner and read all of Hebrews 11 — aloud. I have such a great company of witnesses who suffered as I did. They too were alone for most of their trials. They are my heroes and examples in the faith.



Mike Wallace and son participate in a Lewis and Clark reenactment.

My dad is one of them. He never quit, never yielded to the pain and loss, and never lost faith in God. I hope I have made him proud.

Mike and Bonnie Wallace live on a ten-acre Florence, MT ranchette, where they raised their children. Mike is an insurance agent and financial planner whose hobbies include Lewis and Clark reenacting, book collecting, and serving as 4-H leader. The family attends Sabbath services via U-stream from the Colorado Springs church.

The Courage to Return

**Thank God — He still
calls His wandering
children home.**
by Dr. Donna Sherwood

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It is always high-risk behavior to leave your God-appointed territory to one that is self-appointed. In Elimelech's case, it was not just risky but fatal!

Elimelech encountered severe famine in his Bethlehem of Judah homeland, so he took his wife, Naomi, and their two sons to the land of Moab. He was the first to die, and then his two sons married women from heathen nations — expressly forbidden by the law (Deuteronomy 7:4). In time, the sons too died. What a catastrophe! At this stage, Naomi was left with only her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah.

A critical moment came for Naomi when she decided to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem because "the LORD had visited His people by giving them bread" (Ruth 1:6). Armed with this information, Naomi started her journey home. To Orpah she

bid a warm farewell, but Ruth committed herself to go to the "house of bread" with Naomi and serve Jehovah God.

Much can be gained from the narrative of Ruth, focusing on the words "so Naomi returned" (v. 22). What do you do when life has beaten you up or you have made foolish choices and have to go back to your family, community, friendships, and even your old congregation? When we leave a place, we all dream of returning full — mission accomplished, better off for having left. Not so with Naomi: "I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty . . . and the Almighty has afflicted me" (v. 21).

Moabite practices

Our leaving "Bethlehem" and going to "Moab" does not have to be a physical thing, as in Naomi's case, where it's easy

to see you have left. You can be consistently attending the church fellowship but still be in Moab.

Moab is essentially the violation of God's standards as revealed in His Word, thus leaving His presence. Moabite practices might be sowing discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19; 18:8), being at ease and not evangelizing (Matthew 28:19, 20), Sabbath-breaking (Isaiah 56:2; 58:13), or committing works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), to name a few. Simply put, Moabite practices prove that we are failing to love and obey God with a whole heart.

Back to Bethel

As it was in the days of Ruth, it can be said again that God has given His people bread. God is calling us back to Bethel, His house of bread — to the truth of His Word, authentic fellowship,

thanksgiving, a standard of righteousness. He is calling backsliders to repentance and sinners to salvation.

In many ways, God's church is a type of Bethel, where the nourishing truth of His Word is available. With the call from God's heart for His people to unite (although we are diverse) and heed the mandate to evangelize, what decision will you make? To do nothing is still to have made a decision. To do it "my way," as Frank Sinatra sang, is never the way to guidance, favor, and provision. Rather, we should strive to do it God's way.

Returning requires a change. It is both an act and a process that often takes time, especially when it affects many people. Often sensitive, change needs to be carefully managed so as not to defeat the purpose of returning in the first place, which is to honor God and conduct church life according to kingdom principles.

Roadblocks to returning

A number of things can prevent us from returning, like conflicting doctrines and practices, unforgiveness, and a stubborn heart that is not surrendered to the lordship of Christ.

We can be fearful and embarrassed, not wanting to be perceived as weak and going back on the many vows we once took rashly against persons and groups. People often utter their "I will never this or that." When faced with God's Word and the entreaties of the Holy Spirit, will we still refuse to bow to God's standards?

We can also struggle to return due to a crisis of new identity,

picked up because we were so long in Moab. There we practiced the things that did not please God, and now we are unwilling to break the Moabite addictions. Or we may succumb to the addictive quality of the transient pleasures of sin for a season, lack a kingdom perspective, suffer from an inflated ego, and feel that we are losing something having to relinquish leadership status.

Steps to returning

So how do we return from Moab to where we ought to be?

First, we must acknowledge where we have departed from the precepts of God, repent of our wrongdoing, and make a commitment to totally obey God no matter the cost. We must pray, fast, and follow the Holy Spirit's lead. Most importantly, we must remember the Ezra prin-

ciple of seeking God for the right way (Ezra 8:21).

We must be proactive in reengaging with individuals and congregations that have separated, and adhere to God's truth and godly protocols of church fellowship. In short, we must return with all our mind, soul, and body.

Let us all be like Naomi, having the courage to repent, return, and accomplish the purpose of God. "So Naomi returned" (Ruth 1:22). Will you? **BA**

Dr. Donna Sherwood, formerly from Jamaica, now lives in London, England, and attends CoG7 Hackney. She



works in alternative education in special schools and is co-director of Eagles' Wings Organization, UK.

For Those Who Remained

- Be humble and gracious. "There but for the grace of God go I" aptly captures our proclivity to sin.
- Be forgiving, loving, and welcoming. Offer a fresh start to those who return, without prejudice.
- Be receptive to the contribution of the spiritual gifts and talents of all.
- Don't be satisfied with mediocrity. Allow yourself to be challenged with fresh thoughts and new approaches. Always strive to be more like Jesus and to enhance His church. Many are longing to see the standards of God as the only organizational *modus operandi* among His people.
- Refuse to engage in gossip and in widening the "in the know" circle. Before you repeat a matter and the weaknesses of those who returned, ask yourself: Will it edify? Will it damage anyone's reputation? Will it bring God glory? Will it make the reintegration process easier for those who return?

— Dr. Donna Sherwood

What Newer Scriptures

Trace the Bible's testimony to this crucial question: How do the two main sections of the

The Old Testament, also called the Hebrew Bible, consists of the 39 books from Genesis to Malachi, all written before the coming of Christ into the world. About these Scriptures . . .

Jesus and the Gospels say

- “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17, 18).
- Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. . . . “things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. . . . “Thus it is written . . .” (Luke 24:27, 44-46).
- “You search the Scriptures . . . and these are they which testify of Me. . . . For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:39, 46, 47).

Acts and the Epistles say

- These [Bereans] were more fair-minded . . . in that they . . . searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (Acts 17:11).
- Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Romans 15:4; see also 1 Corinthians 10:11).

- For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart (2 Corinthians 3:14, 15).
- All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16; see also 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. . . (Hebrews 1:1, 2a).
- But the word of the Lord endures forever (1 Peter 1:25).

Summary

Jesus and His apostles are consistently positive toward the Hebrew Scriptures, seeing them as God's oracles delivered to Israel yet still inspired and profitable to the church. A lone exception is 2 Corinthians 3:14-16, where Paul says that the Old Testament read through Jewish lenses can blind one to the gospel — until that veil is taken away in Christ.

Overall, New Testament statements about the Old insist on a relation of harmony and continuity between them. The Old Testament is God's Word, but not His final Word. It must always be read and understood in the greater light of Christ and the New Testament gospel. Let us distinguish between the two halves of Scripture, but never fully separate them.

Say About the Older

one Book link up? Texts selected and summarized by the Editor. Feedback welcome.

Now let's turn to what the New Testament says about the old covenant — not the same as Old Testament. Old covenant is that formal treaty between God and Israel established through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19ff).

About old covenant, the New Testament says

- For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).
- “By Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” . . . “Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 13:39; 15:10).
- But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious . . . how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? (2 Corinthians 3:7, 8).
- Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman . . . which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar . . . in bondage with her children — but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. . . . Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. . . . not children of the bondwoman but of the free (Galatians 4:22, 24-26, 28, 31).
- There is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness . . . for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope . . . Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant. . . . He has obtained a more excellent ministry

. . . He is also Mediator of a better covenant . . . established on better promises. . . . In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. . . . He takes away the first that He may establish the second (Hebrews 7:18, 19, 22; 8:6, 13; 10:9b).

- For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire [Mt. Sinai] . . . But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven . . . to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel (Hebrews 12:18, 22-24).

Summary

Jesus and His apostles hold Moses and the law high for their enduring principles of grace, faith, and morality. However, the old covenant, as a legal bond between God and His people, has reached its end. The old has lost its power to condemn one who is justified by God's grace through faith in Christ (Matthew 26:28).

Further, the main corpus of Moses' law (i.e., the Levitical system with its tabernacle, priests, sacrifices, festivals, and rituals) has no authority over God's people in Christ. We may learn from all types and shadows, whose reality is in the new covenant. But we are free from the need to include Mosaic practices in our Christian faith merely because we find them in the old covenant.

Better Bible Reading

When I was seventeen, my Dad remarked at what a quick reader I was. I took that as a compliment! I would lightly read an article, get the basic gist, and move on.

Dad, meanwhile, seemed to take ten times longer to read the same article. I didn't realize it then, but his method of reading and study was so much more effective than mine.

The problem of surface reading as opposed to in-depth understanding exists primarily, I think, because today's online culture makes it so much harder to read and digest this wealth of information that's right at our fingertips — on our mobile phones, tablets, and computers. My phone is always buzzing and chiming with the latest notifications. Some days it never seems to stop ringing.

Everywhere I drive, there are signs and billboards vying for my attention. As a result, we tend to superficially “graze,” even when it comes to the things that matter, such as God's Word.

Over the years and quite by accident, I've discovered one or two pointers that can actually help us retain more information from things we read that really matter. I found that by reading something aloud, I was able to retain and recall it more easily. I'm not sure why it works, but it does.

The converse also seems to work: to listen to a friend read a passage of Scripture out loud. The voice and intonation give the passage a new, fresh flavor that often provides me with additional insight.

I suppose that's why I've always liked Scripture reading as an integral part of church services, a practice that actually dates right back to early days in the synagogue (see Luke 4:16, 17; Acts 13:14, 15) and in those fledgling first century house churches.

Now we often spend our time in the Scriptures as in other areas of our lives. We're in a rush. Life is busy. And our time with God's Word is downsized to small, appetizer-sized “bytes.”

Reading aloud might initially feel a bit awkward if you've never tried it. But after a little practice, you'll find your natural tempo and voice, and you may be pleasantly surprised at how edifying it is.

I suppose it's all about quality reading, not how fast one reads. Kudos to my Dad!

— John Klassek



Post-it® Notes on Suffering

continued from page 5

Pain relief go-to text

In thirty minutes or less, we can read I Peter, the Bible's epistle on suffering. And we should. It says:

- Christ suffered for us; this is His atonement for us now and will be our glory to come (1:1-11, 18, 19; 2:21-24; 3:18; 4:1; 5:1).
 - We follow Him by suffering for the right. This is the Spirit's fruit of longsuffering in us (2:18-21; 3:8-17; 4:1, 2, 12-19; 5:6-10).
- To immerse ourselves in Peter's first epistle is to grasp the redemptive value of suffering. One who suffers patiently what a Christian in good faith cannot avoid is shown to be a noble follower of Jesus. Our suffering can never achieve the awesome benefits that Christ's suffering and sacrifice gained, but ours is still worthy in God's economy. Count on it. Cast all your care and misery on Him (5:7).

Suffering saints

- Old prophets: Think weeping Jeremiah, praying Daniel, and others. Read James 5:10; Hebrews 11:32-40.
- New apostles: Think Paul, Peter, and others who suffered martyrs deaths. Read Matthew 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; 9:16; 14:22b.
- Job, the super-sufferer: Think the loss of all earthly goods (his livestock), the death of every son and daughter, the painful boils from head to toe, the "curse God" uttered by his spouse, and the unmerciful critique of friends. Read Job 1:20-22; 2:10b.

Now read the sidebar on page 5, and remember our Suffering Servant and Savior Jesus, who said, "I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord . . . fear not them which kill the body . . . he that loses his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:16-39).

For reflection and discussion

- The Bible treats suffering in a way that refutes the popular health-and-wealth gospel.
- It is inevitable that faithful, zealous followers of Christ will suffer, as did their Master.
- There is something noble about suffering for doing right. Thank God for the privilege.
- The pattern of biblical discipleship is first the suffering, then the glory.
- Patience (longsuffering) in tribulation is a clear mark of Christlikeness.
- Instead of "Why me?" questions when we suffer, we should ponder the "Why Him?" question about Christ.

In Christian vernacular, *suffering* is a halfway house in the three-fold curse of sin, suffering, and death. It begins when we are born and doesn't stop until we die. If childbirth and life mean difficult labor and suffering (Genesis 3:16-19), then death means rest and peace for the sufferer.

- Suffering, then, is not only a result of sin but also an effective antidote and the ultimate cure for it — Christ's suffering for us on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). **BA**

Sabbath, Then and Now

continued from page 11

"tradition of the elders." Jesus faced down such rabbinic interpretation of the law: "Laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do . . . All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition" (Mark 7:8, 9).

Jesus and His disciples were censored by the Pharisees for dining with the non-religious, for healing on Sabbath, for not fasting, for asking a healed man to carry his bedroll. In their ardent desire to protect Sabbath (neglect had resulted in national exile), religious leaders had boxed it round with restrictions not commanded by God: "They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4).

Sabbath, then, is a joyous time for fellowship and spiritual instruction, restricted only by the written Word and not bound by unnecessary tradition. Each Christian, independently and informed by God's Word, must determine how he or she observes the Sabbath. **BA**

James McBride, from Lincolnshire, England, edits *New Horizon* magazine of the Churches of God Outreach Ministries (Tulsa, OK). He and his wife, Sarah, married 48 years, have four children.





Mail Bag

Soul relief

Dr. Mary' article ["Are You Spiritual Enough?" September-October '12, p. 8] provided soul relief. I would love to get clarification on what should be our attitude toward the Church's corporate standard in light of this question: "Who's grading anyway? Christ or church members?" The fact that we do not advocate rigid doctrinal tenets should be kept in view.

*I. B. F.
Nigeria*

In my world, believers who cannot offer a testimony from the pulpit have been condemned as being unspiritual, though they may have other qualities that endear them to people outside the church. In some congregations, believers who indulge in incoherent talk or shouting in the name of "speaking in tongues" have been highly praised as "spiritual," though they rate poorly in other areas of Christian life.

Some super-righteous brethren evidently believe that others who cannot preach, teach, and sing for religious gatherings are not right with God. They criminalize and demonize them in sermons and slowly edge them out of the church. No wonder our congregations suffer from the "small church syndrome"!

From now on, I no longer need to be haunted by "feelings of inferiority," which, according to Dr. Mary, "often come from either unbiblical expectations of holier-than-thou brethren or from unrealistic, unnecessary expectations we place upon ourselves." I very much admired the article.

*N. M.
Kenya*



Temple and timing

Has anyone thought that maybe this is the temple that should have been built when Israel came back from Babylonian captivity ["Rethinking the Temple," November-December '12, p. 11]? Why wasn't it built? Read Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai for the answer.

I've heard so many scenarios of prophecy that I decided it's best to be ready for the return of Yahshua, because we know not the day nor hour ["Q & A," p. 13]. When? Only God knows.

*B. S.
Pinehurst, TX*

Feel the love

I was totally pleased to see the subject of love [January-February '13]. Hopefully . . . people may see their true faults and change their ways. When you are truly reborn, your spirit is a babe in Christ. The only way you can reach spiritual maturity is to study and be a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25).

*T. C.
Dustin, OK*

Sleeth and Sabbath

Ten decades ago, my husband's great-grandfather, T. J. Marrs, picked up a BA magazine on a bus. He studied it, then told his fam-

ily, "We're keeping the wrong day." If someone found this [current] BA and read the article by Michael Sleeth ["Finding Your 24/6 Rhythm in a 24/7 World," p. 12], could they learn the whole truth about God's holy Sabbath being the seventh day of the week, Saturday, versus Sunday, the day most Christians view as the day of rest? They may learn that God intended us to rest one day in seven.

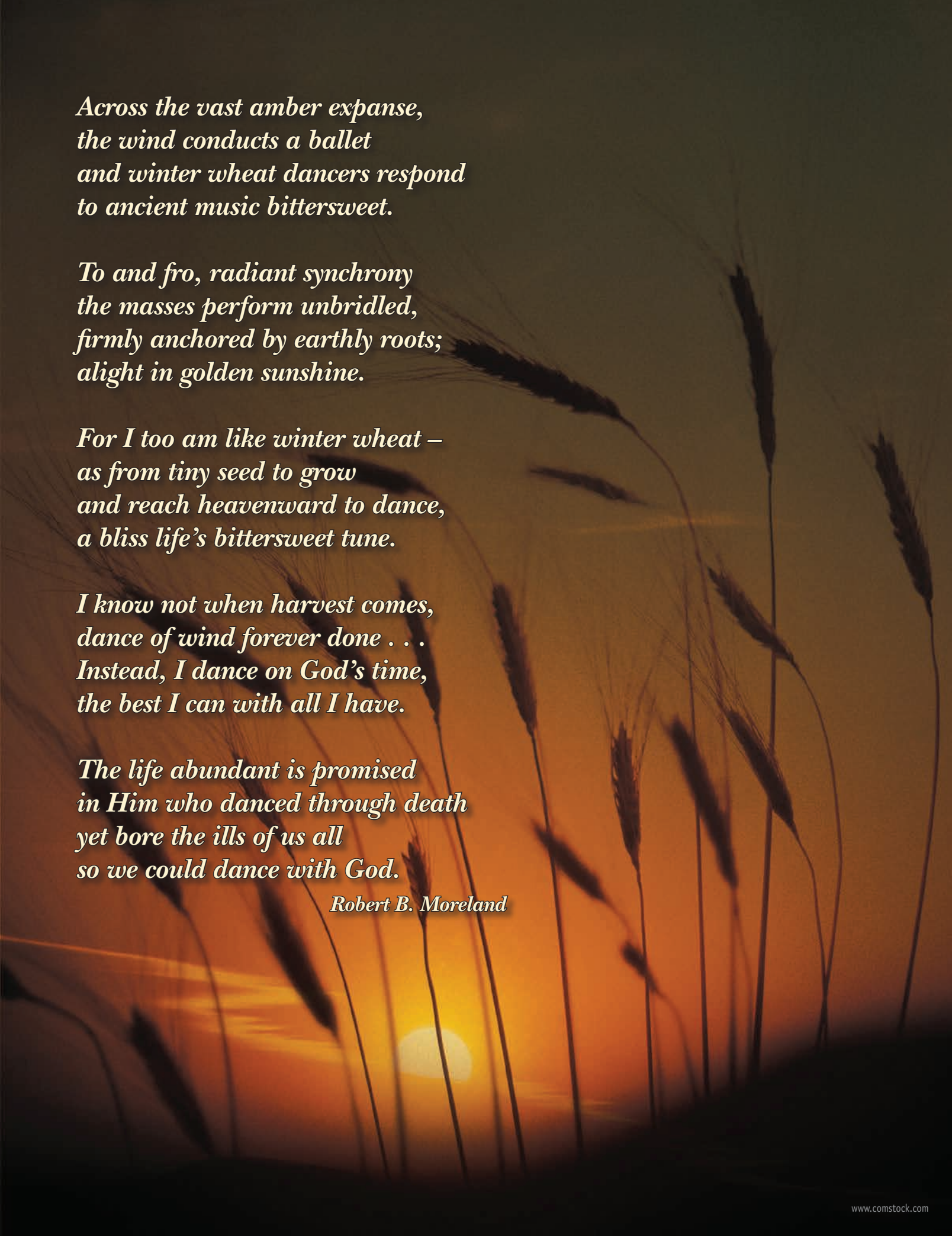
Stopping our work just any day of the week is called a vacation. We are free to worship God any day or all seven, but to worship Him on Monday doesn't make it God's Sabbath. God made the seventh day holy, and we can't change that. I read a lot of other fellow Christ-followers' writings and benefit from their knowledge of the Word, but I don't think we should publish their writings in the BA because they don't uphold our church's doctrines.

*M. M.
Owasso, OK*

Lukewarm?

For over twenty years I've been a BA reader and often found it a useful tool in keeping me sharp in the things of God. However, in the last decade or so I've noticed a . . . decline in topics forthrightly designed to strengthen and encourage the people of God to grow in grace and knowledge, let alone the deep things of God. Articles give the sense of reluctance to broach spiritual matters, except on a superficial level and so as to avoid ruffling the feathers of those who might disagree. . . . The BA has become a lukewarm shadow of its former self, seemingly content to remain on spiritually safe grounds.

*R. L.
West Valley City, UT*



*Across the vast amber expanse,
the wind conducts a ballet
and winter wheat dancers respond
to ancient music bittersweet.*

*To and fro, radiant synchrony
the masses perform unbridled,
firmly anchored by earthly roots;
alight in golden sunshine.*

*For I too am like winter wheat –
as from tiny seed to grow
and reach heavenward to dance,
a bliss life's bittersweet tune.*

*I know not when harvest comes,
dance of wind forever done . . .
Instead, I dance on God's time,
the best I can with all I have.*

*The life abundant is promised
in Him who danced through death
yet bore the ills of us all
so we could dance with God.*

Robert B. Moreland



Those who give \$5 or more per month (\$60 per year) help BA add new readers and keep it coming to many who can't pay. You may give by credit card, electronic funds transfer, bi-monthly or annual check. Call 303-452-7973 or mail your check to Editor's Circle, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

E. C. Breakfast: On Thursday morning, July 4, you are invited to breakfast with the Editor and other Bible Advocate Press staff. Just check that meal option when you register for convention.



Our History

Enos Easton, first BA (*Hope of Israel*) editor, served in 1863. In the 150 years since, 31 men have occupied the Editor's chair.

Publications Emphasis

Keith Michalak, Director



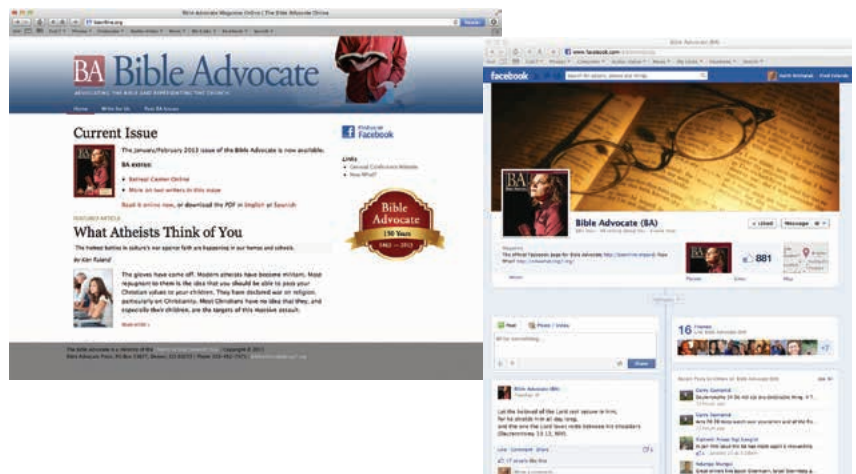
Announcing! A Church-wide sesquicentennial celebration of the BA magazine Friday morning, July 5, 2013, at CoG7's convention in Omaha, Nebraska (see p. 32). This event will track 150 years of changing technology, personal dedication, and expanding horizons since the first *Hope of Israel* was printed.

Changing technology: From the labor-intensive, inky equipment of 1863, the BA has witnessed a steady stream of progress in print media, none of it more challenging than the digital revolution now upon us. Have you experienced Facebook and *BA Online*?

Personal dedication: More than any other single factor, BA has survived and thrived this long because of people – readers, writers, and givers who have known enough of Christ's grace and truth to pass it on. Thank God for staying power among His people!

Expanding horizons: From the first 42 copies mailed to a few of the United States, the BA has found its way (by God's grace) into over half the nations of the world. It is single-handedly responsible for CoG7's presence in some countries and, supplemented by other BAP literature, largely responsible for its acceptance and growth in others.

We hope to see you on July 5 in Omaha. Until then, thanks for your support! Please visit baonline.org.



Pioneer Missionary Training

Pioneer Missionary Training Level One (or PMT1) has completed its thirteenth trip to Mexico. The 16-member team of 2012 met in Guadalajara, Jalisco, on December 20 for classroom work, field training, and real-life practice.

Ministers Juan Mario Delgado, Erick de la Garza, and Isaac Santiago of Guadalajara led this team. Other locals, young and old, participated as the team ministered in a children's hospital, cleaned a residential street, served an evangelistic campaign, offered social services, and worked in the Mexican Church's Grupos Familiares program.

Being so close to people in their physical and spiritual needs has made me rethink my Christian life – only the beginning. Thanks to all who made this experience possible and to all who shared it shoulder-to-shoulder.

– Arely Realyvasquez
El Paso, TX

My goal is to share everything I learned in Guadalajara with my church, practice it, and not let obstacles define us– transform difficulty to impact others, like when we cleaned the streets. PMT's fellowship, learning and growing together with Christ's love, is indescribable.

– Jasmine Lucero
Dallas, TX



Top (L to R): Dan Strunk (Eugene, OR), Larry Davis (Tecumseh, OK), Mary Wallace (Eugene, OR), Abigail Wallace (Eugene, OR), Kayla Henry (Philadelphia, PA), Jasmine Lucero (Dallas, TX), Karina Muffley (Nampa, ID), Arely Medina (Veracruz, VER), Armando Gonzalez (Cuernavaca, MOR).

Center: Edrei Moreno (Monterrey, NL).

Bottom (L to R): Raul Salas (Guadalajara, JL), Ben Romo (Dallas, TX), Arely Realyvasquez (El Paso, TX), Holly Sheffield (Meridian, ID), Karla Zavala (Nayarit), and team leader Martha Molina-Muffley (Nampa, ID).

What is Pioneer Missionary Training? pmt1.org

PMT1 is a short-term mission trip to Mexico offering a first-hand introduction to foreign missions. Participants work closely with churches and youth from the host country. These ten-day trips usually take place during Winter Break time (late December).

PMT2 expands on the PMT1 experience with a more intensive mission to another foreign field. These are announced as plans for the next trip are underway.

PMT has sparked fires of missionary zeal for many. It's a first step to see how you relate to

the international mission field in our church!

How much is a PMT trip, and how do you sign up? PMT1 costs \$400 for the various expenses to host the team in Mexico, plus a mandatory \$65 medical insurance fee. Travel costs are also the responsibility of the participant, and a passport is required. To apply, contact one of the following:

Kurt Lang: youth@cog7.org

Christy Lang: sword@cog7.org

Monico Muffley: pastormonico@juno.com

For links to PMT's newsletter and Facebook photo page, visit baonline.org.



Tired of fishing? Jesus invited His disciples to “come apart and rest awhile.” Still Waters Prairie Retreat, Alfred, ND, invites CoG7 ministers (anyone in leadership) to come for a weekend or a week, to be refreshed and rejuvenated for service. “We’re here and available — focused on pastors and their families,” say Cathy and Terry Schlenker, who with Karol and Brad Ciavarella, operate the retreat center from two spacious facilities. Yes, the lake above is just a few steps outside the door. To schedule a getaway, call Schlenkers at 701-489-3583 or Ciavarellas at 605-999-9456.

Lord, Make Us One

Annual Prayer Initiative

March 16-23, 2013
Eight Days to Pray for Spiritual Unity!

Calendar of Events

- March 9 - Pacific Northwest Super Sabbath at Jefferson Baptist Church, Oregon
- March 15-17 - Alumni Weekend Event at Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI
- March 24 - Annual Lord’s Supper in every church, Sunday after sunset
- March 25-31 - SHINE team in Haiti . . . please pray!
- April 6 - Western Canada Super Sabbath, hosted by Acme, Alberta church, featuring Conference Tour
- April 13 - Regional Super Sabbath, hosted by Lanham, MD church (301-351-5057; hebervega@gmail.com)

- May 25-26 – Graduation weekend at Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI
- June 9-16 – Dover Family Camp at Camp Cimarron, near Kingfisher, OK; contact jerad.ullrich@yahoo.com; 918-864-5589
- July 1-6 - General Conference Convention at Hilton’s CenturyLink Center in Omaha, NE; see back cover for more

Conference Tour 2012–2013

Unity in the Spirit

| | |
|----------|-------------------------|
| March 9 | Jefferson, Oregon |
| April 6 | Acme, Alberta |
| April 13 | Dallas, Texas |
| May 4 | Kansas City, Missouri |
| June 1 | Alfred, North Dakota |
| June 8 | Los Angeles, California |



Seeing the fun at homecoming last fall, why not join us for SVA Alumni Weekend, March 15-17? Call 989-725-2391 to learn more. Hope to see you on campus!

National Youth Ministry

National Youth Ministry requests all youth groups to register in 2013. This helps us communicate and serve you better. Registered groups receive registration cards, a drawstring sport-pack (with our new logo!), subscriptions to *Youth Flash* e-newsletter, text communications, and event discounts. Register your group at youth.cog7.org/register, or use the form in Gimme Five materials.

Gimme Five. This resource gives groups an excellent way to grow a balanced youth ministry. Loaded with info, it assists local workers in building meaningful relationships in ministry and in meeting the five purposes of the Church.

National Youth Week / Hunger Lock-In. April 12-14, 2013, are suggested dates for this weekend of growth and service, but groups can participate anytime through June 30.

National Youth Week offers youth leadership experience in a Sabbath service. The 24-hour famine takes the focus off our blessings onto blessing others.

Hunger Lock-In helps churches in a foreign missions project. If all groups sent \$50 or more, we'd provide a huge blessing to a worthy cause. Help us meet the challenge!

Questions? Contact Kurt Lang, National Youth director, at youth@cog7.org. Information packets, event calendar, and more about the NYM are available at youth.cog7.org.

LifeSpring Emphasis

by Amber Riggs



LifeSpring School of Ministry's inaugural graduation ceremony will be held Thursday morning, July 4, 2013, at the Church's General Conference Convention in Omaha, Nebraska (see p. 32). This event will honor the 50-plus graduates who earned diplomas or certificates between 2008 and 2013.

Following the July 4 LifeSpring general session and graduation ceremony, a LifeSpring luncheon will serve as a reception for graduates, their families, and friends.

amber.riggs@lifespringschool.org | www.LifeSpringSchool.org
P. O. Box 33677 | Denver, CO 80233





@ Pariwattip—Dreamstime.com

International Congress

Special IMC Sabbath on June 29, 2013

Purposes: To unite the world Church in celebration and prayer for growth in Christ’s grace and truth; to provide IMC information in every CoG7 congregation, country, and world zone; to give opportunity for brethren around the world to express their support for the International Congress.

Plans: Hear reports from IMC president and executive committee; pray for the congress and for requests it sends; receive Change for Your World offering for the IMC and send that amount, to the national CoG7 office, which will send it on to the IMC treasurer in Tijuana, Mexico.

International notes

Annual reports from each country, due to IMC President Ramon Ruiz by March 31: ramonruiz@hotmail.com.

Africa’s convention: December 18-22, 2013, in Rivers State, Nigeria. Contact robertashcrawford@hotmail.com.



Peru. *Baptismal candidates in Lima, Peru, where Ruben Cruz serves as a Cristo Viene missionary.*

Guyana. *The congregation in Linden receives a new projector, courtesy of G. C. Missions. Bishop Terry Slowe made the presentation during a recent visit there.*

Nigeria. *Cristo Viene missionary Robert Crawford (in white), shown here with national CoG7 leaders, recently served the large church in Nigeria for six weeks.*

India. *New shoes for a group of boys in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India. These and hundreds of other youngsters in several countries receive support from the Widows and Orphans fund of G. C. Missions.*



PERU



GUYANA



NIGERIA



INDIA



Discernment

Two forces are at work in the world: God's truth and Satan's lie. We see this as early as Genesis 3 — God's Word versus Satan's — with warnings against distortion of truth sprinkled throughout Scripture: Satan's subtlety and craftiness, heresies, deceiving spirits, doctrines of demons, false knowledge, and empty philosophies (1 Timothy 4:1, 2; 6:20).

Parallel to this scriptural thread is the call to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, to grow in wisdom and understanding, and to increase in knowledge of Him (Colossians 1:9, 10). Spiritual understanding is seeing with our heart, hearing with our soul. The charge against God's people in both testaments is "hearing, but never understanding . . . ever seeing, but never perceiving" (Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:13, 14, NIV).

Knowledge is most valuable when combined with wisdom — the right application of it. The height of folly is having knowledge, yet making bad choices. The fall of man is the result of his own choice; life is the result of the choices we make. Our goal should be to rightly apply knowledge as the driving force behind our choices and actions.

The word used in Scripture for knowing what to do in a given situation, for doing what "[seems] good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28, NIV), is *discernment*: "But solid food belongs to those . . . who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14, NKJV). When it loses its ability to discern, the Church sits on the brink of spiritual ruin. More dangerous than persecution without is undiscerned distortion within. We must fill our pulpits with trained preachers; the Bible in the hands of novices hurts the body of Christ. Equally important, we must fill our pews with believers whose spiritual senses are trained to discern.

This is critical in view of the cultural mindset infiltrating the church. Post-modernism (a reaction to traditional worldviews) and relativism (the notion of no objective truth) put new spins on categories like right and wrong, good and bad, and gender difference, asserting the right of each person to decide his own truth.

We loathe such philosophies in the culture but fail to recognize them at church. The Bible leaves no room for relativism. There's one God and one way to God. That truth is a person — Jesus. As subjective as this sounds to the relativist, what we believe about Jesus determines our eternal destiny.

When doctrinal clarity wanes, when a desire for unity trumps the Bible, when it becomes inappropriate (or uncomfortable) to rebuke sinful behavior, and when truth hangs in the balance over open Bibles, post-modernism and relativism lurk at the door of our church — yea, they sit in the center pews!

So Paul admonishes, "Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22). In essence, we must seriously heed (not make light of) God's declared will, carefully analyzing all things spiritual, discerning spirits, separating truth from error, shunning evil, embracing the good.

This is discernment, the church's critical need. The key is developing deep people — believers in passionate pursuit of God's heart through His Word, senses trained in the school of the Spirit.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*
General Conference
President





CoG7 Convention 2013

- July 1-6 in Omaha, Nebraska.
- Theme: *Unity in the Spirit*.
- Amazing Omaha may be Mid-America's best surprise!
- Hilton CenturyLink Center. For \$89 room rate, go to cog7.org/convention/ or call 402-998-4215 and use our group name: General Conference Church of God (Seventh Day).

