

September 2006

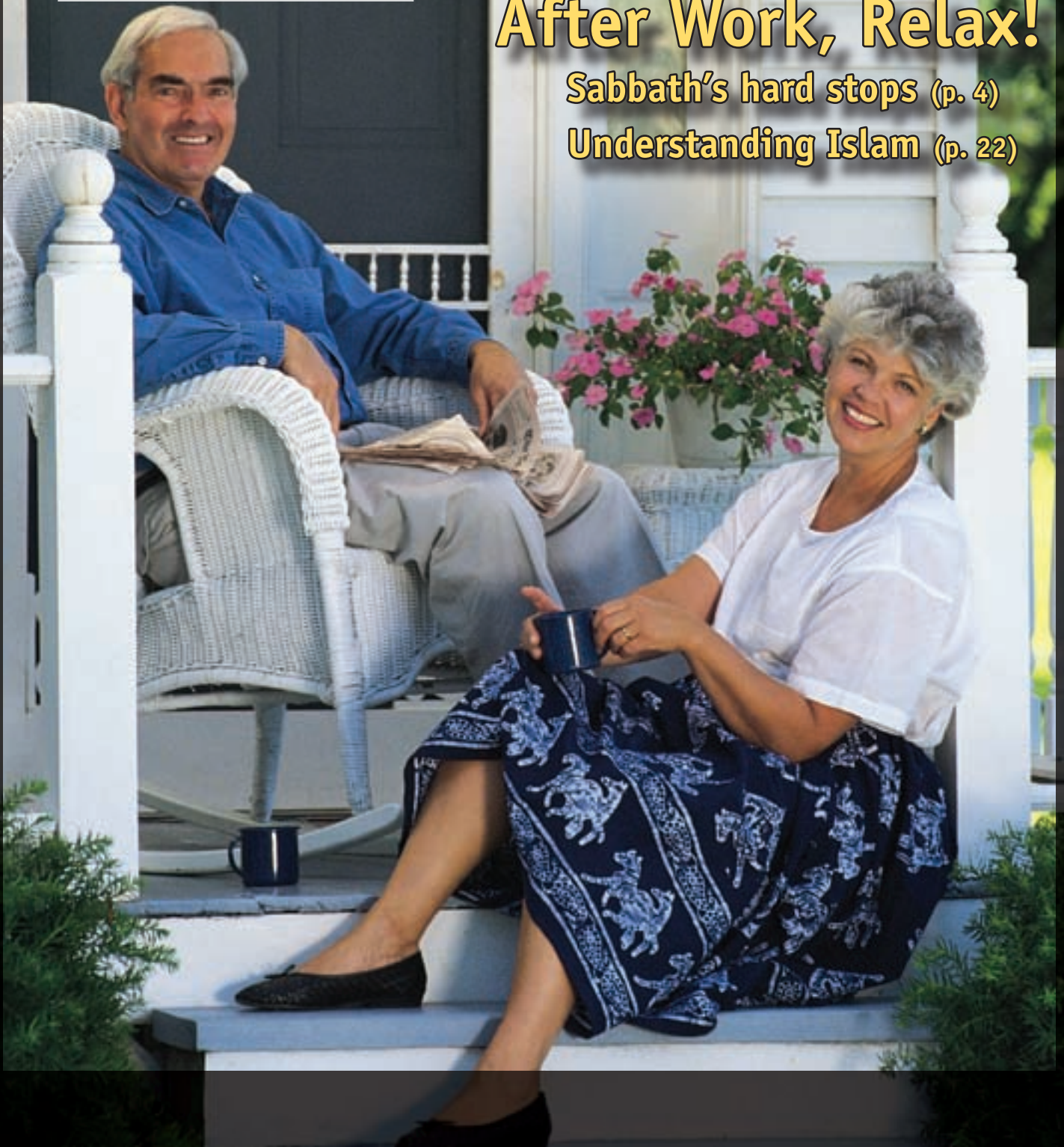
BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE

After Work, Relax!

Sabbath's hard stops (p. 4)

Understanding Islam (p. 22)





ARTICLES

- 4 **The Hard Work of Rest** — by Richard A. Wiedenheft
- 9 **The Forgotten Commandment** — by Bob Hostetler
- 11 **Obedying House Rules** — by Pat Voyce
- 12 **Teaching Tool** — by Les DeSouza
- 14 **Why We Buy Things We Don't Need** — by Bob Putman
- 16 **The Nobility of Work**
- 17 **Perpetual Rest?** — by Sherri Langton
- 18 **Dusty Feet** — by Candace Simar
- 22 **My Neighbor, My Enemy** — by Dr. James DeFrancisco



DEPARTMENTS

- 3 **First Word** — Labor, Leisure, and 9/11
- 8 **Questions & Answers**
- 13 **WWJD**
- 20 **Mail Bag**
- 21 **Wassup?** — 'New' Sabbathkeeping
- 30 **International Tour** — Australia
- 31 **Last Word** — Our Work Matters to God

27 **CoG7 IN ACTION**

Publications, In Memoriam, and more



Miss the last issue on God and country? View selections from it and download the last eight BA's at www.cog7.org/BA.

Coming in the October-November BA: creation care and temple care; international missions; Thanksgiving.

In the September issue of *Now What?*: a woman deals with the death of her husband (<http://now.what.cog7.org>)

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Labor, Leisure, and 9/11



Exploring “Christ and Culture” this year,
 we’ve found that interesting sub-themes
 are often prompted by the calendar. In
 September, for example, Labor Day in Ameri-
 ca (September 4) and the anniversary of the attack on the twin towers
 of New York City (September 11) each suggest lessons and reflections
 for this BA.

Labor Day is celebrated in the honor and interest of working people
 as a class. It’s not just a U.S. holiday but finds a home also on the
 calendars of Canada, Australia, some of Europe, the Philippines, and
 other countries. Honest work in support of human health and well-be-
 ing is rooted in Scripture and has always been a core value of Christian
 faith. It should grieve us more that the benefits of modern industrial
 and financial revolutions are not more evenly distributed around the
 globe, nor are they always based on hard work and honest toil.

Scripturally and socially, we have reason to deplore the present
 American tendency to get all we can, can all we get, and sit on it.
 When economic strategies are designed primarily to maximize wealth
 in minimum time, such greed often means minimal or even negative
 service to others and to God. Proverbs and texts elsewhere in the Bible
 frequently denounce usury, waste, get-rich-quick schemes, and wealth
 gotten at the other’s expense. Surely these Bible teachings speak to
 today’s lotteries, landfills, wasted resources, windfall profits of investors
 who produce nothing but higher prices, and multi-level markets that
 depend mostly on another’s effort. If not, why not?

For every Bible point on the dignity and necessity of good work and
 honest labor, there is a counterpoint on the graces of rest and ceas-
 ing (Sabbathkeeping). In this issue, Richard Wiedenheft weaves fresh
 thought and challenge into this classic but oft-neglected theme (p. 4).

Just as December 7, 1941, (Pearl Harbor attack) lived in infamy for
 twentieth century Americans (as President Roosevelt predicted), so will
 September 11, 2001, remain an offense to peace- and freedom-loving
 peoples for the rest of this century and beyond. That day drove the
 specter of hi-tech terrorism home to many, along with the high-stakes
 potential of escalating conflict between Islam and Christianity around
 the world. How ought we respond? Please give Jim DeFrancisco’s ar-
 ticle (p. 22) a thoughtful read in this regard.

Your feedback is welcome here.

— Calvin Burrell



The Hard Work of Rest

Think it's easy to really take a day off? Think again. by **Richard A. Wiedenheft**

The Ten Commandments are widely acclaimed and celebrated among many Christians, yet the vast majority don't even make a pretense of observing the fourth, which prescribes a day of rest — a Sabbath. It seems that this commandment, more so than all the others, is just too hard to keep.



Perhaps it has to do with the fact that the Sabbath involves our time and that we just don't want to give up being in charge of it. Most of us would sooner fork over our money (tithe) than give up our time, especially when we're supposed to dedicate it to something as "unproductive" as ceasing. We don't want to stop pursuing our own agenda, setting our own priorities, seeking the pleasures we think we need. Or perhaps we don't want to face some of the emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of our lives that surface when our minds are not preoccupied with endless activities.

Even among those who observe a 24-hour, seventh-day Sabbath, ceasing can come with great difficulty. In fact, for many the Sabbath is a day with just as much to do as every other day of the week, except that it's a different kind of activity. All Sabbath long they're busy with traveling,

church services, classes, food preparation, eating, rehearsals, meetings, and studies. This is not to imply that there's anything intrinsically wrong with such pursuits on the Sabbath, but when they get crammed into a day of "ceasing" — well, it just ceases to be a day of ceasing. Not infrequently, I hear people joke, "We keep the Sabbath on Saturday and rest up on Sunday."

Right priorities

The fact that we human beings find it so difficult to cease from activity indicates, perhaps, a deeper spiritual problem. Jesus focused on this when He said:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? . . . So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?'

or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:25, 31).

Clearly, we need food, drink, and clothing to survive physically, but our lives should not revolve around those things nor around the laboring we must do to obtain them. Having to cease, to keep a Sabbath, at the end of every week can be a kind of test of whether or not we truly believe that life does not consist of these physical things.

If we need a Sabbath to remind us of this truth, we also need it to remind us that our lives do not consist of luxuries. Indeed, much of our labor, especially in the Western world, goes for extravagances that we consider necessities. The people of Jesus' day were no different, and He warned them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

Then He told the parable about the rich man who was caught up with his good crops and storehouses and possessions, looking forward to a life of ease and indulgence. But that very night he would die.

If this rich man had observed a day of ceasing, perhaps he would have learned a lesson about priorities, because when we keep the Sabbath and stop our laboring and acquiring, we discover some vital truths: Life does not cease; it is worth living. We still have relationships with our family, Christian brethren, and God. We can love and be loved; we can worship. In fact, on the Sabbath we are free to develop and enjoy these relationships, which often get neglected during the hectic days of work and activity.

Creator and creation

When we halt our laboring and accumulating, we also have time to focus on God as the cre-

ator and sustainer of the universe and of us. It is He who provides the things that are absolutely essential for life and many that are pure luxuries. The warmth of the sun by day, the soft glow of the moon by night, the sparkle of the stars, the lush green of springtime, the smell of a pine forest, the caress of a gentle summer breeze: We did nothing to earn or acquire these. They are gifts from the Maker of heaven and earth.

The Sabbath reminds us that there is a higher purpose to life than the physical accomplishing and acquiring we do during the week. We may have full bank accounts, busy lives, and cluttered attics — the things our hard work can get us. But if we don't appreciate what God provides without any effort on our part, we are destitute. We should thank God every day for His wonderful gifts. But on the Sabbath, especially, we are free to really appreciate and enjoy them.

Equalizer

For much of human history, leisure time has generally been a luxury only the wealthy could enjoy. But that is not as God intended it. In setting aside the Sabbath at Creation, He was providing rest for everyone. The words of the commandment make this explicit. On the seventh day, "you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates" (Exodus 20:10).

The Sabbath has been called the great equalizer because it provides a time of ceasing for all human beings: rich and poor, master and servant, native-born and foreigner — even *animals*. Throughout the week, some of us give orders, others receive them. Some bring home big paychecks, some small. Some buy clothes in fancy department stores, others wear cast-offs. But on the Sabbath, every one of us enters a day of rest before God on an equal basis. In receiving this gift, we are all the same: human beings made in the image of God, recipients of this divine gift of leisure time.

How similar to the gift of life we have in Christ. As Paul put it:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:28, 29).

Those of us who enter into the rest of salvation do so by accepting His grace, His gift of forgiveness. We are all simply adopted children of God, paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ.



PhotoDisc

Fellowship and worship

The writer of Hebrews gives this exhortation: “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

Christians can and should worship God on any and every day of the week. But for Christians to meet together, for corporate worship to take place, they must be available at the same time. They must be free from the responsibilities of this physical life simultaneously. God provided for this freedom in the Sabbath.

Furthermore, by making the Sabbath a higher priority than the physical urgencies that crowd our lives, we are making a statement that corporate worship is not just an afterthought. It’s not something we do if we have time or if we don’t have to work. On the contrary, worship is central to our lives, which are completely dependent on the Lord of the Sabbath.

What a great blessing is this free time for keeping congregations together — time for communication, for relationship-building, for fellowship among brethren and with God!

Sabbath and salvation

Unlike paid vacation time you earn by laboring for so many months, the Sabbath is not something you earn. It is available freely to everyone who is willing to cease from work and rest. Similarly, salvation is not something we earn by laboring. It is a gift from God we can receive by ceasing from the works of the flesh and resting in Jesus Christ. And just as our physical life does



PhotoDisc

not consist of the things we do and acquire, so our salvation is not about what we do for God. It’s about resting — trusting in Christ and in what He has done for us.

One of the most difficult things about keeping the Sabbath is the challenge of resting as if all our work is completed — as if we never have to go back to work again.

Similarly, Christ’s salvation calls upon us to rest in Him as if all our work is done. In Him we are seated in heavenly places, even as we struggle against sin here on earth. In Him we have peace that passes all understanding even while we experience conflict in our lives. In Him we are perfect and holy before God even while we work to overcome our fleshly natures through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Him we glory in eternal life even as we suffer pain, loss, and disappointment in the physical realm. And just as we are called upon to labor in the physical realm without looking to our work as the ultimate source of our significance and security, so we are called

upon to work, to overcome, to do good deeds in the spiritual realm without looking to them as the source of our salvation.

Sabbathkeeping may indeed be hard work — so hard, in fact, that few are willing to do it. But those who do will receive great physical and spiritual blessings. They will be refreshed in body, mind, and spirit; they will savor the wonderful gifts of God, appreciate their relationships with fellow human beings, and experience a reminder of the ultimate rest that comes through salvation in Jesus Christ, Lord of the Sabbath, who labored for us by dying on the cross so that we might rest with Him for eternity.



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



Questions & Answers

Is Sabbath a defining issue of love and obedience, a line between those for or against Christ? If not, may we just ignore it? How can I show God I love Him and avoid sinning? Isn't sin still defined by the law?

The Bible does not teach that Sabbath observance separates true believers from those who only profess to believe. We are not saved or lost by days we observe or don't observe. Though a good gift for those who receive it, Sabbath is not primary. The crucial issue in the New Testament gospel is the cross of Christ. Will we respond in faith to His death and resurrection (John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)?

Still, the fact that a particular doctrine is less than the greatest truth does not suggest that it has no importance. Every teaching of the Bible has value. The Sabbath, for example, enhances physical and spiritual well-being, especially for believers (Mark 2:27; Isa. 58:13, 14). Those who neglect it miss the blessing.

Sabbath is controversial, but we may not assume that one viewpoint of it is as valid as another or that we may ignore it altogether. In response to God's redeeming grace, believers should obey His every word for us and celebrate all His gifts (Rom. 12:1, 2), including the weekly Sabbath.

Yes, sin is still defined by the law (1 John 3:4), and we still demonstrate love for God by obeying His commands (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). However, we must not limit our concept of sin to the Ten Commandments or to law in general. Other definitions of sin include falling short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), unbelief (14:23), failure to do all the good we know (James 4:17), and all unrighteousness (1 John 5:17). The Bible speaks much about good deeds we should do in the name of Christ — Matthew 25:31-46, for example. These deeds also become primary ways to show our love for God.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

Who decides which Old Testament laws are to be kept by Christians today and which are discarded?

The short answer to your short question is "The New Testament decides."

Take the Ten Commandments, for example. The New Testament writings repeatedly reject law as a method to salvation, but they also uphold the essential truths of the Old Testament's Decalogue as standards for conduct. Thus, Christians should be fully committed to observe and practice these truths by the Spirit.

The teachings of Jesus and His apostles show that Israel's top ten laws are now a part of church doctrine. Christians keep God's commands not because they were once written on stone under the old covenant but because they are now written on our hearts under the new covenant. God's law serves to reveal more of God's will for believers. For the unbelieving sinner, the perfect law of God points him to Christ for salvation.

Other New Testament teachings may reflect Mosaic laws beyond the Ten. Jesus' comments about giving, for example, are sympathetic with the Old Testament command to tithe (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42). Should Christians focus on the 613 Old Testament laws, then, to make sure we have them all? Not according to 2 Corinthians 3:13-18. Rather, we give our main attention to the glory of Christ, His life and teachings, and the writings of His apostles.

The next time you are faced with one of the Torah's demands and you wonder if it applies to you, let Jesus and His apostles decide. The Old Testament is still God's Word and shines much light on our way. The New Testament, however, is God's final Word, and Jesus Christ is the light of the world. See and hear Him!

— Elder Calvin Burrell

The Forgotten Commandment



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Time to remember what's important to God and beneficial to us. **by Bob Hostetler**

The common clothes moth sometimes goes into a molting frenzy in its caterpillar stage if it does not get sufficient food. The Tineidae caterpillar, which feeds on clothes and other fabric, will then molt repeatedly, changing its skin many times, shrinking in size with every change. "The diminution process," Annie Dillard points out in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*,

"could, in imagination, extend to infinity, as the creature frantically shrinks and shrinks and shrinks to the size of a molecule, then an electron, but never can shrink to absolute nothing and end its terrible hunger."

The clothes moth's activity is hauntingly familiar. Many of us spend our lives in similar spasms of activity. We speed through frantic work and frenzied leisure,

often not realizing that far from enlarging and enhancing our lives, we diminish and detract from them. The diminution process leaves us feeling tired and stressed, always busy but never finished, always moving but never getting anywhere.

Do these frenzied lives please God?

Origin

The Genesis account of Creation says that, after six days of work, “God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work” (Genesis 2:2). God did not rest because He needed to; He was not tired. He rested for the same reason that He performed the work of creation over six days instead of accomplishing it in one: to provide a pattern based on divine order and wisdom.

That pattern, implicit in the Creation account, was made explicit once He delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. God provided manna in the wilderness for the Israelites and instructed them to gather as much as they needed each day. On the sixth day, however, He commanded them to gather a two-day supply because “Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD . . . Six days you shall gather [manna], but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none” (Exodus 16:23, 26).

That command was codified in the Ten Commandments, given soon after at Mt. Sinai. Referring to the institution of a day of rest in the wilderness and to its pattern at Creation, God charged the newborn nation:

“Remember the Sabbath

day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (20:8-12).

Neglect

Yet of all the commands issued from the mount, the fourth is the most neglected — and perhaps most transgressed.

In spite of Jesus’ statement that “not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18), many Christians ascribe Sabbathkeeping to ancient times or bygone days. Their lifestyles are simply too busy, their schedules too hectic, to observe a day of rest.

Some, of course, point to the church’s apparent second-century shift from worship on the Sabbath to the custom of meeting on the first day of the week. But in many Christian homes and churches, Sunday is no more a day of rest than is the rest of the week. It becomes a blur as families squeeze Little

League games, cookouts, nursing home visitation, youth meetings, Sunday school, church services, shopping, and a myriad of other activities into every waking hour.

Return to the Sabbath

There is a better way, and that is the reason for the fourth commandment. Jesus referred to it when He informed His critics, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The command to observe a day of rest, like every law of God, was given not to constrict us but to free us. The Sabbath is God’s gift!

If we refuse to observe a day of rest, we not only disobey the command of God but also deprive ourselves of a precious gift of God. How much wiser would we be if we rested one day in seven, according to the pattern of God? How could it enhance our worship? How much calmer would be the course of our week? How much healthier and happier would we be? How much more could we accomplish over the course of a lifetime?

The forgotten commandment is no less important than the other nine, and we who seek to please God in our work are also called to please Him in our worship, which includes a Sabbath rest. **BA**

If we refuse to observe a day of rest, we not only disobey the command of God but also deprive ourselves of a precious gift of God.

Bob Hostetler writes from Hamilton, OH. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



Obeying House Rules

by Pat Voyce

I'm always looking for more time.

As a multi-task expert, I've decided that if I do several things at once, instead of one after another, I'll have time left over to do other things I really want to do.

My mind went over and over stuff I had to do: *What can I consolidate? What can I eliminate?* I tried every time-saving efficiency I knew, but there still wasn't enough time. So, I prayed.

I prayed that God would expand my time to enjoy what was missing in life. "God, Your Word tells me there's nothing better than to enjoy the fruits of my labors. I work hard, but there is never enough time to relish the result."

Instead of an answer, I felt a gnawing. In my deepest soul, I was not willing to accept that the peace of a balanced life should elude me. I longed for the endless hours I knew as a child. All I had to do was whatever my folks told me, and everything was fine.

That's different now as I try to balance so much. Others depend on me, so there's little time for me. Maybe I needed to learn to better manage my time.

I read books on time management. To increase my energy level for all my newfound time, I tried a fitness program. Instead

of a boatload of free time and a svelte new body, I was exhausted! I still didn't have any leftover time, and that uneasiness continued to gnaw.

I had the same feeling as a youngster when Dad said to "remember" something; but I hadn't. I decided to do a Bible study about time.

I found Ecclesiastes 3:1: "There is . . . time for every purpose under heaven." The verses that follow list common events of life: birth, death, planting, harvest, hurts, and healing. There is time for all these things in each of our lives. Good enough.

But the phrase "purpose under heaven" haunted me as I considered my own purposes. In the margin of my Bible, I saw *desire* as an alternative for *purpose*: "time for every *desire* under heaven."

My desire was for more time, and Ecclesiastes 8:6 nagged me: "Because for every matter there is a time and judgment." I thought of the one commandment about time: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

Something clicked. As a kid, I had lots of time with only a few of Dad's house rules to "remember" or else face the consequences. Likewise, to enjoy our time, our heavenly Father wants

us to remember His house rules for the Sabbath.

"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (v. 11). God says, "I got it all done in six days and took the next one off to enjoy the results." He explains that He not only did everything in six days but also blessed and hallowed the seventh day.

There it was! In violating God's house rules, I would never have the time I wanted. No amount of multi-tasking or human effort would free me if I wasn't properly using time my heavenly Father had set aside for another purpose under heaven. But when I remember and abide by His house rules, He blesses me with time for every purpose.

God has blessed us with a vacation time each week to counteract the busy-ness of life, to "go back home" and connect with Him, to fellowship with His family, and to be refreshed. Let us remember and show our appreciation for His fatherly wisdom in setting aside this time for His glory and for our good. **✠**

Pat Voyce and her husband, Bill, are members living in Pleasant Hill, IA. Pat teaches writing and sewing to adults.

Teaching Tool

by Les DeSouza

I began observing Sabbath in 1975. A year later, I married a young lady who also believed Sabbath was relevant for Christians. Back then we lived mostly hand to mouth — no savings. Just before our son was born, I had to decide about the afternoon shift I had been assigned by my employer. Would I work beyond sunset on Friday, or leave the job with no other means of support for my family?

Some brethren told us it was OK to work those few Sabbath hours; God understood. My wife and I, however, felt a great obligation to revealed truth. To violate our conscience through disobedience would be unacceptable. Even with unemployment high and jobs scarce, we felt God would supply our needs. I left the job that Friday afternoon, trusting God to make another way.

An amazing thing happened as I went the next Monday to apply at another company. Getting off the bus, I heard an inner voice: “Say you have experience.” I did not understand why until the receptionist told me they were not accepting applications. Turning to leave, I simply repeated, “I have experience.”

Her attitude quickly changed. “Wait,” she said. “I will get the manager from his meeting.” After twenty minutes, I offered to

return, but she replied, “No, you wait until I get him out.”

After interviewing me, the manager said they were not hiring. “However,” he added, “if you are willing to start at the bottom, I will hire you now.” I accepted the position. But with this lower-paying job and a new addition to our family, we soon realized that the job was not meeting our basic needs. Someone told us we could get on a subsidized housing list. My wife applied and was told the waiting list was at least five years long.

Now I was back at the crossroads of decision: Would I accept another position in the company that required Sabbath work but paid more, or would I be true to our convictions? The reasons pulling me to compromise my faith and accept the position were strong. With tears running down my face, I found strength to renew my commitment: “God, if this is my test, I will go home and tell my wife that we can eat macaroni every day if that’s what it will take to not work on the Sabbath.” My wife supported my commitment.

Two days later in a prayer meeting, I heard that voice again: “Thank Me for a car.” Startled, I shared this experience with one of the leaders, along with my difficult financial situation. Following this person’s counsel, I fell on

my knees again and thanked my Father for a car. Two days later, I was driving a 1978 Buick Skylark.

The next week I saw an ad for people with the experience I had from my previous job. I went for an interview, and the first question asked was “Do you have a car?” I readily replied, “Yes.” I accepted a position with an understanding that I would not be required to work Sabbath hours.

After a week on the new job, I received a call that a house was available if we were willing to relocate. When my wife told me the location, I said to her, “Tell them we’ll take it. It is exactly ten minutes from my new job.”

In less than a month after being willing to eat macaroni for the rest of our lives, I had a car, a new job, and a home. I honestly believe that God used the Sabbath to teach me how He would provide the things I needed.

Besides refreshment and the reminder that I’m saved by grace, I now have another reason to celebrate on the Sabbath: The God I honored honors me. ■■

Les DeSouza recently completed two terms as superintendent of the Eastern Canada District and now serves as pastor of the church in Toronto (Scarborough), Ontario.

WWJZ



What would Jesus do about rest and reverence?

- He would take proper times in proper places for rest from the weariness that comes upon us all. Rather than pursue constant productivity, Jesus would seek relaxation and retreat from the pressure of public ministry. His concern for rest went beyond Himself to the needs of others (John 4:6; Mark 4:38a; 6:31; Luke 5:15, 16; 21:37; 22:39).
- He would seek justice and freedom for those oppressed by the work demands upon time, overtime, and Sabbath time. The text Jesus selected in His inaugural sermon (Luke 4:17-20; Isa. 61:1, 2) refers to the Hebrew year of Jubilee, when rest and release were offered to all bondmen and women oppressed by debts, forced servitude, and other things. Christ's sermon implies that the true time of sabbatical rest and release is already and always present in Him (Matt. 11:28-30).
- He would not forsake the regular assembly of believers, as many have done. Jesus' custom was always to meet, at the appointed place and time, with those who came to worship God and hear His Word (Luke 4:16; Heb. 10:25).
- He would serve the physical needs of others even on the weekly rest day, as the Gospels say He often did (Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11; 14:1-6; John 5:1-16ff; 9:1-14ff).
- He would reject the Sabbath of the Pharisees, who majored in minor rules and regulations concerning what could and could not be done on the day of rest. Jesus gave small space for such talmudic interpretations. He would call for Sabbath reform, a return to the Sabbath hallowed at Creation. This is what God meant from the beginning: a day made for the godly benefit and blessing of people everywhere and a day for human well-doing toward others (Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 2:27).
- As Lord of the Sabbath, He would insist that the weekly rest day be preserved for people's benefit — not that people serve the Sabbath but that the Sabbath serves the temporal and eternal needs of humanity as first intended. And Jesus might ask us to pray that future generations be spared from the restlessness and oppression that incessantly interrupts the Creation cycle of noble labor and elegant rest (Mark 2:27, 28; Matt. 24:20).

For further reflection

1. The insistence of Christ to heal and release people on the Sabbath day brought the sternest opposition from religious leaders. What differences do you see between Sabbath as Jesus practiced it and the Pharisees' Sabbath?
2. What reforms did Jesus attempt to bring to the Sabbath of the Pharisees? Would Jesus have attempted such reform had He intended to abolish the Sabbath shortly?
3. Jesus' inaugural sermon linked the sabbatical year of release and Jubilee to the heart of His ministry. How can the same link be true of our service in the gospel?



Corel Photos

The truth about Madison Avenue's influence: How to fight the madness. by Bob Putman

Ever read a book that made you mad? I was intrigued by the title of Pamela N. Danziger's *Why People Buy Things They Don't Need*. But after browsing through pages 1-96, I found myself grouching. Why? Because Danziger knows precisely what she's talking about, and her job is to sell marketers the goods on you and me.

If you don't like being manipulated any more than I do, you might want to look at what Danziger says about Madison Avenue's clever ploys. These people study your weaknesses, then use them to raid your earnings.

Danziger spent the past twenty years researching why Americans spend as we do. We purchase kitchen gadgets, home textiles, computer software, candles and aromatherapy products, gardening items, and a host of other discretionary items. In fact, we fork out about 30 percent of our income for stuff we don't need.

Why this madness? According to Danziger, fourteen "justifiers" underlie our motivation to spend money on unnecessary items. "When marketers do the hard work of providing the justifiers for their customers, it is amazing

how this bolsters product sales. Justifiers overcome objections and compel the consumer to buy," she writes.

Reasons to spend

How do we justify spending hard-earned cash on unneeded purchases? On the basis of one or more of the following "reasons."

Quality of life. The product will improve our education/knowledge, health, spiritual life, emotional satisfaction/security, social success.

Pleasure. The experience of

shopping in an exclusive place makes us feel better.

Beautify the home. We get a feeling of identity and worth from our home's appearance.

Education. The more education we have, the more material things we crave. And then we apply education in researching our major purchases.

Entertainment. We buy or rent things to reduce boredom and generate excitement. Or we seek an environment that helps us experience shopping as entertainment.

Planned purchase. We build anticipation for buying something unneeded by researching and planning for the purchase.

Emotional satisfaction. We spend to seek emotional comfort, to experience the fun of having the latest and greatest, or to express our identity.

Replacing an existing item. Replacing a worn-out item often serves as a catalyst for an extended spending spree on coordinated items.

Stress relief. We turn to relaxation products/equipment, nostalgia- and tradition-themed items to deliver comfort.

Hobbies. We collect for the joy of ownership and the thrill of the hunt. If one family member collects, usually others do also.

Gifts. When buying gifts for others, we often buy a more expensive one for ourselves.

Impulse purchase. We gain a feeling of power and entitlement from making an impulse buy.

Status. While few of us admit it, we buy things that will be visible to others in order to impress them.

Do any of these justifiers sound familiar? They should. Advertisers spend billions each year

to push these buttons in your psyche. For the most part, these reasons to spend are simply nonsense. Danziger states:

The justifiers give consumers the illusion they are acting rationally in purchasing, but in reality, they remain driven by personal desires and emotions. . . . When marketers really understand how their products play into the hearts and emotions of their customers, the judicious use of justifiers in marketing communications stacks the deck in the marketer's favor and gives consumers permission to buy (pp. 59-60).

In other words, they pull your emotional and psychological strings, and a-spending you go.

Declaring war

Armed with these clues to how marketers snag you, how do you declare war against Madison Avenue manipulation? A few suggestions:

\$ Whenever you see an advertisement on TV, talk back to it or mute the sound. Point out the commercial's hidden lie to your children, spouse, or friends.


\$ Do a word study on *content* and *contentment* in the Bible. You might want to begin with

1 Timothy 6:6-8 and Philippians 4:11-13.

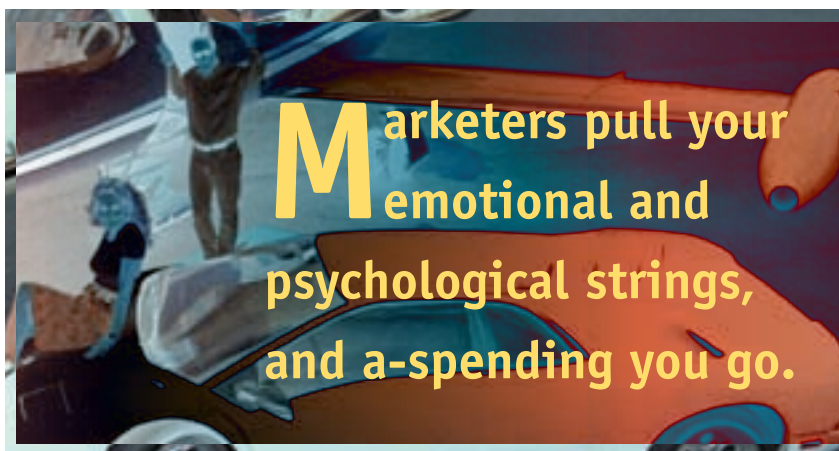
\$ If you're wired for impulse buying ("see it, like it, buy it"), pray while you shop. And exercise the most noncommercial spiritual fruit, self-control.

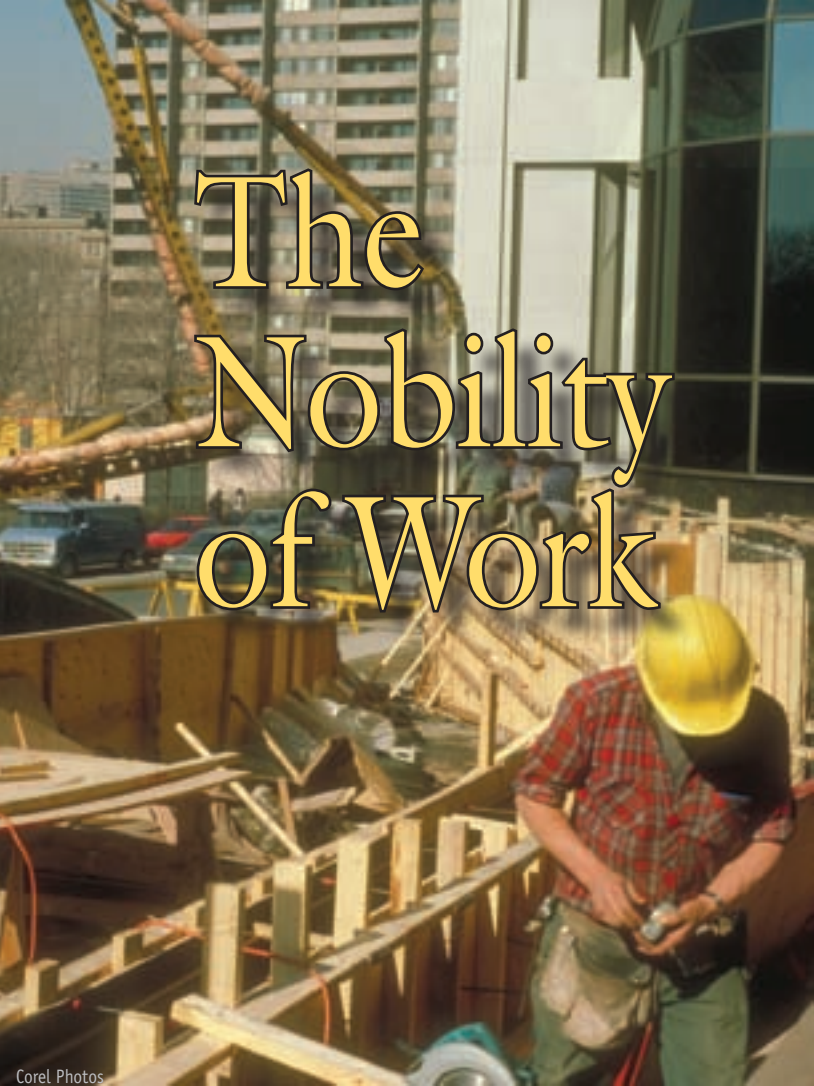
\$ Meditate on your motivation. What do you get out of shopping and spending? Does it improve your mood, strengthen your confidence, energize your emotions? Should it?

\$ For long-lasting satisfaction, invest your extra money in helping people and extending Christ's kingdom (see Luke 16:9).

You don't have to be a victim of your own indulgence or Madison Avenue's manipulation. You were chosen for a better life. So shop wisely, shop well, and shop only when necessary. Diligently search for your satisfaction in God alone. There's plenty there for the savvy shopper (Isaiah 55:1-3). 

Bob Putman is editor of *BGC World* and writes from Schaumburg, IL.





The Nobility of Work

Bible, most often in the New Testament. We might suppose that the epistle of James is the most clear-cut of scriptures in stressing the virtue of good works for the Christian, but other sacred writings emphasize this topic equally well.

Consider, for example, Paul's teaching in the Pastoral Epistles (see box).

- Jesus Christ is our greatest human example of good works (John 10:32; Acts 10:38). His Sermon on the Mount and many of His parables deal with this theme (Matt. 20:11-15; 21:28-31; 25:14-46; Luke 10:29-37; 13:6-9; 19:12-27).
- Good works are the fruit of our salvation, not the root of it (Eph. 2:8-10). Good works put the proof to our claim of justification by faith in Christ. They demonstrate our faith to be authentic, not mere profession (James 2:14-26).
- It assures us that God remembers our labor of love for others (Neh. 13:14; Heb. 6:9, 10) and that He will reward those who do well at the last day when every person will be judged according to his works (Psa. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:5, 6; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12; 22:12).

What does the Bible say about labor?

- It is a blessing and not a curse. God assigned Adam and Eve the nobility of fruitful labor even before disobedience entered their experience. It is true that work became more difficult and toilsome after our first parents' sin, but the curse that came out of Eden was not a curse upon the activity of work itself.
- Work was commanded, not suggested, in Scripture from the start (Ex. 20:9; Deut. 5:13; Eccl. 9:10). Work is required for those who wish to eat (2 Thess. 3:10).
- Not only our creative work reflects God's image in us (Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:15, 19, 20; John 5:17) but also our good works can stimulate God's glory from and through others who observe and benefit (Matt. 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12).
- Labor is good and not evil. The words *good* and *work(s)* are linked more than 30 times in the

Did Paul Oppose Good Works?

- In 1 Timothy, Paul commends the good work of a bishop (3:1ff). He declares the importance of good works for godly women (2:10; 5:10) and for all men (5:25), especially those who are wealthy (6:18).
- In 2 Timothy, he urges that moral purity and scriptural teaching will serve to prepare Christians for every good work (2:21; 3:17).
- In little Titus, Paul is even more emphatic. Though works of righteousness do not achieve salvation (3:5), the apostle urges all who believe in God to "maintain good works" with unflagging zeal (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14).



PhotoDisc

PERPETUAL REST?

Imagine a life of perpetual rest — long mornings in bed, leisurely strolls in the afternoons, relaxed evenings with friends and loved ones.

“Sounds like eternity,” you say.

But this isn’t eternity we’re talking about, and it goes well beyond the weekly Sabbath. It’s the here and now and it’s every day, doing as little as possible and avoiding work at all cost. Business, after all, is the enemy. Rest is best.

That’s what British author Tom Hodgkinson is suggesting in his book *How to be Idle* (HarperCollins). Hodgkinson, also editor of *The Idler*, is not a Christian, and it shows in the host of writers and thinkers he’s quoted who agree that work is a curse. It’s a place of misery with a whip-cracking boss. This environment forces the laborer to break free and seek rest. Why work when you can and should do nothing?

Some of Hodgkinson’s observations are true. Many employees *do* have Pharaoh for a boss. Ours is a culture addicted to work. “And the result is not health, wealth and wisdom,” he writes, “but rather a lot of anxiety, a lot of ill health and a lot

of debt. . . . It’s time to say no to jobs and yes to fun, freedom and pleasure.”

To be idle, in other words. Every chapter in *How to be Idle* is shaped around a specific “activity” (sleeping in, extended lunches, napping, and others) designed to help us sidestep labor and embrace leisure.

While this sounds absurd, the truth is that a good number of folks would rather not work. For instance, we hear much about abuses of the American welfare system. CareerBuilders.com reports that at least once during 2005, 43 percent of workers called in sick when they weren’t sick, an increase of 35 percent over the 2004 survey. Reasons varied, from faking illness to such excuses as “I forgot it was my wedding day,” “My boyfriend’s snake got loose and I’m afraid to leave the bedroom until he gets home,” and my favorite — “God didn’t wake me.”

OK, we may not go to such extremes as this, but the survey and *How to be Idle* are good reminders that even Christians are human enough to misread the fourth commandment. In our eagerness to jump into Sabbath,

we overlook that God worked *before* He rested and that He told us to do the same.

All play and no work isn’t biblical. Idleness is condemned, not condoned, in Scripture because it leads to unhealthy results:

- poverty (Proverbs 10:4)
- irritation to others (v. 26)
- destruction (18:9)
- hunger (19:15)
- lack of harvest (20:4)
- disrepair (Ecclesiastes 10:18)
- meddling (2 Thessalonians

3:11)

Paul felt so strongly about the need to work that he said if a person doesn’t work, he shouldn’t eat (v. 10).

Because we’re made in the image of God, it makes sense that we should find satisfaction in our work, to pour all our skill and energy into a task and call it good — just as our Creator did. Contrary to what Hodgkinson says, work suited to the worker brings a sense of accomplishment, a boost to self-esteem. It goes beyond just earning a paycheck.

Want a break? Feel the need for some down time? Go ahead. Just be sure you’ve earned it.

— Sherri Langton

Dusty Feet

The loss of a job brings pain . . . and a new future. **by Candace Simar**

“**T**his is your thirty-day notice.” My young boss tilted back in his chair and stretched out his legs. “Your job is being eliminated.”

Everything slipped into slow motion. The blood drained from my face.

“It’s a money-saving decision.” He acted embarrassed. “By combining departments, we save on management costs.”

I wondered what I had done wrong, if I had crossed an invisible line that pushed me out of existence.

“It’s nothing personal,” he said.

It felt very personal. We sat in silence. I could feel his relief when I finally stood to leave.

“What are you going to do?”

I had no idea.

My husband sympathized. But no matter how hard I tried, I could not bring myself to speak of it to anyone else. The hurt was too deep. Not even the courtesy of a pink slip; just a casual remark on a Friday afternoon that ended my career.

My devotional reading that morning had been Psalm 37:25: “I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.” I felt forsaken in spite of the psalm.

Exhaustion and awkwardness

On Monday a co-worker empathized, saying how much she would miss me, how my work was valued and appreciated. I choked back tears.

It wasn’t fair.

Swirling emotions exhausted me, and I counted the hours until I could go home. Marking my desk calendar with a pencil, I then counted the remaining days until I could leave forever. It seemed impossible I could survive twenty more work days, the embarrassment, the rumors.

Without future projects on my desk, there was little to do. I dared not complain; I needed every cent I could scrape together before unemployment cut my wages in half. There were bills to pay. How would I manage?

Reluctantly, I took a report to the main office. My boss’ door was closed, and relief washed over me. Jennifer, his secretary, accepted the files, but her eyes flitted to the floor, and her hands fluttered in embarrassment. Her silence brought a lump to my throat.

I had to speak. “You’ve heard they cut my position?”

“Yes.” She laid the folder on her desk and looked at me. “There are other jobs open in the company.”

Model employee

The hurt cut deep. I had been in management fifteen years, six in my present position. I had worked hard to avoid the physical demands of working on the floor, the rotating shifts, the lifting. At 51, I had physical limitations beyond my control.

I wanted to tell her that I had never received a single disciplinary action in my years there, that I was Employee of the Month only three years ago, that two months ago I received a glowing evaluation from my supervisor. How dare she be flippant about my loss?

I struggled when co-workers sympathized with me and struggled even more when they didn’t. But worse were the people who said nothing at all. I felt as though I were on death row or had something contagious. People avoided me, not knowing what to say. Maybe they thought that my work was unnecessary. Maybe they were afraid if they showed concern for me, their own jobs might be in jeopardy.

I packed my grandchildren’s photos that stood beside my electric pencil sharpener, my Employee of the Month plaque, and the personal reference books that cluttered my shelf. It was too soon to take things



Skjold Photographs

home, but I couldn't stand to see them in the office that used to be mine.

Secret ambition

A friend told me that God gave her a verse when she left a job with less-than-friendly feelings: "If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them" (Luke 9:5). I could never do that. I cared too much about my work to leave with a bad attitude.

"Think about it," she said. "Maybe it just means it's time to start something new. Isn't there something you've been dreaming about?"

I did have a secret ambition. For years I had been writing a historical novel. Vacations were

filled with writing conferences and museum visits. Many times I asked God to give me more writing time. Maybe this job loss was His way of making my other dream possible — that of being a published writer.

But the lure of other possibilities didn't take away the agony of losing my job. Every day I clung to the comfort of my devotional book. Every day the assigned Bible verse spoke to me and gave me strength.

Empty hope

My boss called me one afternoon. "When is your last day?"

"March 19." He should know. "It doesn't make sense for you to quit in the middle of the month."

I wanted to remind him that

I was being downsized, that I hadn't quit. For a moment I thought he had changed his mind and would let me keep my job. My heart pounded.

"Would you consider working through the end of March?"

My heart sank. Everything in me wanted to refuse, to throw it back in his face. He hadn't thought through the merge and wasn't ready for me to leave. Why should I help him out?

Surely God couldn't expect this of me. How could I endure two more weeks of agony? My devotional reading that morning had been Psalm 55:22: "Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall."

I felt God's promise that He would help me through the remaining days. I remembered my friend's verse about shaking the dust off my feet and knew I didn't want to leave with a bad attitude. I gulped back the anger and agreed to stay until the end of the month. Then I sent up a desperate prayer for help.

Anguish and exhilaration

Late and early at home I sat at my computer. A writing magazine sought essays for an anthology. The response to my submission was immediate and positive. I polished poems and short stories that had gathered at my desk, and friends in my writing group urged me to submit them. I applied for a writer mentorship and wrote a grant requesting money for a novel workshop. For once, I would have time to do the things I wanted.

Still feeling anguish about my job loss, I also felt growing exhilaration about new possibilities.

Mail Bag



Article errors

“Blank Tablets” and “Debating Decalogue Displays” [March ‘06, pp. 4, 9] contain serious errors: They ignore the Declaration of Independence and the [required] oath of office that Judge Roy Moore made to uphold the Constitution. He would have had to break His oath to God (to uphold the Constitution) in order to carry out the federal judge’s order to remove the Ten Commandments display, because carrying out an unlawful order violates the Constitution.

To interpret that no religious test is required of those who take an oath or affirmation in which they promise the creator God to uphold the Constitution, is absurd! How can officeholders promise God to uphold the Constitution if they do not believe in Him? When the Founding Fathers spoke of a religious test, they were talking about a church test, which was forbidden.

R. P.
Barrett, MN

Editor’s reply: Richard A. Wiedenhaupt has written a response to this letter. To read it, visit www.cog7.org/BA.

Lord’s Supper date

Relative to “Q & A” (April-May, p. 10), Nisan 1 does not necessarily occur after the vernal equinox. Hillel’s calendar fixes dates for Tishri 1, then counts back 177 days to find Nisan 1. In the twentieth century Tishri 1 could come as early as September 5. Hence, the earliest day for Nisan 1 would be March 12.

I do not see *equinoxes* in the Bible. Nisan 1 occurs on an evening when the [new moon] is first visible, as soon as there is enough barley for a wave sheaf offering (Ex. 12:2; Lev. 23:15). . . . The Council of Nicaea introduced the vernal equinox to fix the date of the Resurrection on the Sunday following the full moon following the equinox.

R. R.
Reseda, CA

Striking a balance

How much I have appreciated your thoughtful insights and articles in the *Advocate*. I left [my church] 25 years ago. As a life-long member and worker, that was a painful, traumatic experience. Still, God has guided me and my family, [and] we have attended different churches over the years.

Your insights and comments have helped me keep my balance, and although I don’t always come to the same conclusions as you, your articles have many times helped me through the theological maze in which I found myself. I am so glad that years ago I didn’t “throw the baby out with the bath water” as some of my disillusioned friends did. Many times your articles seemed to speak to the very issues we were struggling with.

G. F.
Trenton, FL

Perspective and strength

Finally, my last day of work arrived. My reading that morning spoke of Christ’s temptation, when the Spirit led Him into the desert to be tempted by the Devil for forty days. *At least my ordeal hasn’t lasted that long*, I thought. On a whim, I picked up the calendar and counted the days from the first notice to my last day on the job. Because of leap year, it was exactly forty days.

This put things in perspective and gave me strength for that final day when I couldn’t keep the tears out of my voice and when my mascara washed away before I even got to the office. All the goodbyes, the consolation of friends, the avoidance of some, and the grief culminated at the end of the day. I was exhausted. It was over; I had made it with God’s help.

The next morning, my designated Scripture passage was Luke 9:5: “If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” I knew it was no coincidence.

It was time to let go and start anew. Mentally, I shook the dust from my feet and turned on my computer. ■■■

Candace Simar

writes from Pequot Lakes, MN. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



by Israel Steinmetz

‘New’ Sabbathkeeping

I hear a lot of Christians who don’t keep Sabbath, saying “The New Testament doesn’t talk about the Sabbath.” It might surprise them to learn that the Sabbath is mentioned more than sixty times in the New Testament. A lot of what we hear about it is from the Old Testament, but Jesus came to fulfill the law and, in doing that, raised the standard.

Remember that Jesus included heart hatred in His definition of *murder* (Matthew 5:21, 22) and lust in His definition of *adultery* (vv. 27, 28)? Well, He also raised the bar when it came to Sabbath-keeping. Jesus didn’t add more rules and regulations but went straight to the heart — like when He rebuked the Pharisees for getting on His disciples’ case for plucking grain. The Pharisees were so caught up in their rules that they forgot “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

The Sabbath isn’t about a bunch of rules to keep people from enjoying themselves. God gave it as a gift so we can take a break from our hectic lives and focus on Him and His blessings.

Remember when Jesus healed the guy with the withered hand in the synagogue, or when He healed the woman with the spirit of infirmity — both on Sabbath? The synagogue leader actually had the guts to tell people not to come for healing on the Sabbath! He must have thought it was too much work for Jesus to heal them or too much work for them to pick up their mats and go home. Can you believe it? Jesus was angry at the Pharisees for their hard hearts (Mark 3:5) and reminded them that they would work to save or water an animal on the Sabbath, so why couldn’t He rescue people from sickness and despair (Matthew 12:9-14; Luke 13:15, 16)?

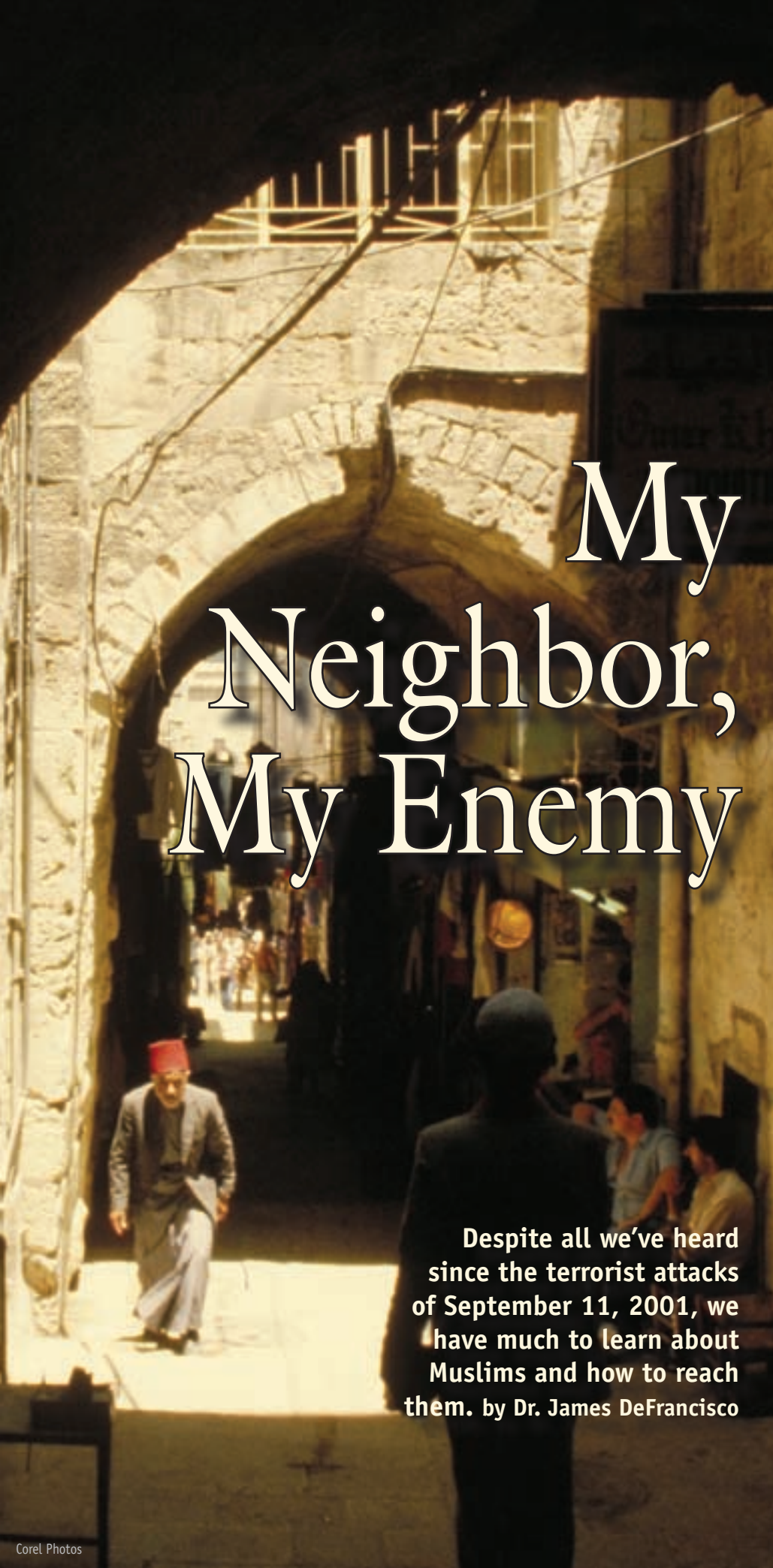
For Jesus, the most important thing was to do good on the Sabbath — to help people, heal them, show them love. Jesus had a right to raise the bar when it came to the Sabbath because He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). That means He decides what is lawful and unlawful. And for Jesus, it was lawful to enjoy God’s blessings and do good for other people, even if it meant plucking a few heads of grain or carrying mats back home.

One more quick thought on how Sabbath should be kept. Did you know that the New Testament says there remains a “Sabbathkeeping” for God’s people? Some translations use the word *rest*, but the word in Hebrews 4:9 literally means “Sabbath-keeping” and is different from *rest* elsewhere in the chapter.

Check out Hebrews 4 to see that the rest God promises us is a rest from dead works that could never save us. He promises us a rest in His grace and mercy when we believe in the gospel and walk with Him in obedience. So don’t think of Sabbath as a rule you have to keep to be saved. Rather, think of it as a weekly celebration of salvation by grace and rest from dead works by living in Christ.

As disciples of Jesus, we keep the Sabbath the way He wants it kept by enjoying God’s blessings and gifts, doing good for others, and resting in His awesome, free salvation. If you’re keeping the Sabbath to be righteous, to live up to some religious code, or to look holy, you’re wasting God’s time. How about keeping it a new way?

Israel Steinmetz is a seminary graduate living in Chesapeake, VA.



My Neighbor, My Enemy

Despite all we've heard since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, we have much to learn about Muslims and how to reach them. by Dr. James DeFrancisco

How should we as Bible-believing Christians pray for and conduct ourselves regarding worldwide Islam in general and our Muslim neighbors in particular?

This article may not feel politically or religiously correct and should not be construed as the position of any church. I have studied Christian, Jewish, and Muslim sources, with special emphasis on the Holy Scriptures in their original context and language. I look to Jesus of Nazareth as my Lord and Savior, Son of God, and Messiah (Christ). As your brother in Christ, I approach this topic from a biblical perspective, not a political or nationalistic one.

Although military intervention seems unavoidable because of radical Islamic terrorism, it is not the ultimate answer. When we kill our enemies, more enemies are born. When Moses killed an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite slave, he killed the Egyptian in himself. To promote peace, we must begin by looking within and changing ourselves to conform to God's will before we attempt to change others. We can begin here by trying to learn what prayer is, what key words mean, and what discipleship requires.

Prayer

First, we must look at the nature of prayer. Most praying involves requests, and most requests are selfish (James 4:3). Before asking anything of God, we should first ask for wisdom, as Solomon did (2 Chronicles 1:10-12; James 1:5).

We wouldn't pray so selfishly if we grasped the meaning of

prayer (*slotha* in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, James, and the apostles), which has been lost by religious people. The word stems from a root that means “to lean toward,” “to incline the ear,” “to give heed,” “to attend,” “to be a follower of,” “to beseech.” This implies that what God desires from us — to give ear to Him — is more important than what we request of God.

Thus, in praying for Muslims, we must first listen to what the Father desires of us as Christians. Such knowledge grows gradually as we learn scriptures like the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). The Lord’s Prayer in particular suggests how we can pray for others. The wisdom of Solomon and James provides further insight on how the person praying should be more concerned about what God expects from him than what he wants from God.

As illustrations of prayers devoted to blessing others, note these standard prayers familiar to our Jewish neighbors:

The Alenu. “May the world be perfected under the kingdom of the Almighty. Let all humans call upon Your Name and turn all the world’s evildoers to You. Let everyone on earth know that every knee must bow to You . . . and let them all accept the yoke of Your kingdom.”

The Amidah. “Let all creatures bow before You. May they form a single band to do Your will with a perfect heart.”

As we pray, what does God want us to know about our neighbors who do not believe what we believe, about those who regard us as infidels and wish to destroy us and what we represent? What does God want

us to know about ourselves, about how we look to our neighbors, and about what we have in common with them? What about our own sins? Perhaps these questions should occupy our prayer time as we ask God for wisdom.

Then we can pray for Muslims as we pray for anyone in need — for peace, salvation, understanding. As we incline our ear to God, we can go forward to change the world in the name of the true Lord and Savior.

Key words

Second, to develop a biblical attitude toward Muslims, we should look at key Aramaic words that Jesus and His disciples used. This study can correct serious misunderstandings and help us approach Muslims as Jesus might. Before attempting to help others who may be misled, we must be quick to listen and learn, but slow to speak (James 1:19).

Neighbor (*kareba*) means “near,” “at hand,” “in close touch

with,” “one who draws near,” “kinsman.” From an Aramaic mindset, Muslims are our kinsmen. We have much in common, much to share and learn from each other — the essence of fellowship.

If we want to discuss Islam, we should be familiar with it from a reliable, unbiased source. I recently heard a message on Islam that was full of religious and nationalistic prejudices, plus inaccuracies in Bible words. The preacher tried to be unbiased, and his message was better than many; yet it still troubled me.

A Muslim taxi driver and I had an interesting talk regarding the twin taboos of religion and politics. With little to agree on, we were both respectful and polite, but we also confronted each other’s position several times. Arriving at the airport, he observed that Christians had done more to help Muslims than Muslims have done for anyone, including other Muslims. This experience confirmed the talk I once heard from an ex-terrorist on how to approach Muslims: Simply treat

As we pray, what does God want us to know about our neighbors who do not believe what we believe, about those who regard us as infidels and wish to destroy us and what we represent?





**Conquest is not
the essence
of any valid faith,
whether it be
Islam, Judaism,
or Christianity.**

them with love and respect. Be quick to listen and slow to speak.

An ancient sage said, "Love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself. All the rest is commentary."

Love has two words in Aramaic. The first, *hooba*, is a white-hot, unconditional love. John used this word when he said, "God is love." The second word, *rakhma*, means "compassion" and shares the same root as *mercy*, *friend*, and *mother's womb*. As benefactors of God's grace and salvation, we are called to love others in thought, word, and deed — unconditionally and compassionately. As disciples of Jesus, we are to love not only our neighbors but also our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:31-37).

Faith comes from the Aramaic *haymanootha*. Try pronouncing it, and you will hear the word *amen* in the middle. *Amen* is the root of faith, and it means to seal anything like a prayer or covenant in faith, trust, and truth. This is why the shallow hedonistic faith presented by Christians to the non-Christian world is so

destructive. Faith must not be alone but must be accompanied by action. As James stresses, faith without works is not real faith at all. If there is no "amen" in our faith, we bring reproach to Christ.

Meekness and *humility* (*ma-keekay* in Aramaic) mean "to be humble," "pliable," "flexible," and "positioned lower than others." Some Muslims, and some Christians as well, think the rest of the world must submit to them and their opinions. But conquest is not the essence of any valid faith, whether it be Islam, Judaism, or Christianity. (Note: Jews are the most passive of the modern Abrahamic faiths in that they do not attempt to convert others, although they do have basic standards for fellowship with non-Jews.)

Islam means "surrender to God" and is related to the Arabic word for peace, *salam* (compare with Hebrew word *shalom*). This denotes surrender to God and to one another and leads to peace, wholeness, abundance, health, prosperity, and other things. If we are truly surrendered to God,

we are, in the Aramaic sense, Muslims.

Allah is the generic word for God in Arabic. Arabic-speaking Christians use this word, as do Muslims. It shares the same root as *El* in Hebrew. *Elohim* (Hebrew) and *Alaha* (Aramaic) are other versions of this word. It is not just related to a pagan moon god, as sometimes presented.

Messiah, *savior*, *prophet* raise the question "Who is Jesus?" Muslims can accept Him as a messiah, savior, and prophet. However, the original meanings of these words are much different in Aramaic than they have commonly been redefined. A messiah is anyone who is anointed and empowered by God (Saul, Cyrus, others). A prophet is one who speaks for God; many appear in the Bible. And a savior, or deliverer, is anyone who steps in and rescues another, as Joshua and Samson did.

Jesus of Nazareth was and is all of these titles, and more. The problem is twofold: 1) Based on their lifestyle, many "Christians" have not been delivered from their sins; 2) Muslims cannot accept Jesus as the Son of God because God has no sons in their belief system. They also cannot accept Jesus as God. Those who cannot accept Jesus as the Son of God cannot approach God as Father, even though they may have some form of relationship with God.

Discipleship

Third, we must be true disciples of Christ if we're to reach our Muslim friends.

There are two paths and two types of religions. One path is righteousness and life; the other

is sin and death. The latter is the broad religion of Cain and leads to various forms of murder. The other is the narrow religion of Abel and leads to various forms of martyrdom. We are each given the freedom to choose one of these paths.

As those who have chosen that narrow religion, we must be disciples of Christ before we can be effective witnesses for Christ. We are not called to convert anyone. We are called to make disciples and immerse them in the name (*beshemi* in Aramaic means “using the method and under the authority”) of the Father (*Abba*) and the Son (*Bar*) and (or in) the Holy Spirit (*Ruka d’ Koodsha*). Jesus is not a brand; He is a teacher, a healer, a deliverer, and a life-giver. This is the essence of the gospel (*swarta* in Aramaic, which means “joyful hope”).

As Jesus’ disciples, we must be quick to listen and slow to speak. We must identify, destroy, and eliminate all religious pride and self-righteousness. We must overcome fear, speak the truth in humility and love, and live an authentic faith.

Mystery religion

Is it possible that we can learn something from Muslims about the Bible and Jesus? Are we open to discussion? Could we listen and then present our view without trying to convert them, persuade them, control them, or condemn them?

I have studied the Scriptures with Jews who, like Muslims, do not follow our Christ. After I discussed several New Testament passages with a Jewish attorney, he stood with a smile and ex-

claimed, “You are Jewish!” We understood passages from the common perspective of Hebrew and Aramaic word meanings and a Semitic mindset.

On the other hand, I experience little in common with some rigid, biased Christians. Through the lens of Holy Scripture from Hebrew-Aramaic viewpoints, I see something different in much of Christianity than the Lord and Savior gave: a modern blend of ancient Greek Gnosticism and hedonism – a mystery religion. It is gnostic because we claim exclusive knowledge of a concept of Jesus that was formulated by people, not by God. It is hedonistic because we present grace as freedom from sin, giving little attention to real discipleship. It is a mystery religion because we gain salvation through the use of a “magical” affirmation of Jesus’ name.

When we export this type of religion to Muslim countries that prohibit proselytizing, and do so under the pretense of business or secular academics, we are misusing God’s name and waging unholy war within that country. If we use the word *crusade*, we remind our Muslim friends of the historic slaughter of their people by Christians “in the name of Jesus and for the glory of God.” We must consider all of this and more as we humbly listen and speak the truth in love. **BA**

Dr. James De-Francisco and his wife, Sandy, live in Mishawaka, IN.



Corel Photos

Is it possible that we can learn something from Muslims about the Bible and Jesus?

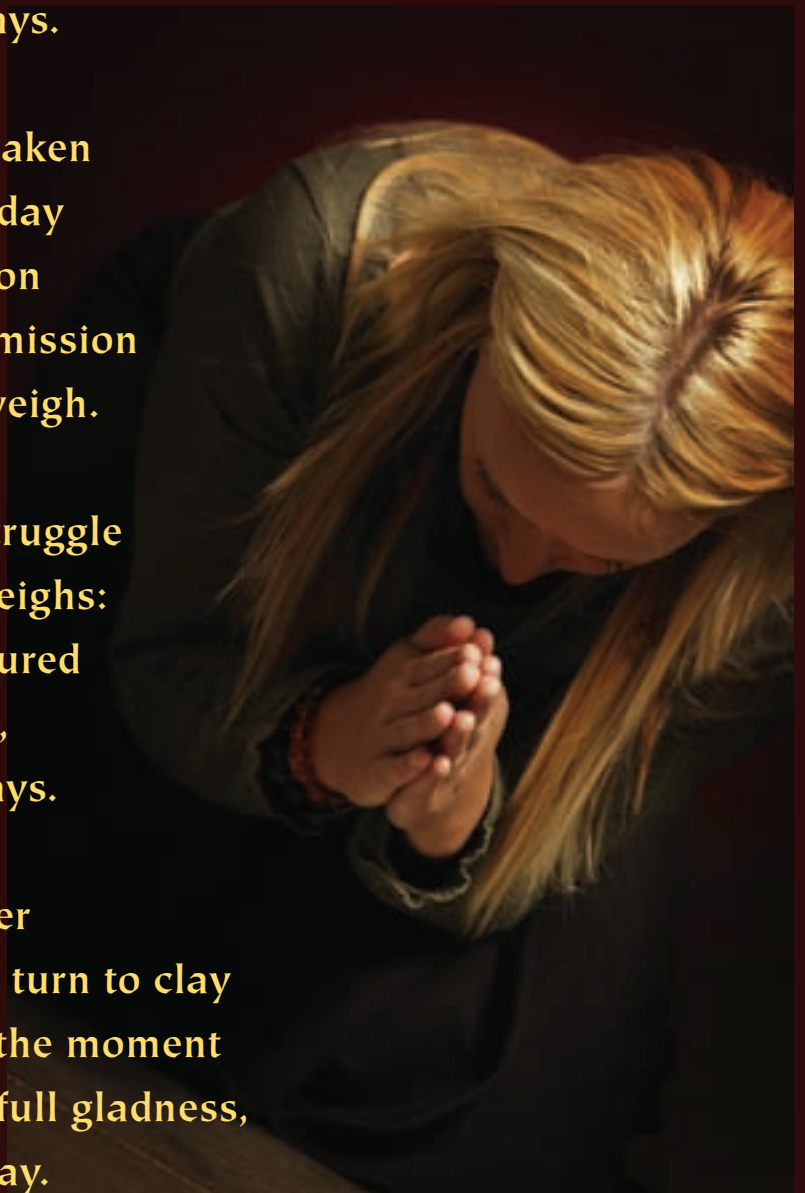
After long, unsatisfied effort,
The Lord God opens the way.
“Now!” He commands. “Strike swiftly!”
And my blow with the target connecting
Is seen in the sparks it displays.

A joy thought long since forsaken
Returns in the bright of that day
To bask in outpouring exertion
for the gospel’s ancient commission
and against its detractors inveigh.

The peace that follows the struggle
All preceding suffering outweighs:
Heaven’s contentment prefigured
At the end of a well-run race,
Having bested a life of dismays.

Imperishable spirit, remember
When flesh, bone, and blood turn to clay
That this life was its best in the moment
When serving the Lord with full gladness,
Rejoicing, we fell down to pray.

Tim Morgan





What's new with . . .

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Publications

Keith Michalak, Director

For thousands of years, a spiritual battle has raged. History is littered with casualties of those who were destroyed or broken by Enemy fire. Never revealing his true self, Satan has used his arsenals of power, greed, and lust to deceive the masses.

Never knowing where his next attack will come from, we must stay vigilant. In the last few decades, Satan has doubled his deceptive efforts. One of his worst attacks has reached a new low, hiding under the cloak of gay rights. If we let it, this agenda will destroy the moral foundation of our society.

But Christians also have a powerful weapon: God's Word, containing His promises of hope and freedom.

For 143 years the *Bible Advocate* has wielded this weapon against the Enemy to protect or rescue as many as possible. Victory comes one soul at a time through a story, an article, or a Scripture passage, thanks to the Holy Spirit. Here's an example of one such person, a prisoner, changed through the magazine's ministry:

I just read your publication for the first time — the June issue. It gave me a lot to think about, especially your items on homosexuality. I recently accepted Jesus, and I am bisexual, so your articles answered a lot of questions. I know homosexuality is wrong and have given that part of my life to Jesus. Yet I still deal with temptation and guilt every day. I know the Lord is with me and forgives me. I just never heard any other Christians talk about homosexuality, unless what they had to say was real negative. I thank you for the support and hope you have given me. I would also like to send my prayers out for everyone dealing with homosexuality. I know what you're going through, and my heart is with all of you. Please stay strong in your faith and trust in the Lord. He loves all His children.

We urge you to continue supporting the magazine and to distribute literature made available by Publications.



In Memoriam



Marvin Richard Keim

Marvin Richard Keim, minister for forty-plus years, was born November 10, 1932, to Albert and Lydia Keim near Acme, Alberta, Canada, and passed away of a heart attack on the farm of his birth June 11, 2006. He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, their sons (Richard, Jeffrey, Jason, and Michael), three daughters-in-law, seven grandchildren, and three sisters (Lillian Shapitka, Violet Chalus, and Elvira Allen).

Marvin attended Midwest Bible College in Stanberry, Missouri. His first pastorate was in Detroit, Michigan, where he also served on the board of Spring Vale Academy. He later served in Denver, Colorado; Ft. Smith, Arkansas; McAlester, Oklahoma; and other churches where a pastor was needed. Most often, Marvin worked with his hands to support his family while assisting in gospel work. He returned to Canada in 1980 to raise his boys on the family farm. The last few years of his life were spent with Dorothy near family and church in Eugene, Oregon.

Memorial gifts may be made to Spring Vale Academy.

Lynn H. Taylor

Lynn H. Taylor, 49, was born in Los Angeles, California, to Floyd and Evelyn Taylor, and he passed away in Kansas City, Missouri, June 5, 2006. Married to Wanda O'Banion on December 5, 1976, he is also survived by three sons (Bradley, Scott, and Joe) and by three grandchildren.

Lynn spent his early life in California before graduating from Spring Vale Academy in Michigan and later from Rockmont College and Summit School of Theology in Denver, Colorado. For over twenty years, he was a pastor in Dayton, Tennessee; Wister, Oklahoma; and Stanberry, St. Joseph, and Kansas City, Missouri. Lynn also served as chairman of the Spring Vale Academy board, as a General Conference meeting planner, and as an officer of the International Ministerial Congress. In the wider community, he ministered as a hospital and police chaplain.

Lynn was buried at Carmack Junction Cemetery, near Albany, Missouri. Donations may be made to the Faithful Servant Memorial Fund.



West Coast District Conference

With attendance reaching near 600, the 2006 WCD Family Conference ended Sabbath evening, July 8, completing an inspiring week filled with countless highlights, such as

- the RiverTrain trip on July 4, which received rave reviews from many.
- the silent auction, which raised more than \$14,000 for Sis-Q Meadows camp.
- a trip to Six Flags Waterworld for FYC and SWORD groups.

The spacious grounds of the Radisson Hotel Sacramento (California), including lake, fountains, and gardens, provided an ideal setting for stepping away from life's busyness to focus on learning, worship, and fellowship. Loren Stacy, Ken Lawson, Glen Palmer, Erik Dunn, Calvin Burrell, and Whaid Rose each gave messages on the theme "The Life-Giving Church." And each service began with a great time of music and prayer, led by John Howell, preparing our hearts for the spoken word.

On the last evening, Elder Whaid Rose thanked Superintendent Wes Stucker and his wife, Holly, for their years of dedicated service to the WCD and CoG7. He presented them with a plaque from the General Conference.

We thank and praise our heavenly Father for the numerous blessings throughout the week.

— Roy Roche

Youth Mission Trip

With plenty of opportunity to cross barriers with Christ's love here in the U.S., not all missionary journeys go to foreign lands. The youth of Harrisburg, Eugene, Marion (Oregon) and Spokane (Washington) churches joined for a mission to Yakima Indian Reservation near Toppenish, Washington, June 18-26. Nearly 40 youth and staff spent months raising funds to provide a day camp program for Native American Indian children and build a playground on our host site, the McKinley Mission. The time there was spent with 70-125 children making friends, giving piggy-back rides, sharing Christ, and loving them as Jesus would.

Special thanks to the Toppenish church for assistance. Read a full report posted at <http://fyc.cog7.org>.

— Kurt Lang, NFYC Director


LITES Ministries

The LITES Ministries' second-year team left April 4 on a two-month tour, with stops in Venus, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; Madera, San Jose, and Lodi, California; Harrisburg, Oregon; and Spokane, Washington. At each stop the team did works of service and led revival events with drama, art, music, and preaching on themes of hope and freedom. (Read reflections by the team at www.cog7.org/BA.)

Longer periods of training and mentoring bore fruit on this tour. Pastors and members told of their encouragement that God is raising up a new generation of leaders in the body. LITES is grateful for all who have contributed!

For the latest updates, photos, reading calendar, and introductions, or to learn more, contact LITES Ministries, P.O. Box 172, Stanberry, MO 64489; 660-783-9544; lites@cog7.org.

— Larry Marrs, Director



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www.cog7.org	maryling@cog7.org

International Tour

Australia

In 1983 the Australian Church of God (Seventh Day) was mostly carried away with the false teaching that turned people away from the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath. From this crisis, Charles Orr, Phil Kordahi, and their families survived with a great desire to see the Church resurrected. A dialogue between these brethren and the General Conference in North America soon began, resulting in affiliation and growing fellowship. The first representative was sent to the G. C. convention in Knoxville, Tennessee (1997), and to the International Ministerial Congress in Monterrey, Mexico, the next year.

Australia has a small population (20 million) in a vast continent (7,700,000 sq km). The Lord has blessed the Church with congregations and/or fellowship groups in South Australia, Victoria, Western Australia, and Tasmania, plus other scattered brethren. We have been greatly encouraged by an increase of Web site inquiries regarding the Church and its doctrinal beliefs. In the last year, hundreds of pieces of gospel literature and *Bible Advocate* magazines have been mailed throughout Australia and around the world.

The Adelaide (South Australia) branch of the Church has persevered in some long-term ministries. On Sunday mornings for about seven years, much



good seed (Bibles, books, BAs, tracts, tapes, and other materials) has been sown and freely taken by shoppers at a large indoor market. This year a family of five some distance away started attending services after initial contact with us through the market. Now a monthly Bible study group has begun meeting closer to where they live, hopefully to plant another church on the outskirts of Adelaide. Brethren from Western Australia have conducted market ministries and baptized one as a result. Long-term ministries have also continued in nursing homes, with concerts and fortnightly Bible studies.

Elder David Kidd and his wife, Angella, spent a month evangelizing in Melbourne last year, kindly hosted by the Bonilla family, formerly of the El Salvador/Guatemala Church of God (Seventh Day). The time proved useful in distributing literature and forging some good contacts. Recently, they have commenced a free children's tennis coaching program on a court adjacent to the Adelaide church hall as we seek to shine more light of the Lord in the local community.

The *Bible Advocate* ministry has indeed been a blessing in Australia. Pastor Kordahi recently followed up on a BA reader near Melbourne who had sought to learn through the Denver office whether a CoG7 existed in Australia. Now strong ties are being forged with his home church group in the state of Victoria. As a result, the Adelaide church has been inspired to diligently reach those scattered throughout Australia who receive the BA.

The Australian church continues to support missions in nearby countries such as India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and now Fiji, where Pastor Kordahi will soon travel to encourage and support a group seeking ties with the international Church. Our quarterly Australian magazine, the *Edifier*, is making an impact in Ghana. By Pastor Dugger's report, there is a hunger for this spiritual food, so we now send them one hundred copies each quarter.

We pray that God will increase our abilities and guide our efforts to share the gospel with our fellow Australians.

— Phil Kordahi
Pastor



Our Work Matters to God

Someone once said, “Your work is a portrait of yourself; autograph it with pride.” This statement calls us to reexamine our attitude toward work. And what better time to do so than in September, the month that includes a holiday (here in the United States) celebrating the gift and dignity of labor.

The importance of work is underscored in the Bible. Man’s first assignment in the Garden of Eden was work-related: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15, NIV throughout). Hebrew culture, the setting of the Old Testament, was marked by a strong work ethic. The command to rest on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8) is linked to work on the previous six days. God’s low tolerance for laziness is underscored by numerous verses in the book of Proverbs. Also, we, the redeemed, will work with our hands in the earth made new (Isaiah 65:17-24).

In the New Testament, Paul uses strong language when addressing this important principle: “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. . . . For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: ‘If a man will not work, he shall not eat’” (1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Thesalonians 3:10). These and other verses remind us that our work matters to God.

Yet popular bumper stickers that say such things as “I’d rather be golfing” and “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go” expose a sinister attitude toward work in today’s culture. The value of hard, honest labor has been replaced by the philosophy that whatever one does must be fun. Consequently, a large percentage of those in today’s work force do not like their jobs. The average person puts less-than-adequate effort into his work. Many worship their toys, a fact expressed on another bumper sticker: “He who dies with the most toys wins.”

In reality, there is no substitute for hard work; it reflects who we are. The lack of meaningful work can drain the color from a person’s entire existence. Work also reflects our relationship with God, for He who lives in us is revealed in what we give our lives to. Our work matters to God, and when we do it with diligence, it honors Him.

While these things are true, hard work must be balanced with rest and recreation. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy – and Jill a wealthy widow! Working at the exclusion of rest and care for one’s self and for family may be a reflection of our inability to trust God to meet our needs: “In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for he grants sleep to those he loves” (Psalm 127:2). This verse not only warns against workaholicism but also reminds us that ultimately God gives us our daily bread.

The following quote illustrates the consequences of work out of balance:

Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their work, to work at their play, to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair, and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot (Gordon Dahl, quoted in *Leadership* magazine, Fall 1982).

God cares about every aspect of our existence; therefore, our work matters to Him. May this truth impact the way we go about our work, serving wholeheartedly as if serving the Lord, not men (Ephesians 6:7). And may our Lord be made more attractive to those around us through our work (Titus 2:9, 10).

– Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President

MINISTRIES



Summer School 2006

Ministries Training System completed its intensive summer school for prospective pastors and ministers June 12-22 in Denver. A total of 46 students came from all over the continent to attend one or both of the five-day sessions. What a thrill to see so many men, including young men, hungry to learn more about the Word of God and to more effectively serve the Lord!



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