

BA  
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People of the Gospel



## 2022: Living the Gospel



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## My Friend, My Family

In our yearlong examination of the gospel, we come now to its most overlooked characteristic. Popular evangelism tends to be individualistic, a private matter. But while the gospel is *personal*, its ultimate goal is to form a *people*. Take Ephesians 2. The saving grace of verses 1-10 leads straight to this conclusion: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (v. 19).

My thoughts have been occupied with this *household* and its *members* the last few weeks. At this writing, I have returned from two trips: a vacation in England, where we worshipped with brethren in London and Manchester, and another to Oregon, for the memorial service of my dear friend, mentor, and *Bible Advocate* predecessor, Calvin Burrell.

Only the gospel can account for the joyous welcome and gracious care we received from Elder Robert Crawford and all the UK Churches of God. Though I’d not met them before, there were no strangers — just instant friends. Their warm hospitality was humbling. By God’s grace, this was our house; this was our family.

Calvin was family too. The household of God is built one person at a time, and only the gospel can account for a person like him. Calvin’s ministry to the Church spanned over fifty years, in every capacity it had to offer, including eighteen years as BA editor. I was merely one member of the thousands in this family of ours who were encouraged, inspired, and loved by Brother Calvin.

In this time of private autonomy, Calvin was a churchman of the first order, sacrificially serving his household with intelligence, patience, and humility. He showed us what *living the gospel* looked like. As our gospel-bearing church helped form a life like Calvin Burrell’s, he, in turn, nourished the Church he loved.

Our family in the US, UK, and around the world needs more like Calvin Burrell. He is gone, but we will see him again. In the meantime, it’s our turn to take up his mantle in living the gospel.

— Jason Overman





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Don't skim the names — you might miss the message.

by R. Herbert

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As he closes his magnificent epistle to the church in Rome, the apostle Paul sends greetings to a number of his friends, co-workers, and acquaintances in the city. The list, given in Romans 16:1-16, is extensive. Almost thirty individuals are mentioned, as well as several groups of people. Nowhere else in Paul's letters do we find such a long catalog of names.

As we read Romans today, it is easy to skim this list, noting the few names we may recognize and then finishing the epistle. But there is more to the list than immediately meets the eye. And like everything in Paul's writings, we can learn from it.

### Love and acceptance

First, of course, we see the degree to which Paul truly loved

the church — knowing, remembering, and greeting a large number of people in a city he did not personally know. Because of his constant travel and evangelization, Paul must have met numerous people. It is impressive that he remembered not only the names of many of the folks on his list but also their individual qualities.

We also see in Paul's list his warm acceptance of all Christians — regardless of race, gender, social position, or any other consideration. The majority of the individuals have Gentile names.

A large proportion are the names of slaves or former slaves who had been freed. Such were Tertius (v. 22) and Quartus (v. 23), whose names mean simply "third" and "fourth." They

were probably minor slaves in someone's household and were given numbers as names, as was often the case in Paul's day. These individuals were not even the "first" or "second" slaves, making them socially insignificant in that culture. But Paul treated them, as he did every believer, with full equality and love. In fact, Paul mentions Quartus in the same breath as Erastus, the influential and important Corinthian director of public works (v. 23).

### Organizing the list

Looking at what Paul says about all these people is particularly instructive. Phoebe, mentioned first in Romans 16:1, 2, was evidently the person who delivered Paul's letter to Rome, and the apostle's greetings actually begin after he mentions her. Paul then specifically greets some twenty-eight individuals. Rather than just an extensive list of greetings with an occasional personal comment thrown in here and there, this list has a clear pattern. Paul refers to the people in a number of different ways:

**Beloved.** Paul was well aware that God referred to His own Son as "beloved" (Colossians 1:13) and doubtless does not use the expression lightly. He mentions only a few people this way in his writings.

**Exceptional.** Paul says those who had assisted him in some exceptional way "risked their lives for me" or had "been a mother to me."

**Hard working.** Paul says some had "worked hard" or "worked very hard" in laboring for the kingdom.

**Other descriptions.** Paul mentions individuals as being "fellow workers," without any other comment. Those Paul notes as being fellow Christians are specifically said to be "in Christ," "in the Lord," or "approved by Christ." But he says nothing else about them.

Some individuals are named, along with many others who are unnamed but included in someone's family or household. Although these people undoubtedly

were Christians, they are included in the list without any qualifying remarks regarding outstanding characteristics.

### Analyzing the list

Once we organize Paul's list in this manner, the first thing we notice is the way he differentiates between two groups: those involved in furthering the work of the gospel in some way and those who are Christians but are

## Knowing the Church by Name

### Reading Romans 16:1-16 aloud

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you. Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord. Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys. Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus. Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too. Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them. Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

evidently not involved in gospel work. Paul undoubtedly loved and cared deeply about these latter individuals, but seemingly did not remember them as being notable in their service to God. Numerically, the majority of the people fall into this category. Paul greets them without any special commendation (see vv. 5, 14, 15 especially).

Those Paul mentions in one group who are “approved by Christ” or described in a similar fashion may have been particularly devout, though no reference is made relative to them being involved in the work of the gospel.

On the other hand, those Paul mentions specifically regarding their service to the gospel were certainly not all elders in the church, but served in different capacities. Some, like the lady mentioned only as the mother of Rufus (v. 13), were extraordinarily dedicated to God’s work. Others, like Andronicus and Junia, had been in prison with Paul (v. 7), thus showing their dedication to the gospel.

We cannot see in what Paul says any quantitative assessment of the work accomplished by these godly people — just his appreciation for their dedication. But when we move past the individuals who helped Paul personally and those he calls “beloved” (yet does not say why), the remaining people on Paul’s list are the ones most actively involved in doing the work of God. These individuals are said to be “fellow workers,” “those who work hard,” and “those who work very hard.”

## Personal challenge

We cannot know whether Paul was subconsciously or consciously “grading” these people as he referred to them in these ways, but they clearly were a minority among the larger group of Christians Paul greeted in his epistle. There was also clearly a difference in Paul’s mind between the level of dedication of the people he mentions. It is hard to imagine that Paul, who wrote so carefully and deeply, included the public grading of individuals without a purpose. Perhaps that purpose was for the good of those he greeted, but perhaps it was for our good as well. We can all ask ourselves which group Paul would have included us in.

Asking that question can be

both instructive and challenging. After all, as Paul wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture [including the list of names in Romans 16] is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every *good work*” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17, emphasis added). If we let it, even Paul’s list of greetings can inspire the people of the gospel to more and greater involvement in God’s work. **BA**

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**R. Herbert** (a pen name) holds an earned doctorate in biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern languages and archaeology. He writes for a number of Christian venues. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



## Membership Notice

All members of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) who will be at least 18 years of age as of July 11, 2023, and who wish to vote during our 2023 convention, should register for convention no later than **May 1, 2023**. They must indicate on the form their intention to vote. Because of the time it may take to validate some memberships, we cannot guarantee that those who register later will be able to vote.

Additionally, because of the time it takes to process membership applications, this deadline also applies to anyone wishing to become a member before our 2023 convention. **No new memberships will be issued the week of convention (July 10-16, 2023).**



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**by Cindy Arora**

Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting (Numbers 1:1, NASB).

The book labeled *Numbers* in our Bible has a couple different names in Hebrew. The most common is *bamidbar*, which means “in the wilderness.” This is a much more befitting title because the wilderness wanderings of the nation of Israel are a picture of our Christian lives, individually and collectively.

God delivered His people Israel from the oppression of the enemy (Egypt). They spent the first year learning God’s covenant with them (the law) and building the tabernacle. After that time of preparation, God organized this rabble of a nation into a community — a people of God, the army of the Lord. God commanded a census . . . to form a military roster. He called out leaders and assigned placement (within the body), and He assigned a marching order.

All that in just the first four chapters of Numbers. The next six chapters are about personal purity, and then the journey “in the wilderness” begins. It was filled with complaining . . . and correction, with rebellion . . . and redemption. Paul writes about “our fathers [who] were under the cloud”:

With most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of

them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition (1 Corinthians 10:5-11).

Our Christian life begins when God delivers us, as He did the Israelites, from the oppression of the enemy. We spend some time learning God’s covenant with us (His Word) and building His dwelling place in our hearts (what the tabernacle symbolizes). After that time of preparation, then God calls us into the community — the people of God, the army of the Lord. And God assigns us a placement in the body of Christ. He assigns us marching orders.

Personal purity is important to God. We must keep ourselves undefiled, set apart for Him, as we begin our journey “in the wilderness.” Our journey is filled with complaining . . . and correction, with rebellion . . . and redemption. All this is the stuff of life “in the wilderness.”

God marched the army of Israel to the border of the Promised Land. But there were giants in the land and battles to be fought. The Israelites had a decision to make: follow God into battle or stay “in the wilderness.”

You and I face the same decision: join the army of the Lord and follow God into battle or continue to wander around “in the wilderness.”

BA

**Cindy Arora** writes from Redmond, WA.





# Prodigal Nation

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Lessons for the church from  
Zephaniah.  
by Nathanael Reed

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The story of the prodigal son is one of the most powerful and endearing of the Lord's parables. The wayward prodigal, patient father, and disgruntled older son are all characters who have resonated with readers down through the ages. Interestingly, this parable has something of a parallel version in the Old Testament book of Zephaniah, where the prophet recounts the sad tale of a prodigal nation.

Zephaniah's ministry to the nation of Judah was set during a most tumultuous time. Although years of apostasy had been interrupted briefly by the reforms of King Josiah, Zephaniah's ominous prophecies made it evident that the people would soon forsake the Lord and return to their idolatrous ways. This catastrophic path would lead directly to God's hand of judgment.

A day of wrath is that day, a

day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness (1:15).

The remarkable thing about Zephaniah's little book is the fact that although God's patience with His fickle people was coming to an end, He still gave the nation several more years to turn back to Him. Enough time to repent — or flee from the wrath to come.

## Forsaken Father

Evidence of God's mercy and love are tightly interwoven throughout Zephaniah's grim prophecies. For the most part, God's compassion and concern focus on the faithful remnant who are scattered throughout the land. To these devoted ones He offers words of love and comfort.



First, He tells them that during the day of their calamity, many will be *hidden* from destruction (2:3). History tells us, in fact, that many thousands did flee to neighboring nations when the Babylonian armies invaded their country.

God then promises that, although numerous Israelites will perish and many others will be taken into captivity, a faithful remnant will one day return to the land of promise (3:20). This event will be marked with great joy and celebration, a time when God will bless the nation and, in return, the people will serve Him with one accord.

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil (vv. 14, 15).

The joy of the heavenly Father over the return of His exiled children reminds us of the response of the prodigal son's father when his boy returned home. Jesus describes how the father ran to meet his son, how he gave him a robe and new shoes, killed the fatted calf, and prepared a great feast in celebration.

This joyous event is similar to the response of the heavenly Father in Zephaniah 3. First, He quiets their fears, then rejoices over them with loud singing (v. 17). For Christians, the thought of the God of the universe exulting over His people is a precious reminder of what all of His children can look forward to for eternity

— the Lord rejoicing over His redeemed ones with songs of joy.

## Prodigal

The similarities between the prodigal son and Zephaniah's prodigal nation are striking. In both cases, the prodigals were guilty of idolatry, complacency, and pride. Whereas the people of Judah bowed down to Baal and Molech, the prodigal son was consumed with a self-indulgent desire to hijack his inheritance and *live it up*. These selfish passions were even more important than his father's love and his own heritage. The apostle Paul equates such covetousness and evil desires with a form of idolatry: "Put to death therefore what

in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the LORD (Zephaniah 3:20).

## Older brother

To sense the presence of the older brother in Zephaniah's prophecies, we need to move ahead in time to the return of the faithful remnant. We find these events recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah, where both writers describe in detail the returning exiles facing opposition from those already settled in the land.

Ezra states, "Then the people of the land discouraged the

“Our heavenly Father is overjoyed to welcome home each and every prodigal who comes to Him.”

is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Both prodigals returned home broken in spirit and humbled, having lost everything during their years of exile. In both cases as well, the father welcomed them back with true joy and without a word of recrimination.

"At that time I will bring you

people of Judah and made them afraid to build" (4:4).

Nehemiah centers on three particular adversaries in this regard: Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian. These three leaders were greatly disturbed by the return of the exiles, and especially with Nehemiah's efforts to reestablish the people by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

While the people of Judah were living in exile, men like Sanballat were solidifying their position in the land, both economically and socially. They had grown in power, wealth, and reputation, but now that so many of the former inhabitants had returned, they feared that all they had accumulated was in jeopardy. Both Ezra and Nehemiah record how these individuals did everything in their power to reverse their perceived precarious situation.

This reminds us of the response of the older brother, who saw the prodigal as an unwelcome interloper, one who had gotten his just desserts and was now honing in on what was no longer rightfully his.

### Three truths

When considering the parallels between these two stories, followers of Christ can claim at least three truths.

First, we have a heavenly Father who loves us and wants only what is best for us. There may be times when discipline is necessary to draw us back to Him, but it is always and only for our own good because of His eternal love for us (Hebrews 12:5, 6).

Like the prodigal son and prodigal nation, at times we will sin and drift away from our Father and lose sight of what His will is for our lives. In all cases, however, God is near and ever caring. He will never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6). Never will we drift so far from Him that He cannot reach out and shepherd us back to Himself.

At other times during their journey, some in the family of God seem determined to dis-

courage us and undermine our relationship with the Father. The older brother should have been overjoyed to see the prodigal return *from the dead*, but instead he selfishly disparaged both his father and brother. As is often the case, such setbacks can come from those we least expect. Despite this, we know that God will always be by our side. When we go home to be with Him one day, He will rejoice over us with songs of joy.

No matter the age we live in, whether during the days of Zephaniah or this present moment in history, our heavenly Father

is overjoyed to welcome home each and every prodigal who comes to Him. And we, His children, long for the moment when we will see our Savior for the first time and are welcomed into our kingdom home to live with Him forever. **BA**

**Nathanael Reed** writes from St. Thomas, Ontario. Scripture quotations are from the *English Standard Version*.



## Biennial Convention

Are you making your plans for GC Convention 2023? Several hotel options will be available. Nightly costs range from \$119 to \$140. These are special convention rates and are not available on general hotel websites. The hotels will prepare a special convention website for reserving your rooms. Your willingness to reserve a room in the convention block helps to greatly reduce the costs of meeting space in the hotels and Convention Center. More details will be released in late 2022 or early 2023.

— *Convention Planning Committee*

*Special note:* The Planning Committee needs your assistance in identifying someone to coordinate a nursery program, including planning activities and recruiting volunteer assistants. If you or someone you know would be interested, please contact Mary Jean Knoll ([knoll5853@comcast.net](mailto:knoll5853@comcast.net)).

## Questions & Answers



**Where** does the saying “Be in the world but not of it” come from, and what does it mean?

**This** familiar expression is derived from Jesus’ prayer for His disciples in John 17: “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world . . . They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (vv. 11, 16).

While the whole New Testament contrasts believer and world, no writer dwells on this distinction more than John. With over one hundred references, John accounts for about half of the New Testament total. And Jesus’ prayer in John 17 refers to “the world” nineteen times alone! Let’s see how this chapter helps us understand the meaning of this saying and of the world itself.

Jesus opens and ends His prayer confessing that He transcends the world. He asks the Father to glorify Him “with the glory which I had with You before *the world* was,” for the Father “loved Me before the foundation of *the world*” (vv. 5, 24, emphasis mine throughout). From this we see that by using the word *world*, Jesus has, in part, all creation in mind.

In between these two verses are several sayings that describe Jesus’ relationship with *the world*. Jesus states that the Father sent Him “into *the world*” (v. 18) and that He spoke “in the world” (vv. 13), yet He was “not of *the world*” (vv. 14, 16). But Jesus sharpens the distinction further. He says, “I do not pray for *the world*” (v. 9) but for those the Father has “given Me out of *the world*” (v. 6). And “*the world* has hated them because they are not of *the world*” (v. 14).

From these statements we glean that the world Jesus refers to so often in John isn’t so much the material cosmos as it is the spiritual condition of creation in its rebellion to its Creator. Although God “so loved *the world*,” the mission of God is “to save *the world*” from itself, from the darkness that defines it (3:16, 17; 12:47).

At the conclusion of His prayer, Jesus states clearly the defining difference between the believer and the world: “O righteous Father! *The world* has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me” (v. 25). So to be in the world but not of it is to live as those who know and love God, *in* a world that does not know Him or love Him. The distinction is simple, yet monumental.

While the world hates, our relationship with it is not antagonistic. Just as the Father sent His Son into the world, Jesus leaves us with His mission: “I also have sent them into *the world*” (v. 18). Jesus prays that God’s mission goes forward as the love that unites Him and the Father, with every believer, bears witness to the world: “that *the world* may believe that You sent Me” (v. 21).

To be in the world but not of it requires discernment and vigilance. And it requires abundant grace toward this world. We must love as our Father does, while not loving worldly ways. John, one more time: “If anyone loves *the world*, the love of the Father is not in him. . . . And *the world* is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15, 17). May God help us!

— Elder Jason Overman



# Hearing Their Heart

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The importance of listening  
before judging.  
by **Jeri Stockdale**

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“For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

The bright glare of the church overhead lights prompted my youth missions’ teammate, Lauren, to slip on her sunglasses once we found our seats before the morning service began. As the worship music reverberated, I questioned if it would have been wiser for us to sleep in after our late night of street ministry on Hollywood Boulevard.

Lauren, pale-faced, was slouched in her seat, trying to get comfortable. A few annoyed glances from the middle-aged, well-dressed women seated one row ahead were cast in our direction. Conscious of Lauren’s and my ragged jeans and wrinkled shirts, I offered a sheepish smile when I caught their gazes. But they didn’t smile back.

Weary from lack of sleep, I felt detached and fuzzy around the edges. I fought to focus on the pastor’s words, but my mind reeled, replaying the events from the night before.

## On the street

Lauren and I were students at a Youth with A Mission Discipleship Training School, and we’d recently returned from an outreach to Monterrey, Mexico. As we traveled by bus back to Washington State, we stayed in various towns and used our pup-

pet, drama, and music ministries to reach out to children and seniors. But this was our first night for street ministry, right in the heart of Hollywood.

We’d been dropped off at 11:00 p.m. on Saturday night, across from a movie theater. It was preparing for a midnight showing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The long line of flamboyantly dressed punk rockers wrapped around the building like an engorged snake. They writhed with impatience until tempers boiled over and people pushed one another into the oncoming traffic on the busy multi-lane road.

Horrified but transfixed, we prayed for their safety. And for ours. Moments later, over one hundred motorcycle law enforcement officers roared in on motorcycles. An officer spoke through a bullhorn and commanded the crowd to disperse or face arrest.

Tense moments followed as we prayed for a peaceful end to what could become a confrontation or riot.

We waited and watched. When the crowd peacefully dispersed, I let out a sigh of relief.

Many punk rockers lingered around the fringe, adding to the nightlife of pimps, prostitutes, and drug dealers, as well as those dressed for a night on the town. The contrasting images of those on the streets reminded us that many were lost, needing a Savior. This visual reinforced our need to pray as we divided into teams of two and were sent out to minister to the broken.

## Sharing hope

Nervous, excited, and fearful, we asked God to lead us to someone we should speak to. Lauren and I saw a young man named Terry standing away from others, uncomfortable and perhaps lonely. We spoke at length to him and realized he'd been caught up in prostitution.

My heart went out to Terry as he told of moving from New York, hoping for a better life. He hadn't found it on the streets of Hollywood. Clearly disappointed with his current lifestyle, Terry listened as we shared our stories of how God had transformed our lives through a personal relationship with Jesus. I explained humanity's fallen state and our need for a Savior. As I told Terry the story of Jesus and how He forgives our sins, his eyes brightened with a glimpse of hope for a different future.

Meanwhile, his friend stood behind him in the shadows, glaring at us. We finished speaking with Terry and handed him a

booklet to explain more about sin's bondage and how he could have a new life in Christ. I prayed that the seeds planted wouldn't be snatched away by the Evil One, even in the form of his "friend."

We'd talked a long time with Terry and didn't have much longer before our 1:00 a.m. meet-up time with the group. We prayed for those we saw and gave a few booklets to others.



## Tough lesson

As I mulled over these things in church, I glanced at Lauren, only to see she'd lost her struggle to stay awake. She was barely sixteen and a young believer, rescued from prostitution herself only a year earlier. Her personal story of God's saving grace spoke to many.

The glare of the church ladies targeted us a few more times. Relieved when the service ended, I woke up Lauren, and we gathered our jackets and Bibles. One of the ladies made a point to talk to us. She challenged us to not disgrace God's house by

disregarding His holiness.

I was too shocked to answer her. Again, I thought of my encounter with Terry the night before and wished that this woman cared enough to ask us *our* story. Did we not feel well, or was our sleepless night because of some problems? How could she and her friends know what we'd been doing half the night? Perhaps if they'd taken the time to ask, we could have instead blessed one another as we shared about our evening.

Through this experience, I didn't just learn about effective outreach. I learned about judging others. Though it made me sad, the ladies' judgment of us reaffirmed in me the need to hear others' life stories, inside and outside the church, with a heart of compassion. Listening and sharing the gospel with Terry and others had removed my fear, replacing it with God's love for hurting individuals. If only these ladies had done the same for us.

We often don't know the truth of a situation or a person's heart. But God does. With caring hearts, we can share not only the story of God transforming *our* lives but God's story of His Son, forgiveness, and the new life He offers freely to all.

Our "God stories" are miracles. And even when misunderstood, my desire is to keep following Jesus, love others, and bring many more lost souls into His kingdom. **BA**

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**Jeri Stockdale** writes from Poulsbo, WA. Scripture quotations are from the *English Standard Version*.





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When a word doesn't mean what you think it means.

by Marcia Sanders

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**M**eekness and warhorse seem to be such contradictory terms. Warhorses are fearless, ready to charge into battle, while meekness is often equated with milquetoast, doormats, and weakness. In fact, *Merriam-Webster* defines *meek* as “deficient in spirit and courage, not violent or strong.” It lists such synonyms as *lowly*, *modest*, *unassuming*, and *unpretentious*.

And yet, these scriptural examples appear to contradict such a definition:

- The meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5) — because they are weak? I don't think so.
- Christians are told to be meek (KJV - Ephesians 4:2;

Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 6:11). But are we expected to be doormats?

• Two people in the Bible are described as meek (KJV): Moses (Numbers 12:3) and Jesus (Matthew 11:29; 21:5). Living their lives required great courage, facing grave dangers, and both physical and emotional pain. So maybe *meek* means something else.

### Biblical definition

Consider the original meaning and use of the word *meek*. *Strong's Concordance* lists the Greek word as *praus*. According to some sources, this word was associated with the breaking-in of horses. Wild stallions were captured in the mountains and brought down to be broken and trained for a variety of uses. It was imperative that the horses retain their spirit, courage, and

power. But without discipline and total obedience, those traits were useless.

In fact, the best horses were reserved for warfare, where their courage to race into battle was essential. A warhorse that failed to respond immediately to command was of little value and actually endangered its rider. These warhorses exemplified great power under control.

Taken from a point of complete wildness or rebellion, these animals were transformed into strong but obedient tools. They exemplified true meekness and had been transformed from unbridled willfulness to courage and submission in situations of extreme danger.

### Old Testament meekness

Moses showed such courage, albeit a bit reluctantly, when God tasked him with going before

Pharaoh. It's hard to imagine returning repeatedly to the court of the most powerful man in the land and demanding the release of thousands of slaves. Each appearance before Pharaoh followed the latest devastating plague that God had released on the land.

After the Israelites' release, the problems didn't end. While facing the Red Sea in front and Pharaoh's charging army behind, Moses displayed the same controlled power, instructing the Israelites, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today . . . The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent" (Exodus 14:13, 14).

Note the confidence in those words: "see the salvation of the LORD" and "He *will* accomplish" (emphasis mine). There was no doubt, no hesitancy in those words.

One other example of Moses' quiet strength was when the Lord threatened to destroy His people on Mount Sinai. Disgusted at how quickly they had turned from the one true God to a golden calf, in anger God declared that He wished to destroy them and make Moses into a great nation. Rather than thinking of himself, Moses begged God to reconsider, and He did (32:9-14).

## New Testament meekness

Shift forward a few thousand years to another Man who faced extreme danger with courage and followed God's leading. Jesus repeatedly faced the Pharisees. They constantly rebuked, mocked, and condemned Him, criticized His every move and eventually saw to it that He was

beaten and crucified. Never did Jesus fail to point out their faults, confronting them on many occasions with calm strength. Three scenes stand out to me:

- Jesus driving the money changers out of the temple with a scourge of cords (John 2:13-16).
- Jesus telling the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father" (8:44). And earlier in John's Gospel: "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" (7:19). This must have struck an espe-



cially tender nerve with the Pharisees, considering how highly they regarded themselves.

- Jesus' obedience unto death: "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Like Moses, Jesus didn't back down when faced with danger. He calmly met the derision of the Pharisees and the crowds, continued to perform the mission for which His Father had sent Him to earth, and faced the grueling death He knew was coming.

In such situations, the natural response is to defend ourselves,

to explain how we've been mistreated or misunderstood, to fight — at least verbally — with those who oppose us. Too often those arguments become loud or heated — definitely not displaying quiet control.

Calm is strength. The louder we become in our defense or in trying to control a situation, the less control we exemplify. Christ's appearance before the chief priests and council would not have been as effective had He vociferously proclaimed His innocence. His undisturbed responses demonstrated who was truly in charge.

## Calm and courageous

To live as effective Christian witnesses, we need to learn true meekness — to allow the Holy Spirit to control our tongues and our actions, to think not of *who* we are but of *Whose* we are. We need to be like the warhorses, ready to charge into battle — not neighing and tossing our heads wildly but focusing on our Master. We must learn to submit our will in meekness to His and tap into His strength, rather than try to make it on our own.

Such complete obedience does not come easily. In fact, it requires His Spirit in our lives, guiding us. But it is essential if we are to commit ourselves fully to Christ. **BA**

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**Marcia Sanders** writes from Fort Smith, AR, where she attends the Church of God (Seventh Day) with her husband,



Randy. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*, except where noted.

# 10 'Bewares' for the People of God

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- 1 "Beware of false prophets" (Matthew 7:15).
- 2 "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes . . . the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers" (Mark 12:38-40).
- 3 "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).
- 4 "Beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).
- 5 "Beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak" (1 Corinthians 8:9).
- 6 "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Galatians 5:15).
- 7 "Beware of evil workers" (Philippians 3:2).
- 8 "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men . . . and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).
- 9 "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).
- 10 "Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Peter 3:17).



# 5 Deceptions for the Church to Avoid

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- 1 “Take heed that you **not be deceived**. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time has drawn near.’ Therefore do not go after them” (Luke 21:8).
- 2 “**Do not be deceived**. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).
- 3 “**Do not be deceived**: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- 4 “**Do not be deceived**, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).
- 5 “**Do not be deceived**, my beloved brethren” (James 1:16).

# 3 Things that Matter Most for Those in Christ

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- 1 “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, **but keeping the commandments of God** is what matters” (1 Corinthians 7:19).
- 2 “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, **but faith working through love**” (Galatians 5:6).
- 3 “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, **but a new creation**” (Galatians 6:15).



by Loren Gjesdal

**M**y wife and I recently attended a wedding on the bank of a lake overshadowed by steep mountain slopes. The sky, water, and trees provided a gorgeous backdrop. God's handiwork was the primary decoration, and He did a fabulous job!

As we waited to sign the guest book, we were directed to another line where our photo was taken with a Polaroid camera (yes, they still exist). From the bottom of the camera came a white square of shiny paper. We were told to hold it carefully by the corners until we could hand it to the guest book host.

As my wife and I stood in line, we watched the plain paper gradually transform into an image, grainy and faint at first, but finally resolving into a clear picture of us. It would be placed next to our signatures in the guest book.

## Image bearers

As people who have put our hope and trust in the good news of Jesus Christ, we, too, are in the process of becoming an image. God's plan for the people

of the gospel is that they would be transformed by the gospel into the very image of God, as we were created to be (Genesis 1:26, 27).

The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the "exact representation of His [God's] nature" (Hebrews 1:3). What does Hebrews reveal about the meaning of being created in the image of God?

It says that His image means more than having a certain body structure. Jesus wasn't significantly different from any of us in His form or appearance. If we had seen Him, Isaiah tells us, there would have been nothing about Him physically that would stand out to us (Isaiah 53:2).

So what was so remarkable about Jesus that distinguished Him as God's uniquely perfect image bearer? His character, His nature, His sinlessness (Hebrews 4:15). To bear the image of God is to embody His holiness. So we are clearly instructed to "be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16), or as Jesus put it, "be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

## Good news

The horror of human history is that we all have fallen short of

the glory of God (Romans 3:23). This verse could be understood as saying we have failed the purpose we were created for: to bear the image of God. One way we can understand the gospel is to recognize that Jesus lived the life we were created to live. He carried the image of God in flesh and blood, in time and space, in the way Adam and Eve (and each of us) failed to do.

The good news that makes the gospel so good is that what we failed to do, Jesus grants to us as a gift. In God's eyes, we are clothed in Jesus' success, and our failures are wiped from the record books at the cross.

God's grace gives us more than Jesus' holy status, however. God's grace goes on to fill us with the Spirit of God to empower us to actually live as Jesus lived (1 Corinthians 6:19). How can we possibly do this? By allowing God's indwelling Spirit to produce in us the heart characteristics of Jesus:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22, 23).

# Image

## New creation

Here is the astounding glory of the gospel. Because we are vessels created to bear the image of God, the Creator himself has now resumed the work of shaping us into His image — from the inside out. He patiently performs His creative work in us without judgment or condemnation, but with loving craftsmanship, proudly re-creating His image in each disciple of Jesus. These disciples' highest ambition is to be just like their Master — the exact representation of God's nature.

We see, then, that the gospel doesn't just save us from our past sins, or even preserve us for a future glory. It produces a visible transformation in us now — an exceedingly important part of God's redemptive plan. Because we are ambassadors of God's kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20) and representatives of the King of Kings, God's will for us in Christ Jesus is that we would be accurate revelations of His nature at this exact point in history.

The good news of the gospel is much more than forgiveness of sins, escape from judgment, or even eternal life without pain. An overlooked, yet glorious, work of grace is to be ongoing, with a

promise of ultimate completion.

What is the ongoing work?

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

What is the promise? "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

When will this glorious work be ultimately completed? "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).

In our Sabbatarian churches we often hear that God rested on the seventh day, having completed His work of creation. There is, however, a work yet ongoing, a creative work that is glorious in ambition and gracious in purpose. The gospel includes the offer of the Creator to His creation to fulfill its original purpose, to bear His image.

Like the Polaroid photo at the wedding, we are gradually being transformed by God's creative

power into a glorious image: that of His Son. A powerful part of His invitation to a lost and dying world is to "come taste and see that the LORD is good!" (Psalm 34:8). **BA**

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**Loren Gjesdal** is co-director of Artios Christian College and co-pastor of the Marion Church of God (Seventh Day) in Oregon. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



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"With You" by Jason Overman

"Meant to Be" and "The Ten-Word Gospel"

Full memorial of Calvin Burrell and condolences from many



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We know the recent Supreme Court decision. What does God say about this important issue?

by Mike Wallace

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I was a young teenager when I first heard the saying “It is a choice, not a child.” Young and rather innocent, I had no clue what abortion is. Then there was this ethereal news item about a court case called *Roe v. Wade*, which said abortion was not only legal in the United States but also guaranteed as a right under the US Constitution.

It was then I learned about abortion and how it was the termination and removal of a living child from the mother’s womb. Even when I was a young person,

this knowledge upset me. How could anybody kill their unborn baby? Does God have anything to say about the killing of an unborn child? Many suggest that since the word *abortion* isn’t in the Bible, it must be unimportant. On the contrary, God’s Word has much to say about it.

### Critical questions

The sixth commandment states, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). The Hebrew word translated “kill” in the King James Version is *rasah*, which is better translated “murder.” The vast majority of Bible translations use *murder* instead of *kill*. The question before us, then, is simple: Is abortion murder?

*Merriam-Webster* defines the verb *murder* variously: “to kill (a human being) unlawfully and with premeditated malice; to

slaughter wantonly; to put an end to.” By any definition, the taking of unresisting, vulnerable, innocent life is murder.

When does life start? Does human life begin at conception? Three months into pregnancy? At birth and first breath? Following the science, modern medicine is now able to pinpoint the exact moment life begins in a womb. In his book, *The Developing Human*, Keith L. Moore sums up the scientific consensus:

Human life begins at fertilization, the process during which a male . . . sperm unites with a female . . . (ovum) to form a single cell called a zygote. This highly specialized . . . cell marked the beginning of each of us as a unique individual.

God already confirmed this truth through Hosea: *Life begins at conception* (9:11). In the Bible,

the unborn are consistently described by the very same terms as those born: a baby, a brother, a son, a child (Luke 1:41; Hosea 12:3; Ruth 1:11; Genesis 25:22).

## Womb of life or death

The Bible repeatedly tells us that we are living and known of God from the womb. David wrote, "Thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psalm 22:10). God makes and protects us from the womb (139:13, 14). Jacob was formed from the womb (Isaiah 44:2). God knew and chose the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah from their mothers' wombs (Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5). God called John the Baptist and the apostle Paul from the womb (Luke 1:15; Galatians 1:15). When Elizabeth heard the voice of her cousin Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, the babe, John, leaped inside her womb (Luke 1:41-44).

Life, including unborn life, is sacred to God. In the law, even accidental harm to an unborn child brought a stiff penalty (Exodus 21:22, 23). This important statute shows God's directive that the baby in the womb is a valued, living, human being.

The Bible tells of several instances where unborn children were murdered and violently ripped from their mother's womb (Amos 1:13-15). Evil King Menahem of Israel smote and ripped up women, and God called it evil (2 Kings 15:16-19). It was prophesied that Hazael, the future king of Syria, would rip up "women with child" (8:12). Hosea prophesied the terrible fate of Samaria: "their women with child shall be ripped up" (13:16).

The word *ripped* (Hebrew,

*baqa*) literally means "to cleave; generally, to rend, break, rip or open . . . tear" (Strong's #1234).

While these words are horrible, they are fair descriptions of the gruesome process that ends the life of an innocent child in the womb. Violent and premeditated, *baqa* describes what abortion truly is: murder.

## Contemplations

Abortion is a sin, and the wages of sin is death (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; Matthew 5:21, 22; Mark 10:19; Romans 6:23). Jesus tells us to love our neighbor (Matthew 5:43). How is the killing of an unborn baby *love*? Jesus tells us that even contemplating killing is a sin (vv. 21,

22). How much more sinful is it to murder an innocent unborn child? By taking the life of a baby, one is actually incurring the death penalty from God.

What would this world be like if Sarah had aborted Isaac because she was past the age of child bearing? What if Elizabeth had aborted John the Baptist because she was pregnant at an old age and worried about Down syndrome? What if the unwed Virgin Mary had aborted Jesus, the Son of God, because she was poor and unable to take care of the baby herself? The answer is,

we would all be lost in sin and death, and we would have no Savior in Jesus Christ.

## Good news

Like all sins, abortion should be repented of; God will forgive. Praise the Lord! He forgives and forgets all of our sins, both large and small, when we truly repent and trust Him. Women guilty of abortion and repentant of it will find love and acceptance from their compassionate God. The church, too, must be a loving, supportive, non-judgmental community for such women.

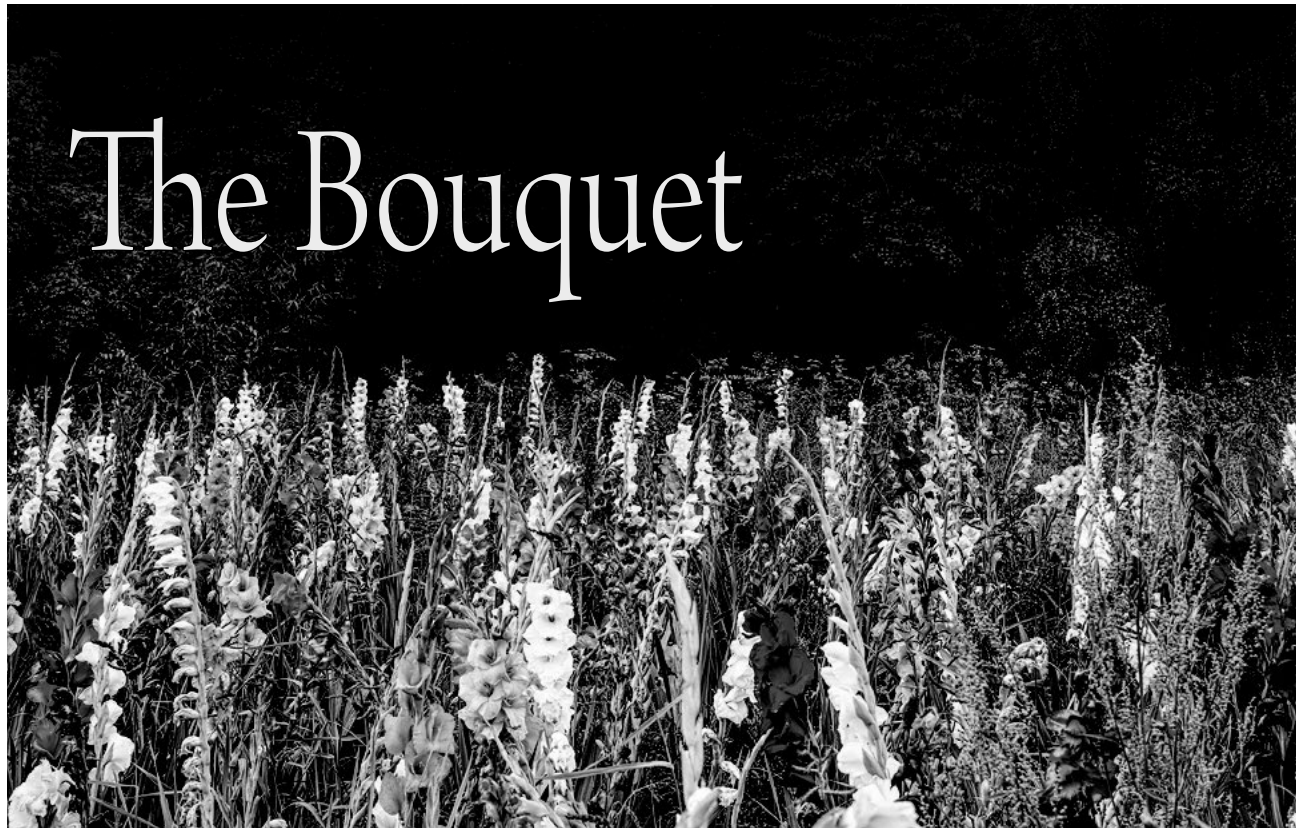
So we pray for this lost world: "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments

“Life, including unborn life, is sacred to God.”

always, that it might be well with them, *and with their children for ever!*" (Deuteronomy 5:29, emphasis mine). **BA**

**Mike Wallace** is the senior spiritual advisor for the Colorado Springs CoG7 and leader of the Montana Fellowship of the CoG7. Mike and his wife, Bonnie, reside in Florence, MT. Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version*.





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# The Bouquet

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Putting love into action, even when it's hard.

by Virginia A. Johnson

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“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34, 35).

Although familiar with Jesus' command, I balked when it applied to a sister in Christ.

Elaine and I attended the same church, but we had little in common besides our faith in Christ. This middle-aged woman had lived her entire life in our small town located near the southern Oregon coast. I was a newcomer to the community. Elaine's world consisted of her husband, adult children, close-knit extended family, and church activities. I was a stay-at-home mom with three children, five years of age and younger.

There was another reason we had no relationship. Elaine had definite (and negative) ideas about our former pastor. Others in the congregation sided with her. My husband and I, along with others in the church, had supported his work.

Now we had a new pastor. Perhaps harmony and friendship between Elaine and me might have bloomed later, but it wasn't meant to be.

Weeks earlier, Elaine had been diagnosed with an aggressive type of cancer. Our church, along with her large family, prayed for her. My husband and I prayed, too, yet Elaine's medical condition worsened. Before long, the family requested no visitors.

I knew the Lord wanted me to reach out to Elaine, but I still held unforgiveness toward her. So

with quiet stubbornness, I resisted His gentle urging. Then one Saturday morning in September the Holy Spirit placed a thought in my mind: *Give your flowers to Elaine.*

## The test

“Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward” (Mark 9:41).

All summer I watched my flowers grow near our kitchen window. It consisted of two giant marigold plants, one dahlia bush, and a single gladiola spike. I had watered, weeded, and hovered over those flowers like a mother tending to her toddler’s needs. I looked forward to when they would make a colorful autumn bouquet for my dining room table.

In September, Elaine’s family informed the congregation that she would soon pass. It was then, on that Saturday morning, the Holy Spirit revealed how I could minister to her.

At first, I balked at parting with my precious flowers, now in full bloom. But the Lord’s test wasn’t about giving away some flowers; it was about my being faithful to Him, regardless of the outcome. The choice was mine.

I chose to ask forgiveness from Him for my stubborn heart. I chose to forgive Elaine and minister to her by gifting her my prized flowers.

But my heartfelt decision posed a new problem. How would I get them to her? I didn’t know where she lived. What if I did find the family home,

knocked on the door, and they refused to answer? My fussing proved unnecessary.

## Faithful obedience

“I was sick and you looked after me” (Matthew 25:36).

A young couple from our church stopped by later that Saturday. I told Susan what I needed to do, and she agreed to go with me.

Scissors in hand, I harvested stems of yellow marigolds with giant blooms, fully opened yellow and red striped dahlias, and the salmon pink gladiola stalk. After I arranged and wrapped them in a large paper funnel,

burst throughout my being. The Lord had forgiven me and gifted me with peace earlier that day, but now? Now He filled me with *His* joy — a gracious and unexpected gift — as a result of my faithfulness and obedience to Him.

Those flowers weren’t mine. I had the pleasure of raising them and of admiring their growing beauty. But the Lord intended they be my gift of love, my gift of apology and of forgiveness to Elaine. Later, her mother shared with me that after we left, the family raised Elaine’s head and shoulders from the pillow so she could see the bouquet, and told her it was from Virginia.

“What a beautiful bouquet of flowers,” Elaine managed to say.

“The Lord’s test wasn’t about giving away some flowers; it was about my being faithful to Him.”

Susan drove me to Elaine’s home.

We knocked on the front door, and one of her brothers answered. His face revealed a deep sadness.

“I would like Elaine to have these flowers,” I told him. I opened my arms and gave him the bouquet. “Tell her they are from Virginia.” He thanked me, said a few kind words, and then closed the door.

As I turned and walked back to the car, an incredible sense of joy

Did the vibrant bouquet remind Elaine that one day she would see Jesus face to face? Did my gift assure her of my genuine apology and my offering of forgiveness? I like to think it did. Elaine died peacefully in the hope of the resurrection. **BA**

**Virginia A. Johnson** writes from Sublimity, OR. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



# Meant to Be



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by Lydia E. Harris

A light blue Volkswagen Beetle backed into the empty space next to my car in the medical parking lot. A middle-aged man got out of it. “That’s a nice car,” I said.

He smiled. “It’s a 2014.” We compared notes on VW’s we had owned, and then our conversation turned to family. “I have ten grandkids!” he proudly declared. “And my twelve-year-old granddaughter is coming for the weekend. I was telling my wife I should go buy a cookbook to use with my granddaughter and teach her to cook. I think that’s better than just watching TV the whole time.”

I couldn’t help smiling. “Look what I have.” I pulled out a copy of my new cookbook for grandmothers.

“Are you *Lydia*?” he asked, looking at my name on the cover. I nodded and handed him food samples to taste from recipes in my book.

“Are you going to write a cookbook for grandpas too?” He took a bite of a buttery cookie.

I shook my head. “No. Grandfathers can use this book as well.”

“Oh, good!” He smiled and handed me a donation for the book. “Our meeting was meant to be.”

“The cookbook also includes Scripture verses and ideas to chat about while you cook with your granddaughter.” I read him an example from the book.

“That’s nice,” he said. “We have four ministers in our family, and I used to attend church.” He paused. “I’ve gotten away from that. But my granddaughter goes to church, and she’s trying

to get her family to start attending too.”

The man said again, “Our meeting was meant to be.” Looking toward the medical offices, he said, “My wife recently developed back problems and is having an MRI. She may need surgery.”

“I’m sorry.” I looked at the pink and purple rubber band bracelet on my wrist that my granddaughter Anna had made. “Would your wife like a bracelet like this? I use mine to remind me to pray for my grandkids.”

He looked surprised. “Those are her colors!” As I gave him the bracelet, I asked, “Are you a praying man?”

He looked down. “Not really,” he said quietly. “Maybe you’ll become one.”

I sensed a nudge to continue the conversation, so I shared the ten-word gospel from my book with him. Then I prayed for his wife’s health, for a wonderful time with his granddaughter, and for all of them to draw closer to Jesus.

He echoed my “amen” at the end and gave me a hug. “Thank you. This was meant to be.”

I turned toward my car. “By the way, what’s your name?”

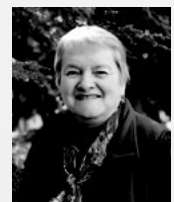
“I’m Bill.”

“Glad to meet you, Bill.”

In that moment I realized yes, in God’s divine providence, Bill’s and my meeting was not a coincidence. It was *definitely* meant to be. **BA**

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**Lydia E. Harris** writes from Lake Forest Park, WA. Read this article with the sidebar, “The Ten-Word Gospel,” in our Online Extras.







## Autumn Beauty

Dawn hides and hesitates.  
Evening light quickly fades  
As autumn descends upon  
The high desert.

Zucchini and tomatoes cling to vines,  
Though fronds brown and curl.  
Vibrant yellow rabbitbrush fades to feathery fluff  
As blustery winds the tiny parachute-seeds unfurl.

Patches of brilliant orange-red leaves  
Flame against dark evergreens.  
Golden aspens dance and sing  
In the crisp fall breeze.

Mountain peaks don a mantle of white.  
In this season of death and decay  
The Creator decorates all nature  
With incredible splendor on display.

Though this mortal tent be worn and wobbly  
In the autumn of my life,  
May the Master wield His mighty brush  
And paint His beauty within me,  
Glowing for His glory, a testimony of His grace.

Yvonne Kays

# Calvin A. Burrell

1943 - 2022



Calvin Archie Burrell peacefully passed from this life on June 29 at 9:30 p.m., surrounded by his family.

Calvin was born June 22, 1943, in Major County, Oklahoma, to his proud parents Lawrence and Lottie Burrell. He was the youngest boy in a sibling set of four, with two older brothers and one younger sister. He grew up the son of a farmer, so the love of the outdoors came naturally to him.

At age 16, Calvin graduated high school and went on to college. He earned his bachelor's in teaching from Northwest Teachers College and a master of divinity from Southern Nazarene. Education was important to him, and he loved teaching and preaching.

While teaching at Spring Vale Academy, Calvin met Barbara Mann, a student. They were married at Spring Vale fifty-six years ago, and their love never wavered but only grew stronger. A couple of weeks before he passed, Calvin summed up in one sentence his adoration of Barb: "Ten minutes without you

feels like a lifetime."

Calvin's three girls — Debra, Darla, and Donna — were his pride and joy. He was a devoted father who balanced his work, ministry, and family life. Every Sabbath after church the Burrell house was filled with people for lunch, which usually lasted into the evening. They often expanded their family by having students live with them while they attended Summit School of Theology.

Eventually Calvin got his boys — Craig, Sean, and Todd — when his daughters married, and he loved them as his own. Then came the grandkids, and he became "Papa." Calvin had nineteen grandkids, and four great-grandchildren.

Calvin accomplished much in his 79 years. He traveled extensively in the United States but also visited many other countries. Most of his traveling was for ministry, but the occasional "vacation" always included visiting and encouraging friends and churches.

A passionate mountain

climber, Calvin climbed all fifty-four peaks that are over fourteen thousand feet in Colorado — many of them several times. He also climbed Popocatepetl outside of Mexico City and Mount Hood when he was 68.

Calvin's love for music was evident. It was not uncommon to find him sitting at the piano, playing and singing hymns. He also taught some of his grandchildren to play his beloved ukulele and sang and played with them for Sabbath services.

Calvin's ministry and career accomplishments are long. He was a teacher and principal at Spring Vale Academy; a minister for churches in Fort Smith, Arkansas; Shawnee, Oklahoma; Denver, Colorado; and Houston, Texas. He was a teacher for Summit School of Theology, LifeSpring, and Artios Christian College. He was a published author and editor of the *Bible Advocate* magazine, Missions Abroad director, president of the International Ministerial Congress, and president of the General Conference Church of God (Seventh Day).

He also served on countless boards and advisory committees.

Along with Barb, Calvin volunteered as a victim's advocate for Adams County Sheriff's Department in Colorado. It was not uncommon for them to be called out in the middle of the night to care for someone who had just gone through the worst experience of their life.

In the last six years, Calvin played "errand boy" several times a week, driving to local grocery stores to pick up food to deliver to the local food bank. He also was happy when asked to do manual labor and loved the chance to drag tree limbs to burn piles and do yard work. Calvin was never too important or too busy to help those in need.

Calvin loved people well and cared about everyone equally — from the least of these to the greatest. He asked good questions and was a great listener. He was a man of integrity, a rare commodity. Calvin lived what he spoke. His desire and ambition were to emulate Jesus, who always walked and spoke truth yet lived and demonstrated grace. He knew he was a sinner in need of a Savior, and he was fully in love with Jesus. On the day Calvin passed, he mustered up the strength to give Barb a final bear hug. As he did, he smiled and proclaimed, "Today is going to be a great day!"

Calvin was right. The next thing he knows, he will be rejoicing with His Lord and Savior.

— *Debbie Hawkins*

*The full text of this memorial may be accessed at [baonline.org](http://baonline.org).*

## Remembering Calvin Burrell

*Editor's note: Here are excerpts from some condolences that have poured into our offices, as well as Facebook postings. The full text of these responses is in our Online Extras.*

We have lost a veritable soldier in the army of Lord Jesus. . . . We will miss Brother Burrell's leadership. He is gone, but his message and the Lord Jesus Christ whom he irrevocably stood for still live on in our hearts.

*Nehemiah A.A. Tembo  
Malawi, Africa*

I am one of the beneficiaries of his spiritual services in the Lord's vineyard . . . I am praying and am assured he will be among the servants whom the Lord shall reward during His glorious appearing to establish His kingdom on earth. Amen.

*Pastor A. A. Johnson  
Nigeria*

Elder Burrell was a special gift to this generation to restore us back to Scripture. His timeless Question and Answer column was inter-weaving scriptures in rare manner to answer every question biblically and honestly.

*Tshidzanani T. Malaba  
Zimbabwe*

In the magazine *Comprender* n<sup>o</sup> 30 of the Church of God (Seventh Day), published about 15 years ago . . . brother Calvin Burrell wrote

the article "My Journey," ending with this text: "I have spent the rest of my life trying to grow up and be the man God wants me to be, and I hope I've made some progress since those teenage years. Still, the most important truth of the Scripture is that Jesus loves us, and God's grace is still sufficient for us!"

*Paulo Jorge Coelho  
CoG7 Portugal*

Condolences to you and other saints there, especially to Calvin's family. The brethren here and across Africa are really grieving. Calvin was loved beyond what he could ever imagine.

*Robert Crawford  
UK President*

When [Calvin] preached, he was filled with infectious passion for God and His Word. When he taught, he always built students up but challenged them to their very core to learn and grow as much as possible. His presence and service will be sorely missed in the Church.

*The Artios Team*

A truly humble servant who ran the race well has finished the course and kept the faith.

*Samuel Holland  
Ontario, Canada*

BA won't be complete without his contributions and views. May God grant his gentle soul peaceful rest.

*Peter Chukwuemeka Chisom  
Nigeria*



# Church on a Mission

A biblical-theological reflection on the paradigm of the early church.

by Ramon Ruiz

In thousands of Christian writings and sermons, the church of the first century has been used as a paradigm for our contemporary church, and we are correct in doing so. The early church is in many ways the criterion and fundamental principle for what we believe and do.

## Characteristics

**The early church received God's special revelation.** We are told about that church in the book of Acts and about the early believers who were the original recipients of the New Testament

epistles. It was that community of faith that personally listened to Christ, to the apostles, and to the next generation of leaders, known as the fathers of the church. In other words, those in the early church received the gospel message and all the other evangelical doctrines firsthand.

That church was responsible for "closing" the biblical canon. Those early believers recognized the real Gospels and the authentic apostolic letters, and discarded dozens of writings of dubious origin. Because of these believers, the discarded writings were not recognized as having been inspired by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, they never became part of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

**The early church was an example in many things.** Just to name a few examples, the believers in the first century exempli-

fied obedience. Rather than obey men, they obeyed God (Acts 5:29). They demonstrated solidarity among one another (2:45), resolution of internal conflicts (6:1-7), and courage to face suffering and persecution because of the gospel (8:1-4).

The early church was a church on a mission. In addition to the previous examples, these believers stand out for their missionary model. It was not an economically rich church, as many are today that have more money than they do members. It was not politicized, as many churches are today that know more about regulations and statutes than they do about the Word of God.

The early church was not a humanly empowered church, as are many members and leaders today, with delusions of grandeur. It did not keep people entertained with fun stuff, as churches do today that offer a

scrupulously well done service so members feel happy, as if they were consumers. It was not a clerical church in which only a few participated. Nothing like the ones that exist today, where laymen have no place, as if they didn't have the Holy Spirit.

The church of the first century was never any of that because it was a church on a mission!

### Prison and prayer

For example, Acts 12 tells us that Herod had killed James with a sword and then went after Peter. He arrested and imprisoned him, then had Peter bound with chains and guarded by four squads of soldiers. But the church prayed without ceasing, and, finally, God performed a miracle: An angel appeared and freed Peter (vv. 1-10).

The story continues:

[Peter] came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer. When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate (vv. 12-14).

### Three characters

In this scene, we find three outstanding characters: Mary, Mark, and Rhoda. Each one of them tells us about the church on a mission.

**Mary, the mother of John Mark,** offered her house to the

believers, rather than have them go to the temple. Many brethren gathered and, naturally, began to evangelize as the gospel convicted them. There was edification because they learned the Word of God. There was fellowship as they shared together as brethren. There was worship as they called on the name of the Lord. And there was service by depending on one another.

**John Mark** is the evangelist credited with writing the second Gospel. He was part of the first missionary team, which eventually became two because Paul took Silas to Syria and Cilicia, and Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus (15:37-41). It doesn't take much wisdom to see the passion of this young man dedicated to evangelizing, and whose house was always full of people.

**Rhoda** was the young woman who, upon hearing a knock, left the gathering to open the door. She went back to tell the others that it was Peter. What this humble young woman teaches us is another of the basics of the church on a mission: service.

In these times, we lack people like Mary, Mark, and Rhoda who

not only connect to or attend the Sabbath service but also are visible on the other days of the week. We are, after all, called to be a church that is visible beyond the temple and beyond the Sabbath.

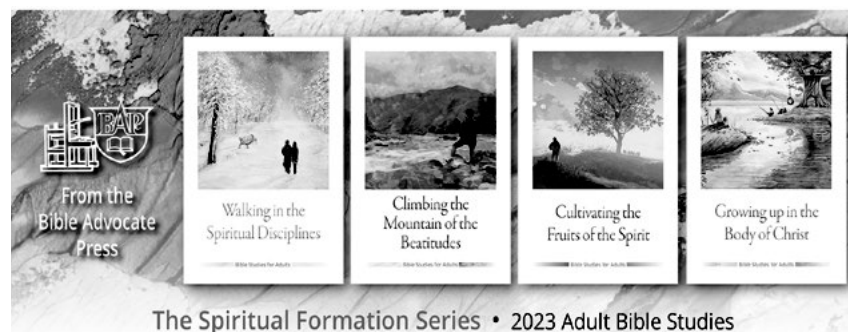
### Carrying on

Even in challenging times of persecution, the early believers were examples of what the church should be. Even in adverse conditions, they evangelized, worshipped, fellowshiped, edified each other, and served.

The early church was not only evangelical but evangelizing. May we follow the example of these committed believers beyond our congregations and beyond the Sabbath.

**Ramon Ruiz** is president of the International Ministerial Congress, and pastors the Melbourne church in Dallas, TX, with his wife Rebeca.

They have one son, two daughters, and several grandchildren.



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# Lie Fallow

by Randy Brunson

Camels have an Achilles' heel. But their vulnerability is hidden by their legendary resilience. These ships of the desert, known for going weeks without water, have been crossing dune seas since before the time of Abraham. They can carry heavy loads and travel thousands of miles across burning sands with seemingly endless endurance. But they give no indication when they are about to collapse. They simply stop, kneel, and die.

Humans, too, have an incredible capacity to rally in the face of calamity and duress, yet our souls hide an Achilles' heel. We rally and rally and then one day, we discover there's nothing left. Our soul simply says, "I'm done." And too often, we collapse into discouragement, depression, or simply blankness of soul.

The last couple of years have been traumatic for many. Each of us has been called on to rally in different ways. And the trauma and drama aren't over. This decade will require significant internal strength and fortitude.

Our American culture seems to endorse a sort of human invincibility, a belief that if we are willing to go any distance, work hard enough and long enough, and develop enough physical and mental endurance, we can accomplish anything. Those who embrace this philosophy often reap outsized financial rewards. We are fans of goal setting, personal growth, the pursuit of excellence, accomplishment, and achievement. Done well, these allow us a platform to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others and have a positive impact in the world.

But we are human. As such, we desperately need rest. And not just a good night's sleep but a restoration of the soul. There has been an ac-

knowledgment of the need for this restoration. The creation story speaks in terms of six days of work and a day of rest. Sabbaticals, extended time away for rest, reflection, and restoration, have historically been a part of academic life.

One of the most familiar poems is Psalm 23. In it, King David speaks of green meadows, still waters, and feasts. It is a picture of him experiencing peace, calmness, restoration, and abundance.

In agriculture and animal husbandry, the phrase is *lie fallow*. Fields need to regularly remain unplanted and simply left to regenerate without the demand of growing crops. A common rotation is to allow a field to lie fallow, or unplanted, one year out of seven.

The same with ranchers. They find that for fields to be healthy long-term, sheep or cattle may not graze them on a regular basis. Nature speaks to the value of rest and restoration.

Find ways to restore. The methods and approach will be specific to each of us. I've found that limiting inbound information helps, as does a focus on face-to-face conversation and intentionally being with people. The beauty and grandeur of nature also has great restorative power.

Perhaps the question is not what we will do but what will we rest from doing. Who will we choose to be? How can we extend grace to ourselves by letting go of the compulsive need to do? May we all experience the peace, calm, restoration, and abundance King David spoke of. **BA**

**Randy Brunson** is a graduate of Spring Vale Academy and lives with his wife, Teresa, in Atlanta, GA.





## Gospel People

The theme of this issue is “The People of the Gospel.” I’m struggling to write this “Last Word” because God’s Word itself addresses this theme so much better than I ever could. Consider, for example, how the apostle Paul (this column’s guest writer) speaks to the theme in just a few passages from his epistle to the Ephesians.

### What were we, and what is everybody, apart from God?

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (2:1-3, ESV throughout).

### What is the good news?

In him [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. . . . But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . . For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (1:7; 2:4-6, 8, 9).

### What, then, is our purpose?

So that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (2:7).

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (v. 10).

### How, then, should we live?

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ (5:15-21).

### To sum it all up . . .

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord (vv. 8-10).

Children of light proclaiming the Light while living His light: That’s how the gospel forms a people who embody and perpetuate the gospel story, by the Spirit, to the world. Thanks for this “Last Word,” Paul!

— Loren Stacy



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