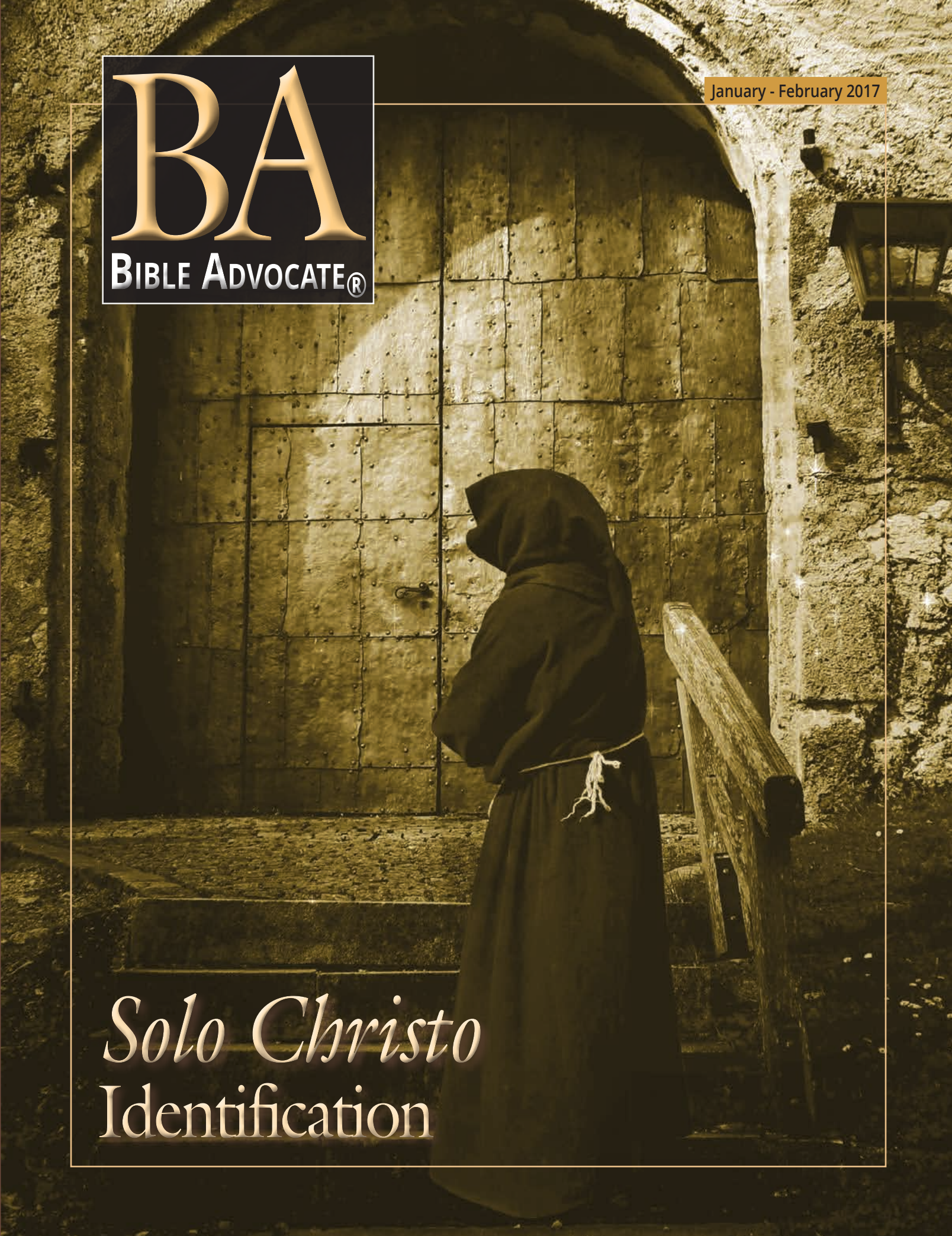


January - February 2017

BA
BIBLE ADVOCATE®

Solo Christo
Identification





2017: Reforming-Transforming



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Reform - Transform

Welcome to 2017! A new year means a new theme and new questions: What kind of church are we? What kind of church do we want to be? The *Bible Advocate* will explore these questions with the help of not one, but two broad themes conjoining for Christians and the Church of God (Seventh Day) this year.

First, we look backward. The word *reform* refers to the Protestant Reformation, which celebrates its five-hundredth anniversary this year. When Martin Luther nailed his “95 Theses” to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517, he had no idea his reforming challenge would change the world. In six BA issues this year we reflect on six enduring core truths from that critical era: *Solo Christo, Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia, Sola Ecclesia, Sola Caritas*.

Examining the fundamentals of Christ, Scripture, Faith, Grace, Church, and Love fits naturally with the second word of our theme. *Transform* points to the future with “Transforming Vision into Reality” – the General Conference’s mission emphasis for 2017. Alongside the central *solas*, we’ll look deeply at our ten-point vision for a Vibrant 21st Century Church. You can find all ten on page 23. I summarize them here as our true desire to be a Christ-centered, Grace-oriented, Sabbath-celebrating church.

Our “Reforming - Transforming” theme is a challenge to become the church God calls us to be, the church we already are in Him. To be transformed, stand ready to be reformed. “Always reforming” is an old cry we make our own because we crave to be “conformed to the image of His Son” (Romans 8:29).

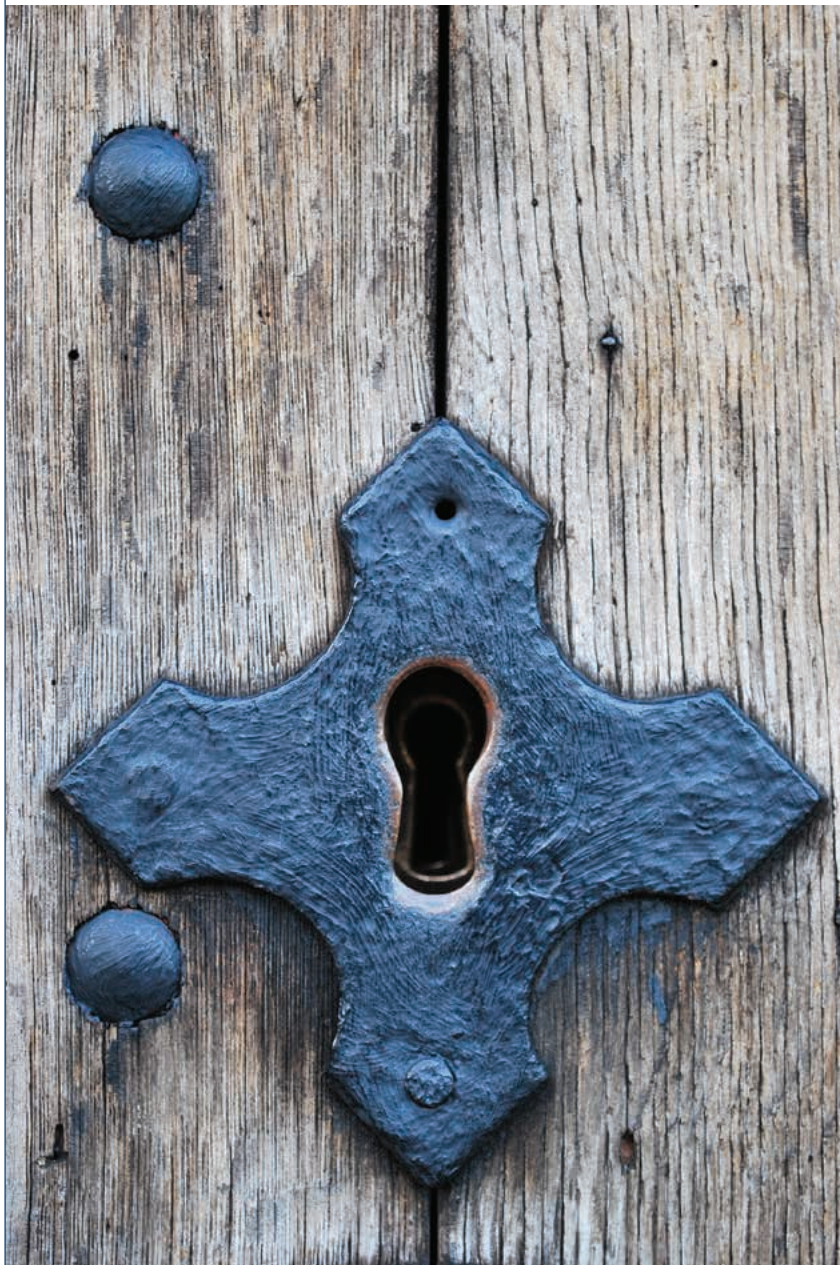
Our quest begins with this issue’s focus on the ground of faith – the One the Reformation sought chiefly to recover and our means of transformation: *solo Christo!* Christ alone! We look to the King, again, for identity and destiny in a world decaying in division. Like the reforming reigns of kings Hezekiah and Josiah that transformed Israel’s experience of God with new Passover celebrations (2 Chronicles 30, 35), we look to Jesus our Passover Lamb, slain for fresh renewal (1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 13:8).

We ask, “What kind of church do we want to be?” Let us begin again with *Solo Christo* – the new, ancient, and everlasting hope of all (Hebrews 13:8).

– Jason Overman



Christ Alone



Remembering the heart
of the gospel and of the
Reformation message.

by John Lemley

The phrase *Christ alone* is at the center of the well-known declaration of the sixteenth century Reformers. They based their teachings on God's justification of those who come to Him by His sovereign grace alone, through faith alone, grounded in Christ alone, for His glory alone.¹

Another phrase the Reformers emphasized was *Scripture alone*. They insisted that Scripture stood as God's singular, objective revelation and that it alone clearly taught the uniqueness and primacy of Jesus, our only Savior.

The good news of Scripture is the good news of Jesus!

Only true Redeemer

The New Testament's witness to the truth of God's justification in Christ alone is widespread. Notice the definite article *the* (emphasized) in just these three sample passages:

Jesus said to him, "I am *the* way, *the* truth, and *the* life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

"By *the* name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. . . . Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10, 12).

For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

The life, the name, the Christ: It is *Jesus* alone. Salvation is found in no other.

The law of Moses does not qualify as our redeemer. In his sermon in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), Paul first summarized Israel's history up to John the Baptist, Jesus' forerunner. Next, Paul turned personal: "to you the word of this salvation has been sent" (v. 26). After telling of Jesus' trial, crucifixion, death, and resurrection, he proclaimed, "And we declare to you glad tidings — that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus" (vv. 32, 33). Paul quoted three scriptures that foretold of Jesus' resurrection (Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 55:3; Psalm 16:10), then declared, "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (vv. 38, 39).

Paul is adamant: The works of the law do not qualify for justifying an unjust person. Only faith in Jesus Christ can (Galatians 2:16a).

Good news battle

The battle to keep the good news the good news has kept God's people alert in every generation. A number of church history books in my library tell a

similar story. Within one hundred fifty years after Jesus' sacrifice, other "justifiers" were added. Despite Jesus and the apostles' clear teaching, the doctrine of *Christ alone* has been challenged, ignored, ridiculed, and rejected. Penance, pilgrimages, gifts to the church, vows, and rules were added. Humanity's additions served to place burdens and restrictions upon the people that God never intended. Fears and superstitions troubled the hearts of millions. Threatening the loss

Bible that led him to trust in Christ alone for his salvation."²

Humanity needs more than reviving the good within. Those without Christ are not in a deep coma from which they need to be awakened. Their condition is much worse. The only solution is to be made alive, and the only way to this life is through Jesus: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth:

“The good news of Scripture is the good news of Jesus!”

of salvation for non-compliance, anathemas gave weight to church creeds and council decisions. The confidence and joy of first century Christians in the finished work of Christ alone was tragically replaced by a list that failed to satisfy the hearts of men and women searching for peace with God.

Martin Luther was among those so affected:

Between 1515 and 1519 . . . he found the peace of soul that he had not been able to find in rites, acts of asceticism, or in the famous *German Theology* of the mystics. . . . A reading of Romans 1:17 convinced him that only faith in Christ could make one just before God. . . . it was his study of the

And He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. . . . Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:15, 17).

Bible example

John 8 begins with the well-known story of the scribes and Pharisees who brought an adulterous woman to Jesus but ended up being convicted by their own conscience and leaving (v. 9). Jesus asked, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned

you?” (v. 10). Then He told her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (v. 11).

The story ends. We are not told what happened to the woman. Did she obey Jesus and live from then on free from sin and its condemnation? I suspect she did because of the next story in this chapter.

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (v. 12). The Pharisees used a familiar ploy: Change the subject and question the credentials of

leaders’ refusal to submit is dramatic. Often those who know, by personal experience, the exceeding darkness of sin yearn for someone or something to rescue them. They may not know how to word their inner longing, but when they learn about Jesus, they recognize that He is the one they were eagerly searching for.

Jesus, the light of the world, is the only solution for those living in darkness. But too often people who have been religious all their lives, as the Pharisees in this chapter were, reject Jesus’ offer to be uncondemned. They focus

Jesus gave two choices: darkness or light. Living in a gray world is not an option. Failure to choose light automatically leaves one in darkness.

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

Christ alone. No one else; no other way. The solution to being dead in sin is not found in therapy sessions, counseling, self-help books, gradual withdrawal, or any philosophy or religion. Life – real life – is reserved for those who have said “yes” to God through His Son Jesus Christ. Christ alone is the light of the world. This was the primary message of Jesus and the disciples.

The truth was revived five hundred years ago during the Protestant Reformation. The delight of this truth shines fresh each time one dead in sin and living in darkness is transformed by the light of Christ alone. **BA**

“Jesus gave two choices:
darkness or light. Living in a
gray world is not an option.”

the speaker. Jesus played their game for a while. They tried again to change the subject by asking, “Where is Your Father?” (v. 19). Jesus touched on their question, then quickly got back on subject: “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come” (v. 21). He did not let their next attempt derail the discussion. He proclaimed, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (v. 24).

If this scenario is correct – that the woman allowed Jesus’ words to rescue her from darkness and enter His light – then the contrast with the religious

instead on extraneous questions and diversions.

Two options

In Acts 26 Paul gave his defense of faith to King Agrippa. He recounted the commission Jesus gave him years earlier while traveling to Damascus:

“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (vv. 17, 18).

John Lemley and his wife, Lois, live in Vancouver, WA, and have four grown children. They attend the CoG7 in Kalama, WA.



1. Stephen Wellum, *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (Winter 2015).
2. Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 282.



Identify Yourself

by **Grace Carpenter**

Republican or Democrat? Conservative or liberal? Cubs or Dodgers? Seahawks or Cowboys? There are countless ways to identify oneself. And though we may not be an actual player on a favorite sports team, we still identify with it, exulting, “We won!”

A stunning moment for viewers of the 2016 Olympic Games came when two members of the US men’s synchronized diving team pronounced their identification in Christ on national television. For them, that identity supersedes any earthly accomplishments, and demonstrates the true meaning of their lives.

Three of the ways Christians identify with Christ are through His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). This trilogy of events symbolizes the radical change from “old man” to “new man” that offers reprieve from a godless life and renewal of true holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Some believers have been physically crucified with Christ or laid their lives down in other ways as martyrs. However, when the apostle Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ,” he meant he had given up all hold on his earthly life in obedience to his Lord. He had put his self to death to make room for Christ’s self (Galatians 2:20). Being wholly committed to following after Christ results in a “living sacrifice,” evolving on the altar to think, act, and be more like Him (Romans 12:1). The aim of this evolution is love. Christ died for us because of love, and we die to self because of love for Him. Reveling in one’s sacrifices is not dying to self. A quiet, humble, genuine love draws others to the crucified Christ.

Burial followed Christ’s crucifixion. In the same way, our old self is buried after it is crucified.

Though unseen, it is changing from a decaying, corruptible self to an incorruptible new creation, as a caterpillar hidden in a chrysalis transforms into a beautiful butterfly. Immersion baptism, with the body submerging below the surface of the water, symbolizes this identification with our Lord’s burial (Romans 6:4).

If we continue to be carnally minded, we stay dead and buried. But the good news is that when we choose to be spiritually minded, we are infused with life (8:6). Just as Christ was raised from the dead, so God also raised His followers to new life (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 2:4-6). We identify with Christ when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:5-11). Our lives gain eternal significance as our minds are renewed to see the world-view of Jesus Christ.

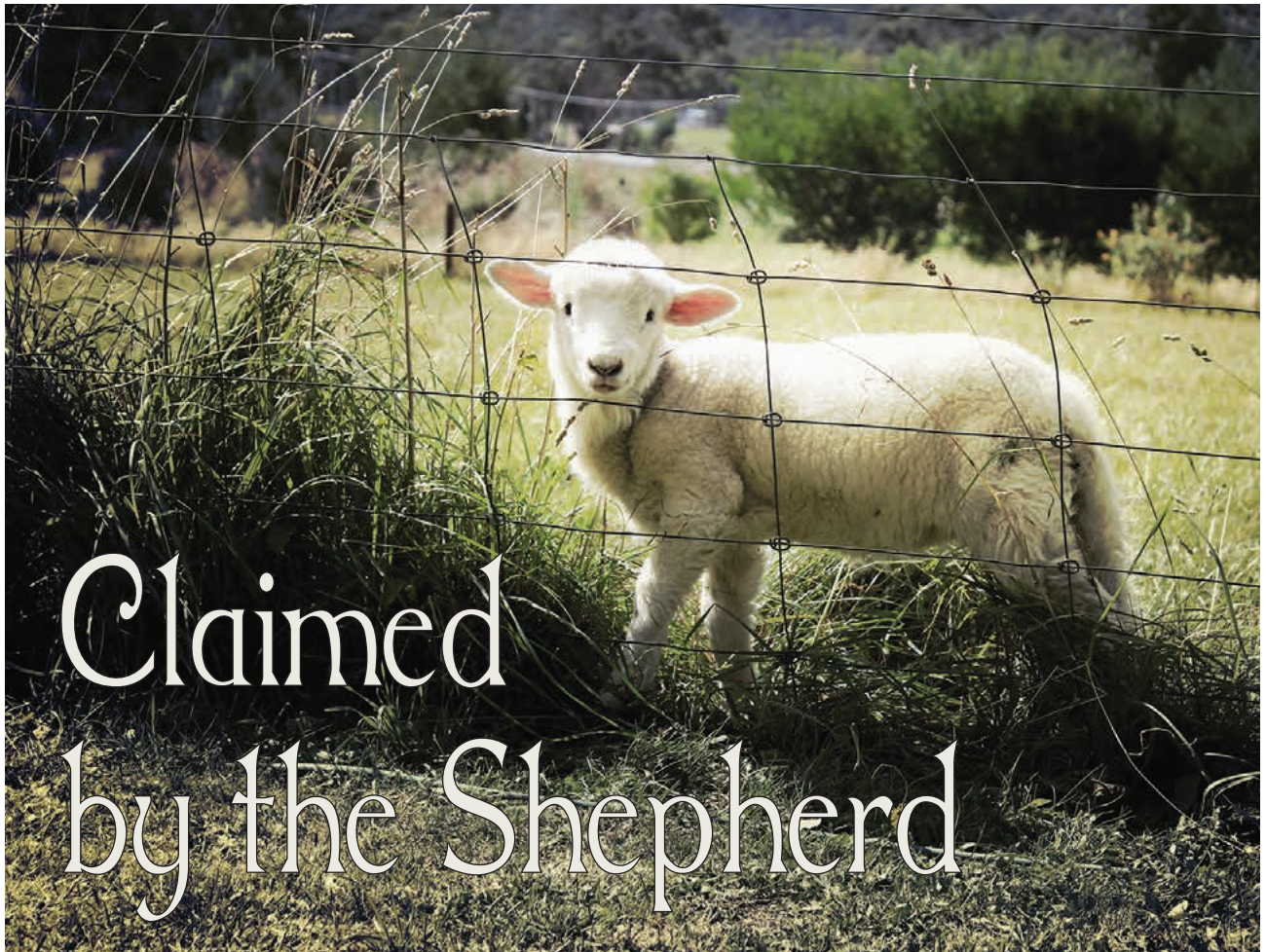
This heart transformation raises us above the competitive, hierarchical society of earth into His kingdom of peace and justice. We are raised to new life now, and God will raise us up at the last day to live forever with Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Just the fact that we are given eternal life identifies us with Christ because He is eternal (John 10:28).

Our identification with Christ first comes through the crucifixion and burial of the old self, followed by the growth of a new, imperishable life raised by God’s grace. Because of this, we “sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

Yes, we can have the best seats at stadiums or arenas, the most prestigious seats at town hall meetings or in chambers of government. But nothing compares to a seat in Christ Jesus! His seat is above all and redefines the rest. May we identify ourselves in Christ alone! **BA**

Grace Carpenter lives in Covina, CA, and serves the Ontario CoG7 as a deacon.





Claimed by the Shepherd

How Jesus' identity
determines our own.
by **Krpasha Govindasamy**

I am a veterinary epidemiologist. I wake up at 4 a.m. and plod barefoot through my morning routine: Put kettle on, switch off outside lights, let Bernie (my baby Saint Bernard) in for a cuddle, make coffee, help Bernie onto the bed, climb back into bed, drink coffee, read Bible verse, and then mull over the day to come.

It's still dark. I wait for the birds to start chattering and the

sun to peep over the neighbor's wall. Finally, the light reaches my cheek, and I know it is time to get up, shower, change, drive to work, and tackle the day.

I am a veterinary epidemiologist, a public servant of the provincial government. I work with data and with the people responsible for collecting it. Recently I have dealt with a lot of lazy, inefficient people who are not doing their job, which inevitably impacts the quality of my data. I have tried everything: read management books, leadership books, team-building books; I have spoken to people, praying that God would make them better. But nothing helped.

Protective Shepherd

4:30 a.m. Bernie is snoring on the bed. I am tired — emotionally, mentally, and physically drained. It feels as if someone has pulled the plug out of my heart, and all my compassion has gurgled down the drain.

I sip my coffee and read John 10:11-15. Jesus is explaining to the people that He is the Good Shepherd. I have read this verse many times over the years. I replay the image of the hired hand bolting away from the wolf to save himself, versus the picture of Jesus guarding the petrified lambs, wresting the wolf that viciously tears at His robe and rips His flesh. Finally, He retaliates, and the wolf's lifeless body lies

in the dirt. This piece of Scripture has always made me admire the courage and strength of Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus teaches us who He is with seven strange "I AM" statements: "I am the bread of life" (6:35); "I am the light of the world" (8:12); "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7); "I am the good shepherd" (10:11); "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6); "I am the true vine" (15:1).

My life would have been immensely easier had John recorded Jesus as saying, "I am a veterinary epidemiologist."

Loving Shepherd

7:00 a.m. I kick off the duvet, rush through the routine, and find myself on the road to work. Traffic is crazy and people are impatient, rude, and reckless. I'm not calm. I'm annoyed with every person on the road and every person at work and maybe every person in the world.

"Why can't people just do what they are supposed to do?" I wonder out loud. It's such a pointless, frustrating question, so I decide to think about something else. I think about Jesus being the Good Shepherd. Normally, I would imagine Him with strong, sunburnt arms tackling the big bad wolf. But on this morning it strikes me that Jesus' job was to love and take care of the sheep. *God's job is to love us! God's job is to love exactly those people I am irritated with.*

I start crying. I have always known that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." But for some reason, it never occurred to me that

this is Jesus' full-time occupation in the way that I understand occupation and career. It is an awful feeling to realize that I have not allowed Jesus to express His heart and will. I didn't let Jesus do His job – to be the Good Shepherd in my workplace.

Epiphany

I really like Jesus; it is impossible to not like Him. But I am well aware that He is perfect and I am not. It is impossible to be Him, and to be honest, I find it almost impossible to even be *like* Him. But it is possible and necessary in my day-to-day life to give Jesus the space to be Himself. Discovering who Jesus is, is an

and who He is thinking of today. This is who He wants to be with.

I thought of Jesus walking to Calvary beneath the weight of the cross He was to hang on, all for the very people I labeled as lazy, useless, and not worth their salary, and I cried. How else does one deal with such a truth as Jesus?

New worth

Shortly after that epiphany, I recalled my dad once chasing me away because he was busy working. I was about five years old at the time. I grew up believing love came your way only if you worked hard for it. If I did not work hard enough or the work wasn't good enough, then I

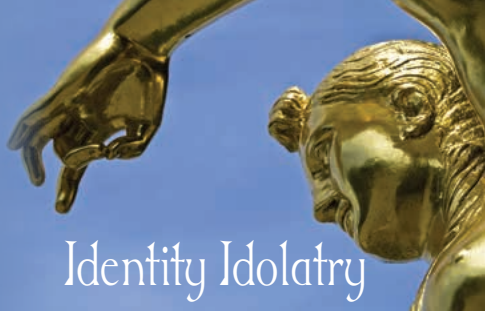
“It is impossible to be Jesus, but it's possible to give Jesus the space to be Himself.”

ongoing revelation for me. He has to teach me slowly, because if I had to really grasp the whole of who He is in one sitting, I would evaporate.

That encounter was a few weeks ago. It changed my entire paradigm of how I think of my co-workers and people on the road. *This is His flock*, I tell myself. *This is who He is growing, who He died for. This is who He is extending mercy and grace to*

was not worth loving. I accepted this belief and got on with life.

Everything I have ever thought, felt, and done has somehow been influenced by my underlying identity of being not worthy of love. This identity was so deeply entrenched that I never thought to address it. The truth is, there was no possible way to do so without the existence of a completely new identity – not a new identity for me but of the



Identity Idolatry

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3, KJV).

What is idolatry, other than a life disordered, with creation above the Creator? It is God’s will to locate our identity in Him, but the first commandment is a perennial stumbling block because sin seeks to create its own identity. It resists submission and invests in little gods of its own making and interest.

This is why Paul conflates the first and tenth commandments in Colossians 3:5: “covetousness . . . is idolatry.” What we covet leads to what we identify with and ultimately worship. Paul thus urges the church to set its affection on things above (Creator), rather than on things below (creation, vv. 1, 2).

What things do we tend to elevate above God? Paul’s list isn’t so different from the identity politics wracking our world today. The national, racial, political, and economic categories we venerate, and by which we view and judge all, Paul sharply relativizes because “Christ is all, and in all” (v. 11).

If any one of these identity idols orders our lives, rather than the Christ of faith, we are idolaters. But if we are renewed according to His image (v. 10), God is exalted and the rest is understood and ordered in Him.

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21).

— Jason Overman

one I defined myself by: my dad. I believed work was more important than me because that’s what my dad believed, and I believed my dad. I believed *in* my dad.

But there is no escaping the Good Shepherd! Though I was so busy feeling His amazing love for all the people around me, I honestly didn’t think to reconsider *myself* in the light of His being a professional Good Shepherd. So I had to swallow a hard truth: *I am His lamb. I am the one He is growing, who He died for. I am the one He is extending mercy and grace to and is thinking of today. I am who He wants to be with.*

I believe *in* Jesus. He is so sensible that it is nearly impossible to not believe *in* Him. It is harder to believe Jesus.

Who I am to Him

“I love you” are the hardest words to accept from Jesus’ mouth. But these three words redefine a human being. Out of the mustard seed of this simple truth, *abandoned* is transformed into *adopted*, *orphan* into *daughter* or *son*, *alone* into *one of the flock*, *forsaken* into *beloved bride*, and *the world* into *kingdom of heaven*.

Jesus is extraordinary. I can never be Him; I can only let Him be who He is. For this to happen, I must allow Him to have His say about who I am to Him. I have to choose between who He says I am and who I have believed myself to be. I have to choose between who He says people are and who I have believed people to be. This is the mind-boggling

challenge we constantly face when hanging around Jesus.

New perspective

I was a veterinary epidemiologist a couple of days ago. Today I am a happy little lamb, doing veterinary epidemiology in the shadow of the Good Shepherd. I still get up at 4 a.m., put the kettle on, open the door for Bernie, make my coffee, read my Bible, shower, change, go to work, and work the best I can.

“Jesus is extraordinary. I must allow Him to have His say about who I am to Him.”

But when I look at people, I don’t see them as their job descriptions anymore. I see them as sheep who are hunted by wolves every day and are loved by my Good Shepherd. **BA**

Krpasha Govindasamy writes from Pretoria, South Africa.



Questions & Answers



Does Church of God (Seventh Day) consider itself part of the Protestant Reformation? If so, in what ways?

Rather than claiming an exclusive role in Christian history, the Church of God (Seventh Day) affirms its kinship with all true believers — those who hold the faith of Jesus Christ and endeavor to keep the commandments of God (Revelation 12:17; 14:12). This is the spiritual body of Christ and biblical church of God, known only to Him (2 Timothy 2:19).

Theologically speaking, CoG7 finds its roots in the early church that recognized the Hebrew Scriptures, produced the Christian Scriptures, and generated the Apostles' Creed, that early confession of the fundamental gospel truth:

I believe in God the Father Almighty;
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord;
Who was by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;
Under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried;
The third day He rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father;
From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
And [I believe] in the Holy Ghost;
The holy Church;
The forgiveness of sins;
[And] the resurrection of the body.¹

Historically speaking, CoG7 identifies with the Protestant Reformation movement of the 16th century — much more closely than with the Roman Church against which the Reformers protested. Our theological roots find common

cause with many views held by Peter Waldo (of the Waldensians), by John Wycliffe and William Tyndale (champions of the Scripture for everyone), by Martin Luther and John Calvin (German and Swiss reformers), and by Menno Simons (Anabaptist reformer) — fallible men though they were.

We share a common conviction for the Reformation principles of *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone as our authority in matters of faith and practice); *sola gracia*; *solo Cristo*; *sola fide* (salvation by God's grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone). In this sense, yes, we do consider ourselves to be heirs of the Protestant Reformation that erupted 500 years ago this year.

Organizationally speaking, CoG7 is nearly 160 years old. Our beginning in the late 1850s was among the followers of William Miller, who appeared amid Baptists, Methodists, and other Protestants in the early 1840s. The Miller-led adventist movement was punctuated by a Great Disappointment in 1844, when Christ did not return as predicted, and soon thereafter by the introduction (by a Seventh Day Baptist woman) of seventh-day Sabbath observance among remaining adventist believers.

Now, 2,000 years after Jesus' first coming, 500 years after a much-needed reformation within Christendom, and 160 years after further reforms among God's people, CoG7 continues to pursue the light and fullness of Christ's grace and truth wherever it leads (John 1:14).

— Elder Calvin Burrell

1. Fourth century version: Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume II, 536.



How the Name above all names holds the Bible together.

by Jonathon Hicks

Something is always lost in translation. That is a sickening axiom to all who have a sacred book in their non-native tongue. But because it is true, we are forced to translate in imaginative ways in order to benefit the reader most. Whether you read a word-for-word or a thought-for-thought translation of the Bible, you will sense one common tactic that translators utilize to help overcome the negative effects of translation: *transliteration*, the practice of typing the original word phonetically into the translation's alphabet. The most important example of this is *Christ*, from ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ (*Christos*) in the Greek.

However, if we're not careful, we might assume that the word *Christ* is an English word and that we can drag its contemporary usage onto the original. If we do this, we will misread *Christ* in its

530-plus occurrences in the New Testament. To mitigate that possibility, join me in discovering the meaning of ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ in its first century Jewish context.

Defining Christ

Let's begin by stating the modern English definition of *Christ*. Google says as a noun, it means "the title, also treated as a name, given to Jesus of Nazareth." This points toward the first century Christian usage but does not capture it. Although *Christ* was not used as a title or a name, it had components of both. *Christ* was used as an honorific, meaning it carried strong connotations of a position, much like a title, and it referred to a specific person, like a name.

This becomes incredibly important when we realize that the discussion is about much more than grammatical jargon (title,

name, or honorific). It is actually about how we interpret the Bible. If we believe that *Christ* is merely a name, then we imply that the Christ was not the Messiah, anticipated by first century Jews. In the same way, if we say that *Christ* is just a title, then we might imply that *Christ* can also refer to someone other than Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, if we say *Christ* is a name, we remove its Old Testament connotations and promise. And if we say *Christ* is a title, we remove its New Testament denotations and fulfillment.¹ To capitulate to either of these two flattened views of *Christ* is to neglect the biblical witness as a whole. This, in turn, tramples our perception of how Jesus was *the Christ*. We must appeal to the whole scriptural witness in order to gain a full perspective of Jesus himself.

Christ literally means “the anointed one” and is the Greek translation of מָשִׁיחַ (Messiah). When Peter declares that Jesus is the Christ in Mark 8:29, he is saying that Jesus is the expected anointed one. And even though there were three classes of anointed persons in ancient Jewish culture (prophets, priests, and kings), it was the king who came to predominantly bear the weight of *the Messiah, the Christ*.² The reason for this is found in the history of ancient Israel.

More than a name

According to Genesis, God created a good creation and set humanity to reign over it (Genesis 1:26-30). Their task was a royal one, but when they chose to rule by their own rules — knowing good and evil apart from God — their Creator ejected

them from His Eden (Genesis 3). Death began to reign instead of humanity, and God desired to reverse this by again blessing humanity as He did in Genesis 1:28.

This blessing came through the calling of one man and his family. God said to Abram:

“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (12:2, 3).

Through the nation of Israel, Abram’s descendants, God promised to reinstate humans to their ruling function. This is what “blessing” means in Genesis 12. It is a reversal of Genesis 3.

But Israel refused to follow God. They were trapped in the same sin that began with Adam and Eve, and they wanted to worship God in their way instead of God’s way. Starting in Exodus 32, the Israelites pled, “Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us” (v. 1). A few verses later they got their wish and held an idola-

trous festival that they claimed was to YHWH (vv. 4-6).

For hundreds of years, the people persisted in their idolatry, serving other gods rather than the true God who wanted to bless them and all the nations through them. They treated one another in whatever manner they wanted (Judges 21:25).

Finally, God worked through the people’s impure desires and gave them leadership in the form of a king (1 Samuel 8). The people at last had stability and guidance. Their second king received favor from God, apparently opening a new period in Israelite his-

“ We must appeal to the whole scriptural witness in order to gain a full perspective of Jesus himself. ”

tory. Maybe with a good enough king, the people would follow God again. However, David’s son Solomon reverted to idolatry, and the nation followed suit.

From this point forward, the nation was locked in the grip of idolatry, but we hear a persistent longing for a king like David to rule forever. Isaiah spoke of it in chapter 11, Zechariah proclaimed it in chapter 9, and the psalmist prayed for it in chapter 72 with these words: “Give the king your justice, O God . . . May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the

sun. May all nations be blessed in him; may they pronounce him happy" (vv. 1, 17).

Notice in these words the blessings to all nations are centralized on this single character. The whole Abrahamic promise now hinged on this one forever King who will rule Israel in such a way as to make them bless all nations. Once the Abrahamic promise is fulfilled, blessings will flow, and humanity can return to their God-ordained task of stewarding God's creation as rulers.

All this history and eager ex-

of the Christ, or any human, as ruling without that sacrificial love. So as the good news spread that the Christ had come and reversed the Fall, this imperative accompanied it: "Turn back from your autonomous leadership, turn back from your idolatry, turn back from your sin, and find your new life in Jesus the Christ." This is at least part of the meaning of "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ . . ." in Acts 2:38.

Even after people followed that admonition, Jesus' redefini-

“Jesus’ horrific self-giving death at Golgotha redefined the meaning of Christ.”

pectation are intrinsic to these words: *anointed one*, *Messiah*, and *Christ*. Thus, when Peter says, "You are the Christ," he declares that in Jesus the world is being put right and God is bringing creation back to a pre-Fall position.

More than a title

Peter's "You are the Christ" also assigns Jesus more than a title because *Christ* possesses its meaning only when lived out by Jesus himself. Jesus' horrific self-giving death at Golgotha redefined the meaning of *Christ*. No follower of Jesus could think

tion of ruling was persistently brought before these converts. Because God reversed humanity's rebellion through Jesus' obedient and humble death for the world, those in Him need to take on His mindset of self-giving (Philippians 2:4-8). And because Jesus was exalted to the highest position (Lord), *Christ* is further redefined as a servant-king who waits for promotion from God (2:9-11). Through His death and exaltation — His resurrection and ascension — Jesus has caused *Christ* to denote Him fulfilling the expectations of the Christ uniquely.

Christ an honorific

The Christ fulfills the Abrahamic covenant, brings blessings on all nations, and restores humanity to their position as stewards of God's creation. Jesus Christ accomplished this through His sacrificial death for all of humanity's sin. Because of this, *Christ* is an honorific, and both Testaments are tightly bound in its over 530 New Testament usages.

This applies to the Christian in two ways. The first is obvious. When you read that transliteration *Christ*, understand in it the whole of biblical witness, then see your interpretation of text blossom into fullness. Second, find yourself in Christ Jesus with all its Old Testament connotations and New Testament redefinitions. Discover afresh that you are a child of Abraham, with all its stories, purposes, and expectations.

But never forget that this story has been transformed in its very fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

BA

Jonathon Hicks and his wife, Danielle, pastor the CoG7 in Lodi, CA. Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.



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1. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 824.
 2. James Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* - Pillar New Testament Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 249.

Recognizing and renouncing
racism in the church.

by Jael Hamilton

I grew up in a low-income, inner city area in Houston, Texas, and my high school mainly consisted of African-American and Hispanic students. In that building, the young girls avoided a certain staircase where many of the African-American boys lingered.

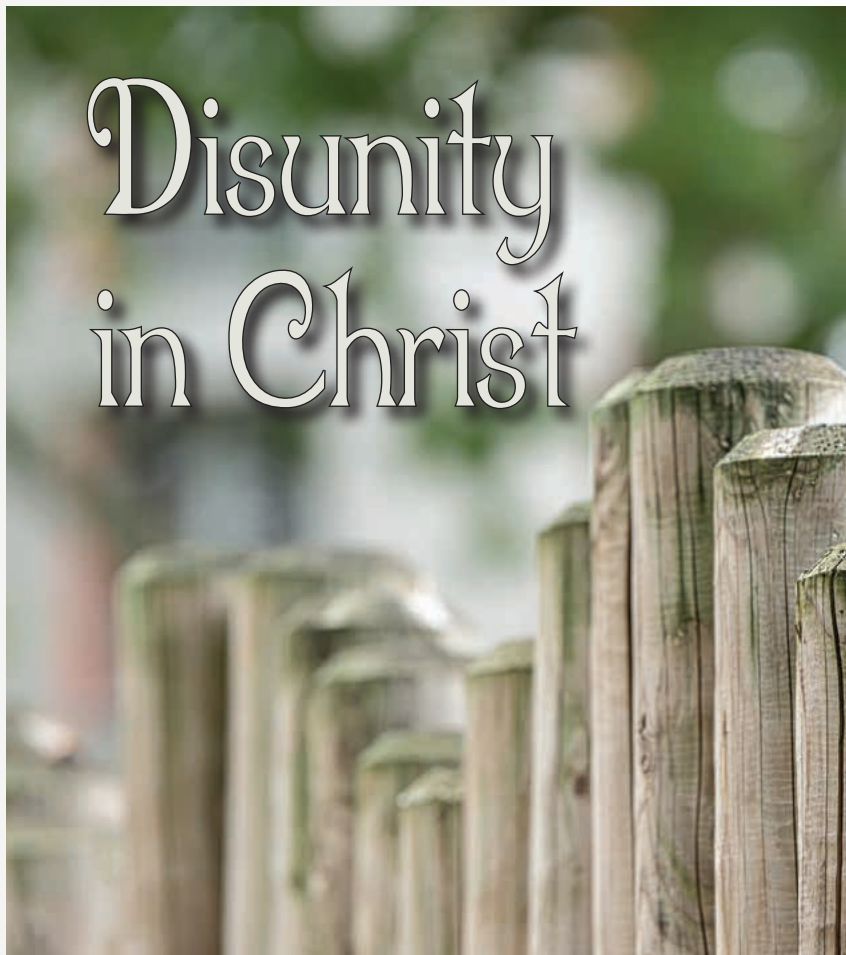
One day when running late to class, I took that stairwell to avoid being tardy. In doing so, I was aggressively catcalled and groped. In fear, I walked out of there as fast as I could.

That year, my mom and sister went to a nearby school to register for summer classes. As they walked to the building from the parking lot, two African-American men violently tried to snatch their purses. Mom refused to let go of hers, and the robber struck her in the face, knocking her down.

These events shaped my view of African-American men and made me afraid of them. Because of that fear, I avoided them. My husband (an Anglo-American) constantly confronted me (a Mexican-American) about my racial profiling and avoidance, but I dismissed my responses as just being honest. It wasn't until about five years ago that I recognized I was being unjust.

Beyond color

The CoG7 church I attend in Galena Park, Texas, is a diverse community of believers. Our services consist of people from



many races and cultures. When I started working in youth ministry there, I found myself in charge of students of various races, and my love for them grew, as it does with all the youth placed in my care.

I noticed I did not view anyone based on race or color but simply as my beloved lambs. Because pastoral work is about care and concern for a group of individuals, I began building relationships with my students. Through this ministry, through true love in relationship, God blessed me to see beyond color.

Recently I came across a book by Dr. Christena Cleveland called *Disunity in Christ* in which she discusses the racial divide in the church, and it really hit home

with me. Dr. Cleveland asks, "What if there were no *them* in the body of Christ?"¹ This was a strong challenge and chastisement for me. It helped me recognize how my past circumstances shaped my views.

What was Paul seeing in the first century church that compelled him as well to write about disunity across ethnic, gender, and class lines? "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The divide was quite large. However, Paul understood that the message of Christ was for everyone who believes. Tim

continued on page 27

Dawn's Early Lights

by Whaid Rose

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12).

We are linked to the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation by our commitment to Christ and Scripture alone. A better understanding of Reformation history can enhance our appreciation for the movement that forever changed the landscape of Christianity.

For the same reason a jeweler displays a diamond against a dark surface, so the beauty of the Reformation is best seen against the backdrop of darkness that fell upon the Christian church during the Middle Ages. The light of the gospel was almost extinguished by the corruption and abuses of Roman Catholicism, the basis for the words that have come to be known as the Reformation's motto: *post tenebras lux* — Latin for "after darkness, light."

But the Reformation's greater lights, like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, were preceded by earlier, lesser lights — a long line of protesters from various parts of Europe who set the stage for what eventually took place in Germany. These include men like John Wycliffe (England), who battled the established church over translating the Bible into the people's language, and John Hus (Czech Republic), who spoke out against papal authority and the evils of the Roman Church. When confronted for opposing the pope's edict for the sale of indulgences, Hus responded, "Let it be understood that I call apostolic orders the teachings of the Apostles of Christ. When the pope's orders are in agreement with these I am ready to listen to them: when they are contrary I refuse to obey them even if you were to kindle before my very eyes the fire in which my body was to be burned."¹ Hus' martyrdom in 1415 — the same

year Wycliffe was declared a heretic by the Council of Constance — sparked a revolution giving rise to a sect called the Hussites, and led to the Bohemian revival, one of the forerunners to Luther's efforts.

Others' lights include John of Wesel (western Germany), Wessel Gansfort (Netherlands), and Girolamo Savonarola (Italy). Savonarola's understanding of grace and the gospel, informed by his Augustinian background, not only set him in conflict with Pope Alexander VI (by whose edict he was burned at the stake in 1498) but also distinguished him as one of the bright lights during the Reformation's early dawn.

Just as the sky's lesser lights merely reflect the light of the sun, so the Reformation's lights merely reflected the light of the Son, the only source of true light: Jesus Christ. *Solo Christo* therefore became the ultimate battle cry of the Reformation, affirming that salvation is by "Christ alone"! Discovering this truth set Luther's heart free and led him to nail his "95 Theses" to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517. This sparked the Protestant Reformation, the most significant development in Christendom's history.

Today we still need the Reformation. Each generation of the church lives with the real danger that the gospel could once again plunge into darkness. The twenty-first century church faces a new milieu of darkness marked by a diminishing passion for Christ and His authority over His church. Celebrating the Reformation's five-hundredth birthday should therefore be more than about appreciating its legacy. It should be occasion to renew and transform our passion for Christ, causing the glorious light of the gospel to pierce the present darkness, sounding a fresh crescendo of *solo Christo*!

1. Stuart Garver, quoted by Charles Swindoll in *Can One Person Make a Difference?* (Insight for Living, 1994), 5.

By Night When Others Soundly Slept

By night when others soundly slept
And hath at once both ease and Rest,
My waking eyes were open kept
And so to lie I found it best.

I sought him whom my Soul did Love,
With tears I sought him earnestly.
He bow'd his ear down from Above.
In vain I did not seek or cry.

My hungry Soul he fill'd with Good;
He in his Bottle put my tears,
My smarting wounds washt in his blood,
And banisht thence my Doubts and fears.

What to my Saviour shall I give
Who freely hath done this for me?
I'll serve him here whilst I shall live
And Loue* him to Eternity.

Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

* Old English for Love.



Stained glass window, St. Botolph's Church,
Boston, Lincolnshire, England



Follow the

■ [Vibrant leadership]

by Israel Steinmetz

Are you a leader? If you think of leadership only as a rare spiritual gift (Romans 12:6-8), you'll likely answer, "No." Certainly God calls some to a unique level of leadership in the church, and their special role deserves special honor (Ephesians 4:11, 12; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17). But what if leadership is broader than that? What if every follower of Christ is a leader?

Leadership guru John Maxwell is famous for saying that "Leadership is Influence: Nothing More, Nothing Less."¹ If you are influencing others, you are leading them. Your words and actions impact others. In the world you influence culture. At home you influence family. At work you influence fellow employees. At school you influence fellow students. And in the church you influence fellow believers. Everyone influences someone. In this sense, everyone is a leader.

The question is not whether you are a leader but what kind of leader you are. Are you intentional about how you influence others? Are you being equipped for leadership that has maximum influence for God's kingdom? Are you leading non-believers into a saving relationship with Christ? Are you leading fellow believers to use their gifts in ser-

vice to the mission and glory of God? Ultimately, are you modeling the Jesus way of loving God and people?

The universal call to leadership started long before Christ walked the earth, and it extends into eternity. At Creation, humans were commanded to take dominion over the earth. We were created — in God's image — to rule. You were created to lead. While sin and death interrupted this holy vocation, God never changed His plan for His people to reign with Him through eternity.

In Christ we are restored to being truly human, co-regents of creation. As we discover new life in Christ, we rediscover, and begin to live out, our created purpose: reigning with Christ. This reign is not like the self-serving monarchies or petty politics so familiar to us, but the gracious, sacrificial rule of God aimed at human flourishing and loving perfection. Jesus calls all His followers to this kind of leadership — a nation of priests and rulers.²

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' repeated call to "Follow Me" is characterized by becoming "fishers of men" (4:18-22) and a radical self-sacrifice (16:24, 25; 19:21-26) that prioritizes Christ above everything (8:18-22). When we follow Jesus in this missional, servant-hearted, God-centered manner, we cannot help but influence those around

Leader

us. As 18th century evangelist John Wesley often said, “Get on fire for God and men will come and watch you burn.”

Jesus was speaking to everyday people when He called them the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world.” He said that as we follow Him, the world will take notice and glorify God (5:13-16). Writing to Titus, Paul speaks of the same influence over unbelievers. The simple act of living a godly life in the home, workplace, and society has the power to keep God’s Word and the believer above reproach and make the gospel beautiful to a watching world (Titus 2:11-15). In Ephesians 5:1, 2, Paul calls believers to imitate God like beloved children, walking in love as Christ did. In the following verses he highlights the power of a godly life to influence an evil world, fellow believers, marriages, families, and workplaces. The church is a united body made up of people with various gifts and ministries (1 Corinthians 12). The health of the body depends on every part doing its part (Ephesians 4), highlighting the influence each of us has within the church. We’re called to be leaders in the world, the home, and the church.

Again, the question is not whether you are a leader. The question is, what kind of leader are you?

Christian leadership says, “Be

imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Imitating Christ means humbling ourselves in order to lovingly serve others (Mark 10:41-45; John 13:12-16; Philippians 2:1-11). It means using our influence, however great or small, to shine the light of Christ into a dark world. Everyone who follows Christ is called to lead others to a growing knowledge of Christ.

Where is there help for this? Through Artios Christian College, which carries on the work of LifeSpring School of Ministry, Ministry Training Systems, Summit School of Theology, and Midwest Bible College. However, while we continue to provide customized training for those called to pastoral ministry, our focus has broadened. We exist to equip leaders for a Vibrant 21st Century Church. And every follower of Christ is a leader. Our calling is to make you a vibrant leader, full of God’s energy, enthusiasm, strength, and life.

There’s a sense of anticipation within the Artios Christian College family. We have a hope in Christ that allows us to see beyond physical reality to what is possible with and through Him. We’re confident not in ourselves but in the God we serve and His faithfulness in revealing Himself, His ways, and His wisdom to us. We are humbled by the realization that we can lead others only as He empowers

us to follow Him. We look for opportunities to engage others in conversations about how we can effectively influence our families, churches, communities, and workplaces to more closely reflect God’s heart.

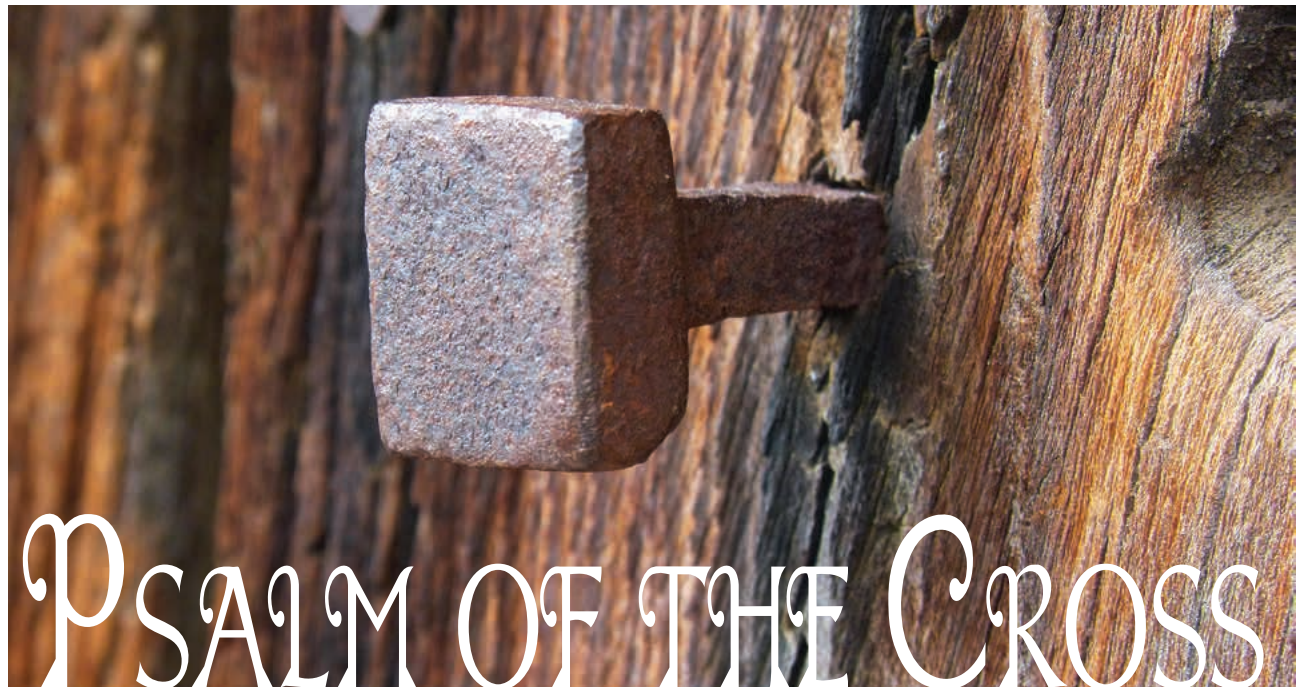
If you’re a follower of Jesus, there’s a place for you within the Artios Christian College family. Our courses are focused, flexible, and financially sustainable. They were created with you in mind. Our instructors are vibrant leaders devoted to discipleship. Our resources, available free at artiosmagazine.org, exist to equip you to become a vibrant leader.

So ask yourself, “Who will I influence today, and how will I influence them?” Following Jesus makes you a leader. Be a vibrant one. **BA**

Israel Steinmetz is dean of Academic Affairs at Artios Christian College. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



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1. John C. Maxwell, “Leadership is Influence: Nothing More, Nothing Less,” *christianitytoday.com* (July 2007). Web accessed 11-10-16.
 2. For more on this, see especially Chapter 3, “Priests and Rulers,” in N. T. Wright’s *After You Believe* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010).



PSALM OF THE CROSS

A verse-by-verse
comparison of Psalm 22
with the life of Christ.

by David Kidd

But You are He who took
Me out of the womb; You
made Me trust while on My
mother's breasts (Psalm 22:9).

Do you ever find it difficult to trust God? If so, an important key to help you is to develop a love for Him and His Word. People I've met who really love the Bible seem to trust God with great conviction.

King David, who lived about 1000 BC, was one of those people. He meditated on the Scriptures, including God's commandments, and thus wrote often of his love of and trust in God — probably more than any other writer in the Bible. Psalm 22, one of many psalms that Da-

vid wrote, fills us with the same love for God's Word and encourages trust in God himself.

But a deeper look at this psalm reveals much more. And what you find might surprise you.

Son of David

One unusual thing about Psalm 22 is that David writes it in first person, as if it's all about him. Yet the New Testament says the psalm is about Christ (John 19:23, 24; Psalm 22:18). Though unique, this is understandable when we remember that Jesus' favorite way of referring to Himself was as the son of David, having come through the family line of David.

Though Jesus is much greater, David is given special importance in the Bible. For example, Jesus is not called the son of Abraham or Moses. The tribe or house Jesus is said to come from is not the house of Abraham or Moses but the house of David. It's not the throne of Solomon

Jesus reigns from but the throne of David. Acts 15:16, 17 says Jesus came to rebuild, not the tabernacle of Abraham or Moses but the tabernacle of David. The city of Jerusalem, which pictures the heavenly city of New Jerusalem, is not the city of Moses or Abraham but the City of David.

Besides his prominence in the Bible, David's life pictured Christ's in many interesting ways. Both were born in Bethlehem. Both were shepherds (Jesus in the spiritual sense). Both were doubted and mocked by their people, brothers, and the king. However, Jesus and David were also loved by the poor and those hated by society. People in high places were jealous of them and tried to kill them. Their enemies touched neither of them without their consent. Both faced what looked like impossible odds, but they brought salvation for their nation in unexpected ways.

For example, no one thought David would bring the giant Goliath down with a single sling-

shot. Likewise, not even Christ's disciples expected Him to be resurrected and bring salvation for all through the surprising way of the cross. David is Israel's most famous and loved king; Jesus is King of kings. As such, they both suffered terrible betrayal by those close to them and experienced great pain, but they were both restored.

The similarities are many, so we can understand why David wrote Psalm 22 in the first person, while finding its deepest meaning in Jesus Christ. Despite all these similarities, Jesus thought it necessary to remind us He was much more than David's son (Matthew 22:41-46).

Prophetic psalm

Understanding the closeness of King David and Jesus will help us make sense of Psalm 22. While David writes it as if writing about himself, careful study shows the psalm is an amazing prophecy about Jesus. And seeing what God has promised and accomplished in Christ helps us love and trust Him even more.



The cry

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (22:1).

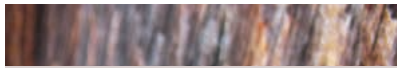
Jesus spoke these very words while suffering on the cross (Matthew 27:46).



The mockery

But I am a worm . . . A reproach of men . . . All those who see Me ridicule Me; they shoot out the lip . . . "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him" (22:6-8).

Jesus' enemies regarded and treated Him exactly this way. Luke 23:35 says, "And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.'"



Christ's background

But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God (22:9, 10).

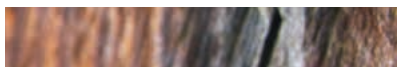
Matthew tells us how the man Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. He therefore had an incredibly close connection to God, even from conception (Matthew 1:18, 20).



The angry mob

Many bulls have surrounded Me; strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me. They gape at Me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion (22:12, 13).

When it was time for Jesus to be taken and sacrificed, He was like a helpless lamb surrounded by raging bulls or lions. Matthew writes that a great many people came after Him with swords and clubs (26:47). He also says that Jesus was surrounded by many soldiers, who mocked and beat Him (27:27-31).



Pain and piercings

I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax;

it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up . . . My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death . . . The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me (22:14-17).

As a person hangs on a cross, their bones slip out of joint. The cross is like a rack that tortures people by stretching them, making death by crucifixion one of the most painful, if not the most painful, kinds of deaths. The word we use today to describe this extreme pain is *excruciating*, linked with the word *crucifixion*. Charles Spurgeon provides more about this horrid act:

We know that the greatest . . . pain that the body can endure, is that arising from a bone out of its place . . . Now when the Lord was raised up upon the cross, and his sacred body hung in the air from the nails, all the joints began to give, so that the bones were parted one from the other so visibly that, in very truth (as David had prophesied) they might tell all his bones, and thus, throughout the whole body, he endured acute torture.¹

It's amazing David knew exactly the kind of death Jesus would die, even specifically stating Jesus' hands and feet would be pierced. Did you also notice that in verse 15 the prophet David says that *God* brought Jesus "to the dust of death"? It was God's plan to save us through His Son's sacrifice.



Sola?

Sola is Latin for “alone.”

Christ alone, faith alone: These are familiar phrases among Christians. Curiously, the Bible never joins these nouns and adjectives specifically. Search as you may, *Christ, Scripture, faith, grace* – all the famed *solae* of the Reformation – are not described as being “alone.”

This search *does* reveal one significant “alone” in the Bible. The LORD God is regularly described as such. This Only One orients all the rest.

So the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him (Deuteronomy 32:12).

You alone are the LORD (Nehemiah 9:6).

For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God (Psalm 86:10).

And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day (Isaiah 2:11).

When the Reformers reacted against religious corruption with their famous *solae*, their intention was not reductionist – not meant to confine or eliminate all else to these few. Rather, it was expansive: In Christ, through faith, with Scripture, *all* else is comprehended and finds its purpose in God.

The *solae* are core realities by which *God alone* reveals Himself as Creator and Redeemer of all. Nothing more is needed to experience His salvation.

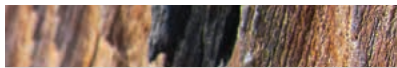
– Jason Overman



Casting lots

They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots (22:18).

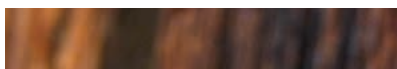
The apostles John and Matthew both write about the soldiers sharing Jesus’ clothes among themselves by casting lots.



Resurrection

Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me. I will declare Your name to My brethren . . . All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him . . . For He has not despised . . . the affliction of the afflicted . . . But when He cried to Him, He heard (22:21-24).

God raised Jesus from the dead! He heard His cries but did not save Him immediately, as He had a greater plan for us. For forty days, Jesus showed the brethren that He had been raised from the dead. Therefore, His followers praised and glorified Him. The Christian movement would have died had Christ’s followers not seen Him alive again.



Kingdom rule

All the . . . world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD’S, and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth shall eat and worship; all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him . . .

A posterity shall serve Him. . . . They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born . . . (22:27-31).

Today, in Christ’s spiritual kingdom, people from every nation worship and serve Him because of His loving sacrifice on the cross. Though much more could be said about these prophetic verses, Jesus has been raised, sits on the throne, and is seated at the right hand of God (Acts 2:29-33). Many obedient believers from all nations hope in Christ their ruler (Romans 15:8-12).

Incredible psalm

They cried to You, and were delivered; they trusted in You, and were not ashamed (22:5).

Psalm 22 was written one thousand years before Jesus’ crucifixion. Its witness to God’s faithfulness to deliver and fulfill His promises in Christ makes it a personal, reliable love letter to His people of every age.

Do you have trouble trusting God with all your mind, loving Him with all your heart? Why not take the time to study the Bible carefully? His Almighty signature is all over it. Trust Him! **BA**

David Kidd and his wife, Angella, live in Tauranga, New Zealand, where he was born and where they recently moved as part of a church-plant effort (see www.churchofgodslve.com).



1. Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, Vol. 1 (Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 343.

Did You Know?



• Five hundred years ago, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther sparked the Reformation when he nailed his “95 Theses,” opposing indulgences, to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany.

• The very first of his listed theses reads, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Matthew 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

• What were indulgences? They promised forgiveness and a shortcut through the lengthy, refining horrors of purgatory, and they were popular among the laity. Some Roman Catholic leaders sold indulgences to raise money for military campaigns and church projects, like the rebuilding of St Peter’s Basilica. A clever Catholic clergyman, Johann Tetzel, trafficked indulgences in Luther’s hometown and is said to have coined the well-known refrain “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.” Luther revolted against the idea that salvation was a commodity or that forgiveness could be bought and sold (recall Simon the Sorcerer attempting to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit from Peter in Acts 8).

• Luther’s doctrine of “justification by faith” struck at the heart of such practices as indulgences and subversively challenged the authority, finances, and theology of the Catholic Church. Pope Leo X condemned Luther as a heretic on June 15, 1520.

• However prevalent in Luther’s Germany, selling indulgences was theologically dubious even among Catholics. Pope Pius V abolished the practice in 1567.

• Martin Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” is popularly known as the “battle hymn of the Reformation.” Verse 2:

“Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God’s own choosing
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.”

Free grace promised
“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters; and you who
have no money, come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price”
(Isaiah 55:1).

Free grace performed
“But the free gift is not like the offense.
For if by the one man’s offense many
died, much more the grace of God and the
gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ,
abounded to many” (Romans 5:15). **BA**

“Transforming Vision into Reality”

Christ Centered
Spirit Formed
Bible Based
Sabbath Celebrating
Distinct Yet Inclusive
Passionate in Worship
Compassionate in Service
Engaging in Witness
United in Fellowship
Committed to
Discipleship

Sources

- www.christianpost.com/news/martin-luther-reformation-day-5-facts-148854/
- Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea* (Harper One, 2007), 37-55.



What's Going On?

Finding meaning, purpose,
and identity in our Lord
Jesus Christ.
by Jody McCoy

Who am I? Why am I here? Have these questions crossed your mind? The first concerns *meaning*, the second, *purpose*. In his Confessions, St. Augustine wrote, “Thou hast formed us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.” With His sacrifice, Jesus gave our lives meaning, and His Great Commission gives us a purpose of eternal significance. When we accept Jesus as our Savior (meaning) and Lord (pur-

pose), we know who we are and why we’re here.

Jesus is the anchor of our soul (Hebrews 6:19). Until we find Him, we’re drifting. Our souls are disconnected, and we don’t know who we are or why we’re here. This isn’t a platitude; it’s historical reality. This history takes a little time to explore, but it will help us understand the culture we live in today.

Historical context

After three hundred years of intermittent persecutions, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire (AD 380). When the Roman Empire fell (AD 476), the church provided the continuity that political powers lacked. Throughout the Middle

Ages (c. AD 500-1400), people looked to the church for their stability and security.

As the church grew in power, its reputation suffered from church leaders who abused their authority. Several attempts to reform the church from within were unsuccessful. It had grown too powerful to oppose because most believed it held the keys to the kingdom of heaven. All divine forgiveness was in its power to dispense or withhold. The church silenced its opposition and controlled its domain through threats of excommunication. Meanwhile, its corruption continued unabated.

The Middle Ages are also called the Dark Ages because people at this time were concerned more about survival than

intellectual pursuits. Remnants of better days littered the landscape: Greek philosophy, art, and architecture and Roman roads, aqueducts, and coliseums. In time, Europe regained some affluence, and it emerged from the Dark Ages into the Renaissance, the “rebirth” (1400s). Europe wanted to recapture the glory days, and it focused on the classics: Greek, Roman, and biblical literature.

By 1452, Gutenberg was printing Bibles on his press. These Bibles were too expensive for the public, but scholars like Erasmus and priests like Martin Luther could acquire them. Erasmus soon began to question unbiblical church practices. In time, Luther became aware of the sale of indulgences (selling forgiveness), and confronted the church.

Reformation

By Luther’s time, the Renaissance had opened the eyes of many to a life less controlled by the church. Furthermore, the printing press made it possible for those like Luther to communicate their ideas quicker. As a result, when Luther couldn’t get the church to reform itself, he started a reformation in the hearts and minds of the people (AD 1517).

The Reformation (1500s) was a needed reform, but it caused a century of war between Catholics and Protestants. After one hundred years of bloodshed, many saw Christianity as a ruthless, self-righteous defense of truth. They no longer equated Christianity with love and compassion. The violence, coupled with the church’s history of controlling and immoral leaders, left

many eager to reject Christianity and its “truth” altogether.

For centuries, the Bible had served as the source of Truth. In the 1600s, the rapid advance of science provided an alternate source of truth independent from the church. Science provided answers to the motion of the planets, and the universe suddenly seemed comprehensible. By the 1700s, many people had replaced the Bible with human reason as their highest authority. Auguste Comte characterized religion as superstitious and

wit and satire. Audiences roared with laughter at the expense of Christians. Other men, like Denis Diderot, compiled encyclopedias of knowledge, lacing them with articles that undermined Christian beliefs. By the time Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species* in 1859, the public was eager for a full rejection of God. They just needed a reason to justify it. The first printing of Darwin’s book sold out on its first day.

As expected, the Enlightenment thinkers also rejected the idea that we’re sinners in need

“Without God, we’re left alone to search for happiness in a meaningless life.”

backward. He believed that society matured from naïve religion to adolescent philosophy and then into adult science. Having progressed to science, society was now ready to rid itself of the dogmatic religious notions that created so much bloodshed. This was the Age of Enlightenment. Its ideas remain with us today.

Loss of meaning and purpose

The Enlightenment enjoyed its freedom from the church with playwrights like Voltaire, who ridiculed Christianity and the church’s authority through

of redemption. On the contrary, they said that man is innately good but becomes corrupted by his competitive environment. If society eliminated selfish competition, it could rid itself of evil and create utopia. This led to the twentieth century experiments of socialism and communism — utopian societies that eliminated competition.

In 1882, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote the words “God is dead . . . And we have killed him.” In his writings, Nietzsche wrote candidly about the terrifying consequences of life without God. He said without God, we have no basis for moral-



ity, and we should no longer live by a Christian morality that cares for the weak. This sounds eerily like Darwin's survival of the fittest. Nietzsche also wrote that life without God is devoid of all meaning and purpose. There is no reason for our existence, and we need to have the courage to stare into the abyss of nothingness.

Futile existence

For most, Nietzsche's philosophy was too terrifying to think about. Instead, they focused on man's innate goodness and their bright hopes of creating utopia. However, this dream of heaven on earth ended with the nightmare of the Jewish Holocaust and the haunting question it summoned: "How can man be innately good if man is capable of such debased and cruel evil?"

In 1942, Albert Camus wrote *The Myth of Sisyphus* as a way to cope with Nietzsche's life without meaning. He opens the book by saying that there is only one serious question left: suicide. If life has no meaning, why do we continue to exist? He then tells the story of Sisyphus, a mythical king condemned by the gods to push a boulder up a hill only to

have it roll back down. His fate was to do this over and over as an eternal exercise in futility. Camus concludes that the solution to our futile existence is to imagine that Sisyphus is happy. Camus' work exposes the horrifying reality of a life without God: We're left alone to search for happiness in a meaningless life. Camus and many others believed that his work reflects our reality.

Rather than recoil from Camus' reality, our culture is convinced that no true meaning or purpose exists. It no longer asks, "Who am I?" or "Why am I here?" It no longer seeks answers, just happiness. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that man is condemned to be free. No meaning exists but the meaning we create for ourselves. This is largely where our secular culture is today. People create temporary meaning for themselves as they pour themselves into their self-interests: money, status, sports, music, arts, and so on. These moments provide superficial contentment, but the only enduring feeling is the emptiness inside. As a result, we talk about the pursuit of happiness rather than its attainment. Happiness always feels elusive and ephemeral.

Source of meaning and purpose

Looking back on history, it's sad to realize that the church itself caused so many to turn away from Christianity. Whenever we decouple truth from love, we cause great harm. Our secular culture has no moral anchor. It survives only on the ghost of a Christian morality it no longer believes. As the apparition fades, disorientation sets in. Society's sense of identity is fading, even to the point of confusion in sexual orientation and gender. Jesus is the fullness of grace and truth (John 1:14). Our culture needs His grace *and* His truth, not one or the other.

You and I know the way. We know that true meaning and purpose exist in Christ. Our lives have worth because He gave His life for us. When we give our lives to Him, we are flooded with transforming gratitude. Christianity isn't based on a principle; it's based on a person: Jesus Christ. It's His Spirit alive in us. We're secure in our identity because our identity is found in Him. With His presence in us, we know who we are.

Our culture influences us far more than we realize. Many of us follow its empty values and pour ourselves into our self-interests as if no greater purpose exists. We continue to live for ourselves rather than for Christ. As a result, we lose our gratitude for Him, and His love within us fades. We lose our joy and influence. Instead of allowing Christ to rescue our culture through us, we find ourselves in need of rescue again.

The answer isn't to deny our self-interests. Rather, the answer

is to do everything in light of our eternal purpose (1 Corinthians 10:31). We live in a dying world. Jesus gave us the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20); we know why we're here: to lead others to Christ.

As we share our lives with people, they'll see our love for Christ and our love for them. They'll see in us a sense of meaning and purpose greater than ourselves. They'll see our joy in living, not for ourselves but for Him. They'll see that we don't need to pursue happiness because happiness finds us. And as they see His love resonating within us, they'll want to know the truth we possess. They'll want what we have because our identity is in Christ – and in us, they can see Jesus. **BA**

Jody McCoy is executive director of the General Conference and lives in Austin, TX.



Disunity in Christ

continued from page 15

Keller states it this way: "The Gospel is an exclusive truth [as in you must believe to be a part of it] but it's the most inclusive exclusive truth in the world."²

Through all this, God was changing my heart to see beyond race. But still, I rarely spoke of my hang-ups. Another book caught my attention: *Under Our Skin: Getting Real about Race. Getting Free from the Fears and Frustrations that Divide Us*, by

NFL player Benjamin Watson. He observes:

... ultimately the problem is not a SKIN problem, it is a SIN problem. SIN is the reason we rebel against authority. SIN is the reason we abuse our authority. SIN is the reason we are racist, prejudiced, and lie to cover for our own. SIN is the reason we riot, loot, and burn. BUT I'M ENCOURAGED because God has provided a solution for sin through his son Jesus, and with it, a transformed heart and mind.³

Spiritual change

After reading Watson's book, I felt a call to confession, to renouncing false seeds that had taken root in me. I felt a call to transformation. We are all aware of the fruit of the Spirit, but are we aware of the fruit of the flesh? Do we understand that participating in dissensions and factions is a result of living in the flesh and not in the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-26)? If racial discord, jokes, or rationalization of injustices arise in our words and deeds, we must stop and ask ourselves why we hold these views. If they are not the ways of Christ, we must reject them and make ourselves obedient to Christ. This includes all fruit of the flesh.

Not until we talk about these things and share what has shaped our views can we denounce anything that is not of Christ and repent from it. The love of God for His children has no color. It's time to stand with all our brothers and sisters, regardless of our racial differences, and truly love each other as our Lord Jesus Christ intended.

God is calling us to love as He loves and see others the way He

sees them and as He sees the heart: "man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Can we look beyond the outside and reach the heart of others?

United in Christ

The church in Philippi is known as the church that Apostle Paul trusted the most. According to Acts 16 and Philippians, among the believers in Philippi were a Jewish family, a Roman jailer, a poor slave girl, Greeks, and women church leaders/teachers. These believers represented the most discriminated-against groups in the first century Roman world. There was prejudice against women and the poor, hatred of cultural elites and authorities, and suspicion of religion and ethnicity. Perhaps Philippi was Paul's most trusted church because in Christ, they rose above their notable differences and lived out His teachings to be united as one.

The question then remains: Will we be that church as well?

BA

Jael Banda Hamilton

attends the Galena Park CoG7. She and her husband, Scott, have three children.



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1. Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 63.
 2. Tim Keller, March 26, 2013: <https://twitter.com/timkellernyc/status/316643741052051456>. Web accessed 11-7-16.
 3. Benjamin Watson, *Under Our Skin: Getting Real about Race. Getting Free from the Fears and Frustrations that Divide Us* (Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2015), xi-xii.



Mail Bag



Fruit of goodness

When I first saw the cover of the July-August 2016 edition of your magazine, I immediately warmed to it. Not only did I find the cover compelling and very likeable, but also the contents mirrored it very well. Dorothy Nimchuk's article, "The Orchard" [p. 4], was really wonderful. I related to Adele Crockett's idea to reform and keep her family's orchard going, even if it wasn't really successful in the end. I live with my dad, and due to disability, neither of us has successfully tended the garden since my mum died seven years ago. I have prayed, asking God to allow me (miraculously) to deal with the weeds that have grown. It's a bit like the weeds in the slothful man's garden in Proverbs. I enjoyed the theme of good or goodness expressed in Dorothy's article, a fruit of the Spirit.

I also noticed the idea of goodness taken up in Calvin Burrell's ["Fruits and Gifts," p. 18]. The aspect of the goodness of God has largely shifted my view of God as being cruel and allowing all manner of calamities in our lives to a God greatly showing goodness and incorporating it in everything from His creation in Genesis to a spirit of goodness in us.

Many thanks for all you do. Your

articles are for the most part very readable, and that's what I like best about the BA magazine!

A. K.
E-mail

Proclaiming the gospel

Thanks for that article ["Called Out, Sent Out," September-October 2016, p. 4], probably one of the most important discussions I have read in a long time. I like what Paul said in Philippians 1:5, 6: "Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (NIV). Paul's assertion seems to be that the evidence of God working in us is our participation in the gospel. I remember years ago Herbert Armstrong saying that he had observed that people's spiritual maturity seemed to be proportionate to their commitment to the proclamation of the gospel. The one who is focused on saving his own life will lose it. May we never be like the guy who buried his talent — or even worse, forget where we put it!

G. F.
E-mail

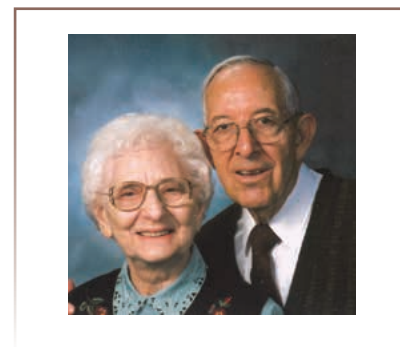
Applause for "One Hope"

Thank you for the *Bible Advocate*. The articles, uplifting and insightful. I pray for you and so appreciate the gift God has given you for editing. This November-December issue was just wonderful — every page. I am sharing it with others.

J. S.
Facebook

I really enjoyed reading the latest issue of *Bible Advocate*!

M. M.
Facebook



Asleep in Jesus

Catherine Carlin (97) passed away November 2, 2016. She was born February 17, 1919, to Tjeerd (George) and Altje (Alice) Nienhuis — the fourth of eight children in her Dutch immigrant family, homesteaded near Lawton, North Dakota.

Catherine married Albert Carlin while he was on leave from serving in Japan near the time of the Korean War. The Carlins lived a short time in Japan, then in Bakersfield, California, where Albert began a residency. In 1952 they traveled across the country with Paul, their toddler, to Stanberry, Missouri. Within a month, they welcomed their second child, Janice. Elizabeth and Ann were born in the busy years that followed.

Catherine was preceded in death by her parents, her husband of 55 years, her brothers (Edward and Matthew), and her sisters (Tena, Rose, Fennie, and Fencine). Catherine is survived by her children Paul (Pat) Carlin, Janice Smith, Elizabeth (Ken) Keim, and Ann Grape, as well as by her sister Alice Sheffield, six grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

For more, visit "Memorials" at cog7.org.



G. C. Ministries News

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Equipping Leaders

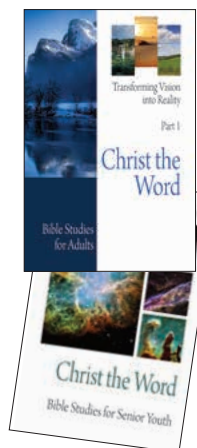
On January 31, 2017, LifeSpring School of Ministry will become known as Artios Christian College (pronounced AR-tee-oss).

However, we won't just be the same school with a different look. With Artios, we are taking the qualities that made LifeSpring so unique and transforming them into core strengths, particularly regarding our emphasis on Christian leadership.

Artios Christian College (Artios) is a college for Christians who want to influence their families, churches, communities, and workplaces to more closely reflect God's heart/plan for the world of the twenty-first century church.

Following Jesus makes people leaders. Artios equips Christians to be vibrant leaders through flexible programs, affordable courses, and other focused resources that lay a foundation of biblical theology, restoration, and missional engagement.

Find out more at artioscollege.org.



Sabbath School Series: 2017

Don't miss the new year's four-part quarterly series, based on "Transforming Vision into Reality." Adults and youth will study the ten-point vision, be-

It began with a desire to reach the unchurched on the Internet. Twenty years later, *Now What?* is going strong and still offers the help and hope of Christ. Check out the redesigned site at nowwhat.cog7.org, with its extensive archive. And share a story with someone!

January is Publications Emphasis Month. Support our online ministry!

Former BA Editor Passes

Roy Marrs (91), a minister for 65 years in CoG7 and former BA editor, died October 8, 2016. He was born November 28, 1924, near Dale, Oklahoma, to Mitchell and Vida (Kerns) Marrs and was the youngest of three children.



After serving in World War II, Roy married Claudia Ruth Whitford, and they had four children: Lucille Joy Dralle (Neal), Lawrence Mitchell, John Harold (Judy), and James Roy (Phylis). Claudia preceded Roy in death. He subsequently married Alvina (Miller) Stacy, who brought to the marriage Roy's stepson, Loren Gene Stacy (Karen). Alvina passed away November 18, 2012.

In addition to his sister Wilma, children, and stepson, Roy is survived by ten grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held January 7, 2017, in Lodi, California. For more, visit "Memorials" at cog7.org.

ginning with *Part 1 - Christ the Word* in the first quarter.

There are also good studies for intermediate, primary, and pre-school/kindergarten age groups. For details, visit baonline.org.

Order the 2017 series from the Bible Advocate Press at P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; e-mail bap.orders@cog7.org; or phone 303-452-7973.



Around the World



IMC 2016

Almost 110 delegates from 31 countries in the International Ministerial Congress (IMC) gathered for Bible teaching, regional reports, and church business October 10-15, 2016, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The theme “The Whole Word for the Whole World” facilitated morning and afternoon sessions of uplifting worship, anointed preaching, productive business sessions, and in-depth reports from around the world, all reflecting a wonderful spirit of unity and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Members from the three Church of God (Seventh Day) congregations in Buenos Aires generously welcomed the IMC, blessing and expressing their love in a variety of heart-moving ways.

Through a variety of presentations and business sessions, delegates learned how the Church is experiencing growth and a shared vision of how the Holy Spirit is helping equip and embrace the challenge of taking the gospel more effectively to the whole world. Keynote messages included “Fellowship in the Word,” “Passionate in Worship,” “Compassionate in Service,” “Committed to Discipleship,” “United in Fellowship,” and “Engaged in Witness.”

Conference business concluded with the election and dedication of new executive IMC officers: Ramon Ruiz, president (Mexico); Whaid Rose, first vice president (US/Canada); Jorge Gillig (Argentina), second vice president; John Klassek (Australia), secretary; and Lawyer Obara (Nigeria), treasurer. Bryan Cleeton continues as executive director.

The IMC now consists of 45 countries, with Pakistan, Myanmar, Burundi, Zimbabwe, and Spain obtaining membership. It shares and envisions a momentum for promoting doctrinal unity, financial stewardship, and continued collective mission and vision to work toward a vibrant 21st century church, where the Lordship of Christ is exalted.

— John Klassek



1. African leaders give special Sabbath afternoon worship. 2. Raul Lopez Espinosa, Mexico. 3. John Njogu, Zone 5 East Africa representative, receives the Shepherd's Staff Award. 4. Sabbath afternoon worship. 5. Victor Bangura, Sierra Leone; Gustavo Hultgren, Argentina; Tshidzanani Malaba, Zimbabwe. 6. Tluang Kung, Myanmar.



Questions of Identity

Among life's important questions are those of identity: Who am I? Who are you? An inability to answer these questions indicates that something is wrong. An accurate understanding of identities — our own and others' — helps us relate with one another appropriately.

The Gospel of John is full of questions of identity. For example, John introduces John the Baptist this way: "This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?'" (1:19, NASB throughout). The Baptist understood that initial question to be "Are you the Christ?" and he answered: "I am not the Christ" (v. 20).

That answer led to more identity questions: "What then? Are you Elijah?' And he said, 'I am not.' Are you the Prophet?' And he answered, 'No.' Then they said to him, 'Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?'" (vv. 21, 22). Thankfully, John knew exactly who he was: "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD . . .'" (v. 23).

The most important identity questions in John's Gospel concern the identity of Jesus. John the Baptist pointed at Him and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (v. 29). Jesus himself made His identity clear in seven "I AM" statements preserved in John: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst" (6:35); "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (8:12); "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and

out and find pasture" (10:9); "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (v. 11); "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies" (11:25); "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (14:6); and "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (15:5).

To leave no doubt, the apostle John began his Gospel about Jesus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (1:1-3). And beginning its conclusion, John wrote, "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (20:31).

In Mark 8:27-29, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They answered, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets." Jesus continued questioning: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ."

The General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) agrees! Jesus is the Christ, the divine Son of God the Father. He is our Lord and our God. In Christ alone, we receive grace and salvation.

— Loren Stacy





Grab your calendars and mark July 3-8, 2017, for the
General Conference Convention
in Springfield, Illinois!

Excitement is building as the Program Committee plans this important gathering. Can you hear convention voices singing praises to Jesus? Are you ready to be inspired by speakers proclaiming our Lord? Are you praying for wisdom to engage in sessions on revising bylaws?

For more details, watch for the registration website in January 2017: <https://cog7.org/convention/2017-info/>.

See you in Springfield!

