

October - November 2006

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE

His place, His people

Wonderful world (p. 4)

American idol (p. 18)

Appreciating elders (pp. 16-17)



ARTICLES

- 4 **The Why of Great Wonders** — by Bob Putman
- 8 **Caring for Creation** — by Michael Flores
- 12 **A Quick Guide to Eating Right** — by John and Lizeth Kennedy
- 14 **Not Just a Girl Thing** — by Paul C. Mihalak
- 16 **Thanks to God for the Church**
- 18 **Tampering with the Temple** — by Bob Hostetler
- 20 **Obsessed with Dress** — by Julio Martinez
- 22 **Makeover Needed** — by Thelma W. Kephart

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 **First Word** — Our Bodies, Our Earth
- 7 **WWJD**
- 11 **Perspective** — The Daniel Diet
- 23 **Mail Bag**
- 21 **Wassup?** — Bad Choices
- 30 **International Tour** — IMC to North America
- 31 **Last Word** — Rethinking Abundance

25 **CoG7 IN ACTION**

G. C. Ministries, Missions Abroad, and more



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Coming in the December BA: end-time mania, prophecy, and the future

In the October and November issues of *Now What?*: struggling with bulimia and overcoming childhood abuse (<http://nowwhat.cog7.org>)

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A publication of the
Church of God (Seventh Day)
 This magazine is published to advocate
 the Bible, represent the Church, and
 glorify the God of grace and truth.

Volume 140 • Number 7

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 editor.

The BIBLE ADVOCATE (ISSN 0746-0104) is
 published eight times a year January-February,
 March, April-May, June, July-August,
 September, October-November, and December
 by Bible Advocate Press, 330 W. 152nd Ave.,
 Broomfield, CO 80020. Periodicals postage
 is paid at Broomfield, CO, and at additional
 offices. Subscription is free to any who ask.
 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bible
 Advocate Press, Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233-
 0677.

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Subscriptions and Orders

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

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

Publications Agreement No. 40042428

Scripture quotations are from the New King
 James Version, unless otherwise noted.

The Bible Advocate Online appears at www.cog7.org/BA.

Cover photo: www.brandxpictures.com

Our Bodies, Our Earth



Did you hear about the devout member of
 the church who was so heavenly minded that
 he was no earthly good?

Conservative Christians often lean in that
 direction. We find time on most Sabbaths for exalted praise to God
 and songs about our eternal home in the sweet by and by.

We're less enthused, though, when the church house needs repair
 on Sunday afternoon, when someone needs a visit during the week, or
 when a community service project is planned. Tougher still, it seems,
 is getting us concerned with the ailing environment our grandchildren
 will breathe and drink.

This is our Father's world, we sing, and we believe that He cares for
 His creatures in the here and now. It follows, then, that we ought to
 more quickly express support for our earthly home and the health and
 welfare of those who share it.

Our bodies and our earth matter to God because He created them,
 because His beloved people now inhabit them, and because He plans
 to redeem and restore them in His eternal kingdom, through Christ.
 What God called "very good" at the start He will not forever discard as
 junk at the end.

The Bible's gospel, as I read it, is not as much about heaven and
 harps and us going there as it is about Jesus coming here. He came
 first to rescue, and He will come again to recreate the vision of Eden
 that went awry with Adam. Perfect beauty and purity, from the inside
 out: This is creation's ultimate end and present goal.

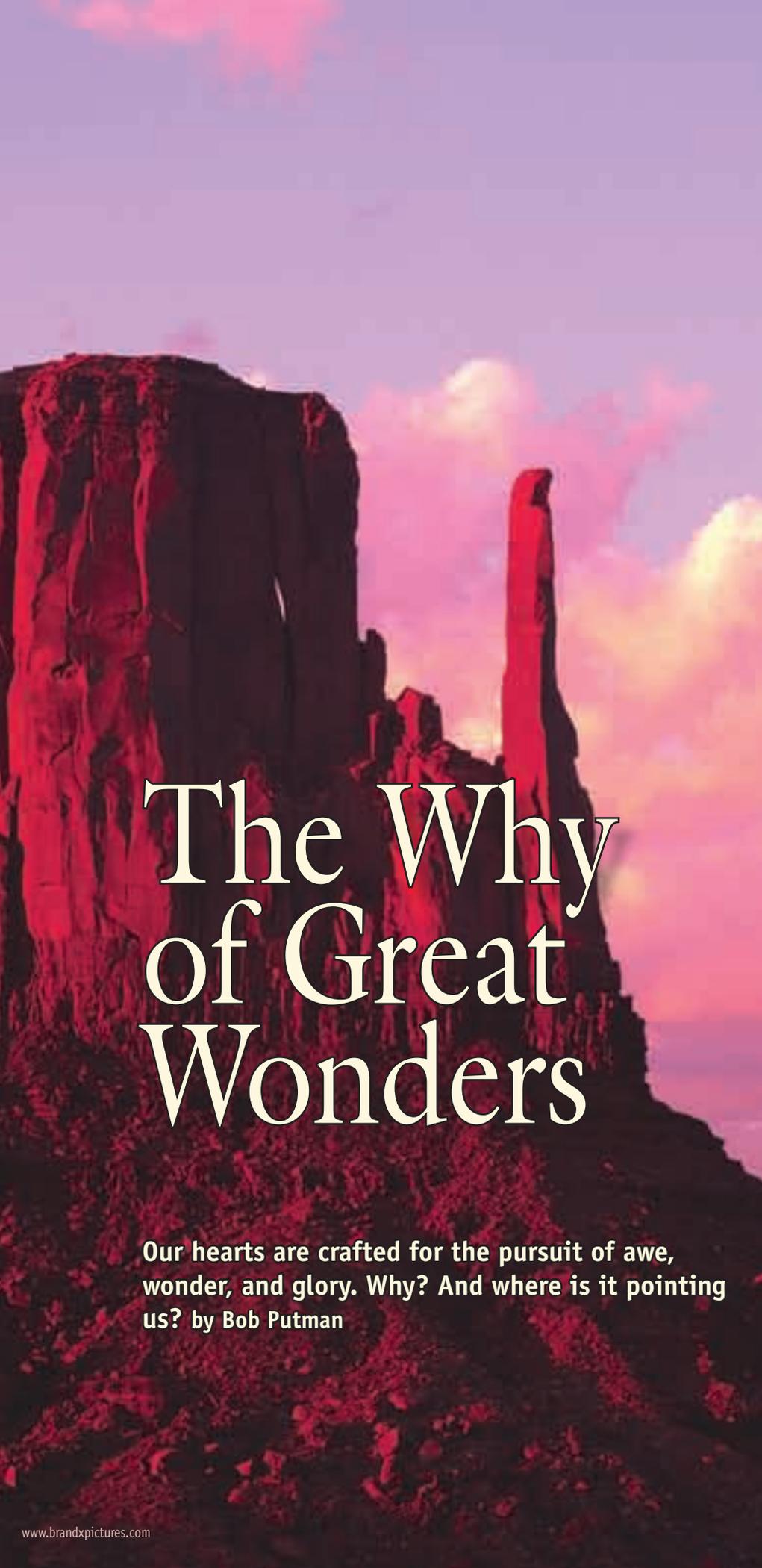
This BA is not full of rules, rights, and wrongs but does cover ne-
 glected values and balance. Bob Putman's lead article (p. 4) introduces
 the wonders of our world and the greater Wonder to whom they
 point. All else good follows in the wake of Him who took on a human
 body and walked this blest planet with us.

Two verses underscore the tension and paradox of these topics. On
 one hand, Paul wrote, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drink-
 ing, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans
 14:17). That's inspiring — even heavenly!

On the other hand, the same inspired guy said, "Therefore, whether
 you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"
 (1 Corinthians 10:31). That's right down to earth!

Christians, let's embrace them both!

— Calvin Burrell



The Why of Great Wonders

**Our hearts are crafted for the pursuit of awe,
wonder, and glory. Why? And where is it pointing
us? by Bob Putman**

When I was young, I loved to ponder the photos in *National Geographic*, *Arizona Highways*, *Life*, and other magazines depicting wonders of the natural world. My mind blazed with images of dense jungles, mountain heights, coral reefs aglow with life forms, mysterious creatures of the deep, giant sequoias, towering waterfalls, churning volcanoes, calving icebergs, giant nebulas, and swirling galaxies. My heart trembled for adventures and discoveries of a world that offered more variety and splendor than I could ever hope to experience.

These powerful thoughts and feelings were dwarfed by the sensations of actually being there. I will forever remember . . .

- climbing over the guardrail at Niagara Falls to crouch within inches of the gargantuan, thundering wall of water throwing itself sixteen stories down upon the deadly rocks.
- watching the sun emerge scarlet upon the Colorado plains and mountains from atop 14,255-foot Longs Peak.
- catching my breath as the mist separated suddenly to reveal a stunning primeval gorge in China's Yellow Mountains, then watching it vanish seconds later.
- gazing upward for hours as the jagged fingers of the Grand Tetons shredded the morning clouds.
- meditating on the pounding Pacific surf from the volcanic rocks of Corona Del Mar and drinking in a long sunset over the Gulf of Mexico from Florida's Longboat Key.
- taking in the glory of Pennsylvania autumn foliage ablaze in brilliant reds, yellows, and oranges.

Human stature

In each of these places, something happened that far exceeded what I could imagine from a photograph: I absorbed the power of their magnificence and knew my own smallness by comparison. And yet I came away refreshed, strengthened, and encouraged — not belittled or deadened by my own inconsequence.

Interesting how such natural wonders measure our human stature. In experiencing something far greater than ourselves, we are renewed and restored, not humiliated.

Our souls appear to be crafted for the love of wonder and glory, and in this life we are never fully sated in this pursuit. King Solomon, who sampled all the world's pleasures to excess, wrote these words: "No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content" (Ecclesiastes 1:8b, *The Message*). We are sated only with something greater in which to invest those feelings of awe, wonder, significance, and glory.

To quote John Piper, "In all our seeing of the natural world we are to let our eyes run up the beam of beauty to the Original."* For believers, natural wonders pull our eyes toward Jesus Christ, the source of all wonder.

Experiencing Jesus

What there is to know and experience of Jesus far exceeds anything you or I have encountered in any of the natural wonders we've seen or hoped to see. For nearly two thousand years, great minds have invested scholarly and experiential research in

the quest to know what makes Christ uniquely worthy of our admiration, trust, love, and even worship.

Since the first century, theologians have searched through archives of manuscripts, learned languages, and scrutinized cultures to get a better grip on this most intriguing Man of history. Monks, nuns, and hermits devoted their lives to contemplate His glories, living in monasteries, remote caves, and deserts to avoid worldly distractions. Millions have gone to martyrs' deaths, confident their faith was based in truth and that they would meet Jesus face to face beyond the grave.

What did all these people spend so much time contemplating? What profound insights inspired the great cathedrals: the Vatican, York, St. Peter's, Canterbury, Chartres, St. Paul's, Notre Dame? What heart exaltations inspired the paintings of da Vinci, Titian, and Rembrandt; the sculpture of Michelangelo; the music of Handel and Bach; the fiction of Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky? For what did eleven of Jesus' first disciples willingly submit to torture and violent death?

The answer is the innumerable wonders and glories of Jesus Christ. In Him we find heights,

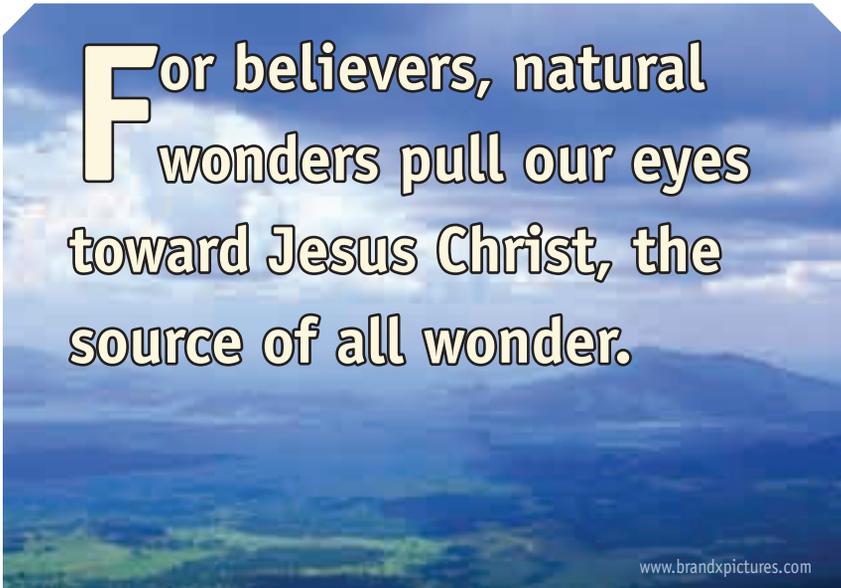
depths, and mysteries that the greatest of human minds strive to decipher but find themselves too small, too compartmentalized, too steeped in the present culture and thought. Yet in the attempt, each has found himself refreshed, strengthened, and infused with courage to face the pressures of this life and to stand against its attempts to depreciate our souls.

To examine the wonders of Jesus Christ is to expand the soul, to pursue the awe, wonder, significance, and glory for which we are hardwired. It is to breathe in a rich fragrance of life, to test truth, to ponder mysteries, to take the risk to fully *be* for a few hours of existence.

There is no more important task to which you and I could give our time, though few invest the time to do so. Such an attempt, conducted with simple sincerity, can result in unexpected rewards. No one can draw close to the person, life, and mind of Christ and walk away unchanged.

Beginning the quest

So what do we need to begin the quest? A willing spirit, an instinctive curiosity, a hungry soul, a ready mind, a good dose of humility — and for most of us,



For believers, natural wonders pull our eyes toward Jesus Christ, the source of all wonder.

a trustworthy guide. A few great discoverers I have followed are authors A. W. Tozer (*The Knowledge of the Holy*), J. I. Packer (*Knowing God*), John Owen (*The Glory of Christ*), John Piper (*Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*), and for the ambitious, Peter Lewis (*The Glory of Christ*).

But before rushing off to the bookstore or logging onto Amazon, let's stop and do a bit of wondering on our own. What kind of wonders of Jesus do we hope to find? What delights might feed our hungry souls?

Like the nine-member fellowship in *The Lord of the Rings*, we need some hearty waybread for the long journey. Here's a bit of sustenance to set us on the way:

Jesus sustains every molecule in creation, holding each one together by His incomparable power. "In him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17) because "Through him all things were made" (John 1:3). While the galaxies spin away from each other at astounding speed, Jesus holds subatomic particles together and directs the confounding phenomena of space. He is the strong force maintaining the universe.

Because Jesus came to earth from heaven, every word He taught about physical and

spiritual reality comes from firsthand experience. We are so enraptured and engulfed in the ways of this world that reality as defined by Jesus sounds alien to our ears. But He said, "The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:10) and "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father" (16:28). Jesus' teachings on love for enemies, joy in suffering, strength through weakness, the richness of an impoverished spirit — all are suns of reality breaking through the clouds of our over-cast minds.

Jesus is unique. No one or nothing in all creation compares with Him. He is the only god who suffered, the miracle healer who claimed He could do nothing, a divine who resisted religion but was the most reverent man on earth, a counter-culture radical more orthodox than the wisest religious teachers, the humblest of men exalted to the Father's right hand, the chief articulator of the doctrines of hell's loss and of heaven's kingdom.

No one suffered as He did at the hands of cosmic rebels and for their potential benefit. No one exercised more self-restraint

in temptation or injustice when He could have called legions of angels to His defense. No one else voluntarily laid down his life and took it up again. No one else fulfilled all of God's righteous requirements or satisfied God's wrath, then in love turned and credited His sacrifice and holiness to sinful people. There is no other just judge of human souls, restorer of all things, imperial Lord and merciful King. He is our all in all.

Enlarge your soul

So much more can be said about Jesus, so many wonders remain to be discovered. I urge you to take some time to enlarge your soul by learning of the glories of Christ.

Who is Jesus *to you* that you should know Him, love Him, fear Him, worship Him, and obey Him? Is He big enough in your heart and mind to captivate every waking thought and turn it to His glory?

This is His rightful place. It is for this reason that He hardwired you for wonder, awe, and reverence. Sate your hunger in Him.

■ ■

Bob Putman is editor of *BGC World* and writes from Schaumburg, IL. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.



There is no other just judge of human souls, restorer of all things, imperial Lord and merciful King. He is our all in all.

* Sam Storms, frontispiece quote in *One Thing: Developing a Passion for the Beauty of God*, p. 2.

WVWZ

What would Jesus do or say about our bodies and our earth? Does He care for environment and for external appearance?



A surprising number of Jesus' ministry events involve eating and drinking: water to wine, corn on Sabbath, feeding the multitudes, and breakfast by the lake are only a few. Jesus was not slow to accept dinner invitations — even with those not yet His followers — so much so that He was accused of gluttony and wine-bibbing. Several of His parables refer to food: the fig tree, fish net, loaves at midnight, leaven, new wine, wedding feast, and a fattened calf for the prodigal son. His fundamental teachings in John's Gospel deal with living water (ch. 4) and living bread (ch. 6).

Is there instruction here regarding nutrition, so common today? Not much. Jesus turned ceremonial cleansing on its head when He taught that the most dangerous defilement does not come through the mouth, but from within — from the heart (Matt. 15:11ff). If cleanliness was next to godliness for Jesus, it was a distant second.

Christians differ on how Christ's teaching impacts Hebrew food laws or dietary correctness. It would twist the text too far to insist that the Lord who honored His Father's creation and commandments would approve our careless disregard for any counsel, ancient

or modern, intended for our health and welfare.

In the same vein of spirit over body, Jesus taught us to have small concerns for physical needs, like food and clothing (Matt. 6:25-34). This classic text implies our need to learn contentment with the simpler things of life, rather than chasing the expensive and the ornate. He repeatedly critiqued the religious crowd for their emphasis on outward appearance, instead of on inward character (Matt. 23:25-28). He taught that the body's welfare is secondary to that of the whole person — the soul (10:28; Luke 12:4, 5).

On the other hand, Jesus went on to affirm that God knows every hair on our heads and sees every sparrow that falls (Matt. 10:29-31; Luke 12:6, 7). Christ relieved physical and spiritual suffering. He

fed hungry people, thousands at a time. He was a healer and provider for those in need. He took our infirmities, the Scripture attests, and bore our sicknesses (Matt. 8:17). Wholeness of mind and body was His apparent goal for God's people.

Jesus often spoke of nature's elegance and creation's value: lilies, birds, sheep, donkeys, oxen, and others. If compassionate humans care for their animals' welfare, how much more does God care for those He has created in His image and calls to Himself through the gospel (Matt. 12:11, 12; Luke 14:5)!

Today we celebrate the beautiful, the recognized, the one with the most of what the world wants. But Jesus cares more for the down-trodden and the threatened: "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench . . ." (Matt. 12:20).

For Further Reflection

1. Jesus came eating and drinking, enjoying it as much as the next man (Matt. 11:19). Why do you think others accused Him of being a glutton and a wine-bibber?
2. How do you think Jesus would have responded to the current emphasis on exercise and nutrition? What about our environmental concerns, much greater now than in the first century?



Caring for Creation

Does our dominion over the earth suggest limits on our use of its resources? by **Michael Flores**

www.comstock.com

Environmental activism has become a buzzword and battleground in our society. The environmental movement in the United States may appear to be associated with liberal political agendas, causing many evangelical Christians to reject the entire issue.

Then there are the ideological differences among Christians regarding our care for nature. On one side, stewardship is seen as dominion, justifying humanity's destructive actions toward the earth and its natural resources. The other extreme takes a transcendental approach, viewing nature as sacred and worthy of reverence.

Does nature deserve reverence? Though God did create the earth first, He gave dominion of it to humanity. But what does dominion mean? What wisdom does the Bible offer on how we ought to treat creation? And

where do believers fit in?

Let's discuss the two perspectives of dominion by comparing a utilitarian and relational view of the earth. Then we'll argue the benefit and biblical soundness of the relational view as a template for stewardship.

Two views

The utilitarian view sees the earth as a commodity that exists to benefit humanity. When I was young, I collected cans to sell to aluminum buyers because I saw recycling as a means to produce wealth. By reducing earth's resources to a means of procuring material gain, I had embraced the utilitarian perspective.

Interpreting stewardship as dominion reinforces this view. Since God gave humanity dominion over the earth, we can do with it as we please. Dominion further suggests that the environment and its care matters less than

our human needs and wants.

With this perspective, damaging untouched land for fossil fuel, pollution of seas by industry, or clearing forests for commerce is justified because God has conferred to humanity this right.

The Bible's Creation accounts show a view of dominion as nurturing instead of controlling, a view that aligns with God's original intention for stewardship. Genesis 2 reveals God's desire for relationship between Himself, humanity, and the earth He has created. God forms humans from "the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (v. 7).

This story emphasizes God's intimacy with creation. He relates to the heart of humanity. He uses the earth to make living creatures, forming solidarity between the different parts of creation. He converses with humanity in spite of His omniscience,

showing His desire for relationship. This contrasts with the more structured, formulaic writing of the first chapter, which stresses a God who is cosmic and transcendent. The actions of the second account emphasize a God who cultivates a nurturing relationship with His creation.

When viewed in juxtaposition, these chapters reveal a God both infinite and intimate. He is the transcendent creator but also the intimate nurturer. When we view dominion in this light, we see that while hierarchy exists in creation, God equally emphasizes relationship. Though “The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness” (Psalm 24:1) and though God gave “dominion [to humanity] over . . . every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28), these stories show that dominion has less to do with control and more with relationship.

Humanity and the earth relate through a shared purpose of worship because God created both for His glory. If God cultivates intimacy with His creation, then His stewards must value this quality. Adam’s naming of every living creature – a task requiring time, care, cognition, and intimacy with the creatures – reveals the Creator’s intention of intimacy between humanity and nature. A dominion that nurtures, cares, and values the earth creates a template for biblical stewardship.

Relational dominion of the earth strives to reinforce the original intent of the Creator for His creation. When a king left his kingdom with a steward, he expected him to maintain order. Likewise, humanity should maintain the original purpose God had for nature. Because God

calls us to stewardship, humanity is responsible to promote nature’s worship of God.

When humanity’s actions produce a nature that deviates from the original template, then creation glorifies God less. The question is, Do our actions regarding nature reinforce its purpose of worshipping God? Does a ravaged earth still reflect God’s beauty? When pollution changes the earth’s biophysical properties, does the new disorder of creation still reveal a God of order?

Kingdom reality

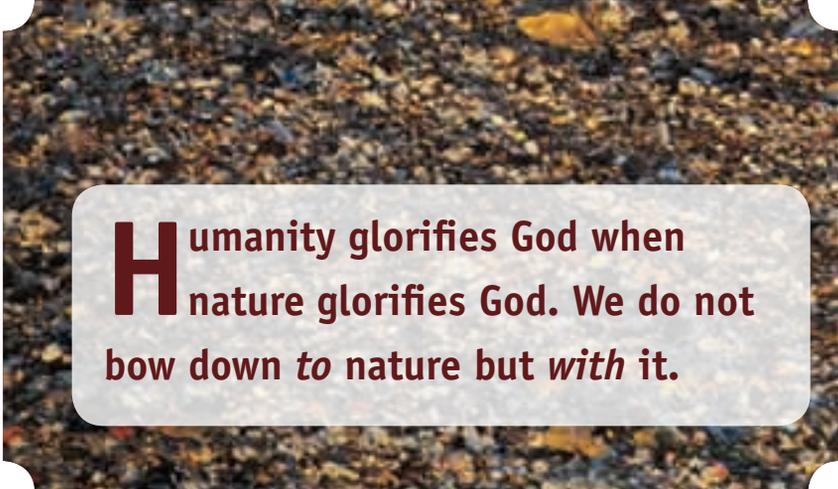
Peter advises us to be a people who look forward to a new heaven and a new earth. With this perspective, someone who sees the new heaven and earth as reality motivates others to live as if that reality is now. The reality of the coming kingdom is that all creation glorifies God. How humans treat God’s creation now will reveal our affection toward our Creator. If we view the earth as an impersonal fellow worshipper, giving glory to God, we may with our treatment of the environment promote its worship of God.

But some may argue, “What about our needs? Is this nature worship?” First, nurturing the earth’s worship of God does not deny humanity its right to use the earth for resource. Rather, it suggests that the earth is more than just resource but a part of this relationship with God. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8:19, 21, 23:

creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God . . . because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God . . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The question should be, Do our needs justify over-consumption, irresponsible squandering of natural resources, or careless treatment of the earth? Our needs can be met while maintaining the order God established.

Second, relationship with nature is not worship of nature but recognition that God still owns the earth and that He deserves glory from it. Humanity glorifies God when nature glorifies God.



Humanity glorifies God when nature glorifies God. We do not bow down *to* nature but *with* it.

Gardening, Then and Now

Was Adam's only assignment in Eden to rest and take an evening stroll with his wife? Not quite. In Genesis 2:15 the Lord God gave man important responsibilities: to harvest the garden and keep it.

"To keep" anything is to care for it. Man had to work the garden, stirring the soil, tending to plants and trees, and perhaps even removing rocks or insects that would hinder Eden's beauty and fruit.

After Adam and Eve sinned, God sent them out of Eden and cursed the ground. Now man had to work harder to make the land produce (3:17-19, 23).

What about us? Do we have responsibilities like Adam and Eve's in taking care of the land? Of course we do, though we use different methods.

What are we doing to care for the land? Public campaigns for environmental awareness encourage us to oppose littering and pollution; to recycle glass, plastics, and paper; to plant trees and/or greenery in neighborhoods, parks, and forests. Even if others do not care for God's marvelous world, we should.

Consider Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork." Every one of us could participate in caring for our planet, each according to his capability.

What about the big empires and corporations that contaminate air and water and those that slowly destroy our forests? They shield themselves by claiming to do it for "progress," but they show little care for the resources of future generations. Such problems are difficult to solve, but the lack of care on the part of some does not give us the right to not care. Here we are talking about a personal commitment with our God, a commitment that starts with one person: me.

What about those who do not take care of the land?

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth (Revelation 11:18).

— *Fernando Coronado*

We do not bow down *to* nature but *with* it. Ultimately, this will increase the renown of God, — the purpose of humanity and the desire of His people.

Perspective and action

Practicing worshipful stewardship begins with perspective, then requires action. First, view the earth as good, because God proclaimed creation good from its inception. Appreciate His creation; bow in humble recognition of the Creator. Nature humbles humanity by revealing a wonderful Maker. Then, get your hands dirty trying to clean it up:

- Adopt a highway.
- Clean up your neighborhood street.
- Plant a garden in your back yard.
- Buy organic foods; be aware of meat processing practices.
- Buy fuel-efficient cars, maybe a hybrid.
- Get a political voice; get involved in environmental justice; visit Restoring Eden (www.restoringeden.org).
- Be creative: Find your expression of worshipful stewardship.

Keep the earth beautiful, keep God's creation ordered, encourage nature's worship of its Creator, and satisfy the desire of your heart: His renown. **✠**

Michael Flores is happily married to Victoria, serves as youth director in San Antonio (Willard St. church), TX, and has recently enrolled in graduate school.



The Daniel Diet

by Richard A. Wiedenheft

It wasn't enough of a challenge that young Daniel and his three friends found themselves exiled to Babylon. Soon thereafter, they were taken into the very courts of the king of that pagan realm. How would they remain faithful to Yahweh?

Their first recorded test had to do with, of all things, food: "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine . . ." (Daniel 1:8a). This food was undoubtedly rich, tasty, and enticing, but Daniel and his friends opted for "vegetables to eat and water to drink" (v. 12b). Whatever Daniel's motivation, he and his friends were healthier on peasant food.

But we modern Christians, sent to be Daniels in the pagan world around us, seem to be content to indulge ourselves in the modern royal food so readily available. If it tastes good, bring it on! If it is sweet, rich, or fried, dig in! Whole fruits made by God? Just give us the juice. Whole grains designed by God? No, we like the white stuff. Raw, leafy greens — just the way God made them? Yuck! Leave them for the rabbits! Give us the royal food — and cola too!

And where does our diet of highly processed, refined, juiced, enriched, colored, and sweetened food get us? We have a 42 percent chance of getting cancer in our lifetimes. New cases of

diabetes have increased by one third since 1990, and approximately 20 percent of people over sixty have the disease. Heart and cardiovascular disease is on the increase. Some children as young as five to eight have changes in their blood vessels that indicate the beginning of atherosclerosis. And a whopping 85 percent of twenty-one to thirty-nine-year-olds already have atherosclerotic changes in their coronary arteries. Worst of all, the prevalence of these diseases among us Christians is no different than it is in the world around us.

It does not have to be this way. The China Study, a monumental survey of diet and death rates conducted in 1983 and 1989-90 in China, involved some 16,000 people living in hundreds of different communities. The study revealed that people in areas where there was a simple diet of fruits, vegetables, and grains had little cancer, heart disease, diabetes, or excess weight. People in areas where refined foods, especially animal products, were added to their diets showed marked increases in the prevalence of these diseases. These findings are confirmed by many other studies.

Essentially, the message is this: Foods the way God made them protect against a whole host of diseases. Whole grains, whole fruits, and fresh vegetables are

packed with hundreds — probably thousands — of nutrients our bodies need. The closer we can move to a diet based on foods God created, the healthier we'll be. And how blessed we are in modern America that we can buy hundreds of different kinds of whole foods in our supermarkets.

We claim that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). Will we honor God with our food and drink so that we can be healthy for as many years as He gives us? Or will we limp through those years debilitated, handicapped, and compromised in our witness to the world? Will we continue to eat at the royal table of this world? Or will we have the courage to follow Daniel's example and eat from God's garden?

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

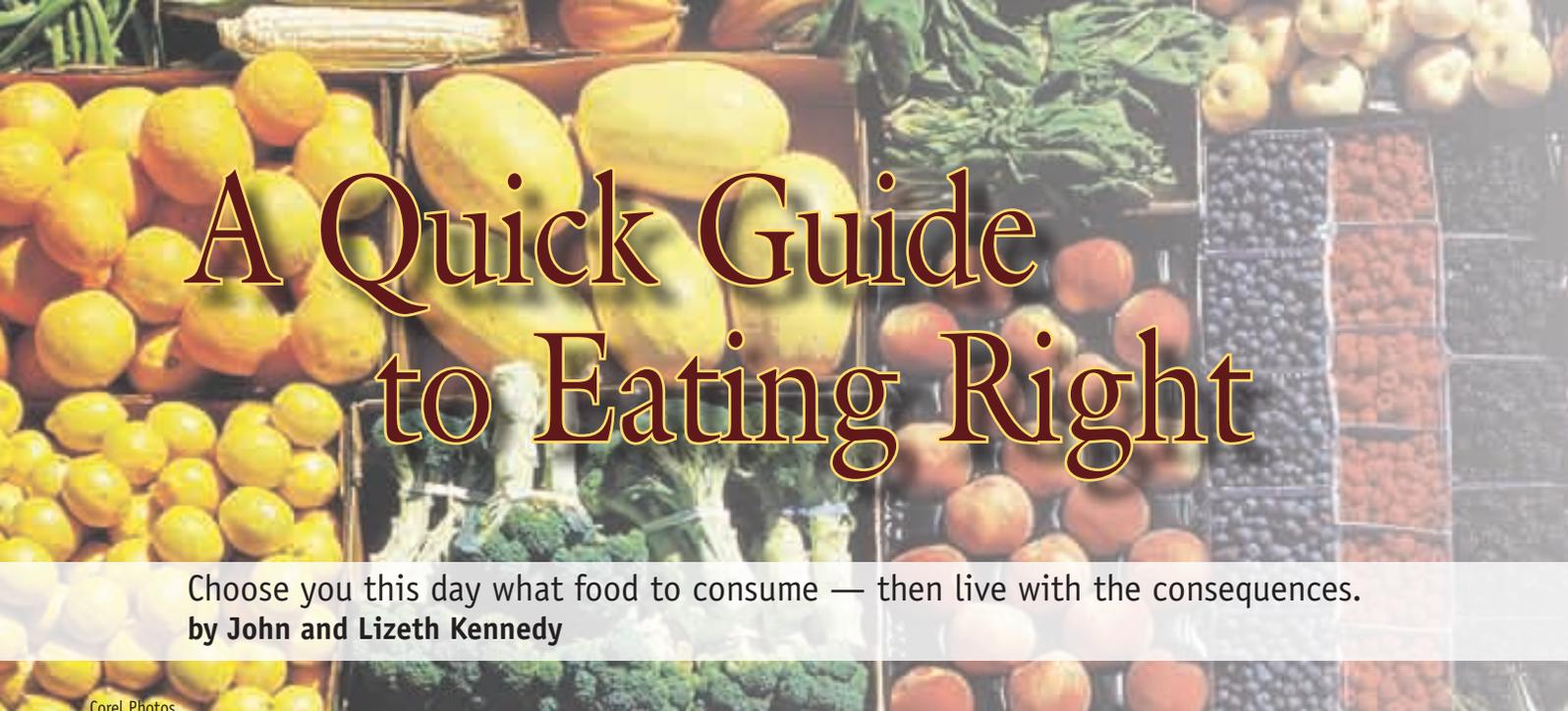
Resources

Eat to Live, Joel Fuhrman, M.D.

The China Study, T. Colin Campbell, Ph.D.

What Would Jesus Eat? Don Colbert, M.D.

The Maker's Diet, Jordan S. Rubin, N.M.D., Ph.D.



A Quick Guide to Eating Right

Choose you this day what food to consume — then live with the consequences.
by **John and Lizeth Kennedy**

Corel Photos

“**M**an is what he eats,” quipped German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. From a nutritional standpoint, Feuerbach was correct. Nutritional differences among foods affect our bodies in real ways. What we eat can either provide lasting energy for daily tasks or leave us flat after the initial burst of energy.

How can we make right food choices? One way is by following the ideal diet, illustrated in the Healthy Eating Pyramid.

New pyramid

Nutritional experts from Harvard School of Health have recently developed a Healthy Eating Pyramid, replacing the standard U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Guide Pyramid. Studying the diagram, we can make several observations. One is the need for daily exercise. A sedentary lifestyle is counterproductive even if we eat healthy. Noticeably present in the new pyramid are fruits, vegetables, whole grains, plant oils, and nuts — all natural foods given by God.

Noticeably absent are the scavenger and other unclean animals prohibited in Leviticus 11.

Some American favorites to avoid are placed at the top of the new pyramid. Let’s take a look.

Red meat

Back in Eden, God told the first humans to eat “every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” (Genesis 1:29). After the Flood, God permitted Noah’s family to eat clean meats. (The distinction between clean and unclean meats was known long before the Jewish nation, according to Genesis 7:2.) But they weren’t allowed to eat the blood (9:4). Blood in the ancient Near East was considered sacred; that’s why it was used in sacrifice. Later, the prohibition against eating blood and fat was included in the Mosaic law (Leviticus 3:17).

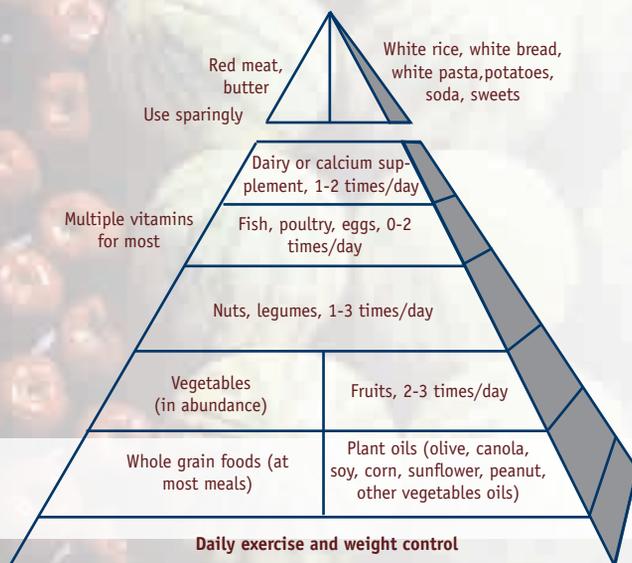
Meat sold in supermarkets today typically contains a lot of blood. Though blood has nutrients our bodies need, it also has

residual toxins, pesticides, antibiotics, hormones, and growth stimulators — all of which may trigger different types of cancer. Red meat also contains a lot of saturated fat, a dangerous weapon against our heart and health.

White flour

Red meats aren’t the only foods to be used sparingly. We should also avoid white (refined) flour. Whole grains are the most natural, healthy way to eat cereals, but humans have converted whole wheat grains into white flour. Because this flour lacks fiber, its sugar is absorbed quickly, overwhelming our body’s insulin production. This overload of sugar is a direct cause of type 2 diabetes and colon cancer.

Wheat breads that are not whole wheat are actually a mixture of enriched white flour and whole wheat flour. This mixture has less fiber than whole wheat breads. For this reason, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to buy whole wheat bread instead of white bread for their children.



Hydrogenized oils, trans fats

Vegetable and natural oils are the best source of fats in our diet; hydrogenized oils and trans fats should be avoided. These are vegetable oils that have been chemically transformed from a liquid to a semi-solid form. They can damage the heart, sticking to the arteries much faster than saturated fats found in animal products and causing strokes and coronary problems.

Some products that contain this type of oil are French fries, fried chicken, or the fried foods often found in restaurants or supermarkets.

Calcium and protein

Despite the almost endless food types we should use sparingly, our bodies need other kinds of food daily.

One is calcium, a mineral that builds bones and keeps them strong. Dairy products have traditionally been the basic source of calcium for Americans, but they are full of saturated fat. You can get the same calcium value by switching to no-fat or reduced-fat dairy products, or by using soy

milk and cheese fortified with calcium. If you don't like dairy products or are lactose intolerant, you may want to try calcium supplements.

Protein is also essential. Fish, poultry, eggs, and nuts are healthy sources of protein. Of these, fish is especially important because of omega-3 fatty acids, which may protect from coronary heart disease, the leading killer in the U.S. Fish can also reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. Eggs are regarded with suspicion because of their effect on cholesterol, but they provide a better breakfast than doughnuts or bagels, both rich in trans fats and made from refined flour.

Processed and natural foods

Many foods in industrialized countries are processed with refined or chemically modified sugars, hydrogenated fats or trans fats, preservatives, artificial flavors and colors, and other additives. Due to low cost, quick and easy preparation, and savvy marketing campaigns, consumers usually eat more processed foods — like white bread, soda

pop, canned foods, chips, fast foods, deli meats, desserts, and candies — than natural foods. High consumption of processed foods increases the likelihood of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary diseases, and cancer.

God created foods with natural benefits. Fruits and vegetables, for example, contain fiber, enzymes and sugars, vitamins, and minerals, and they often have a delightful taste. According to most authorities, fruits and vegetables decrease the likelihood of heart attack or stroke, protect against a variety of cancers, lower blood pressure, help avoid constipation, and guard against cataracts and macular degeneration.

Temple maintenance

We must eat to survive. But what we eat affects our bodies either positively or negatively and influences how we feel. Inspired by the Spirit, Paul writes, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).

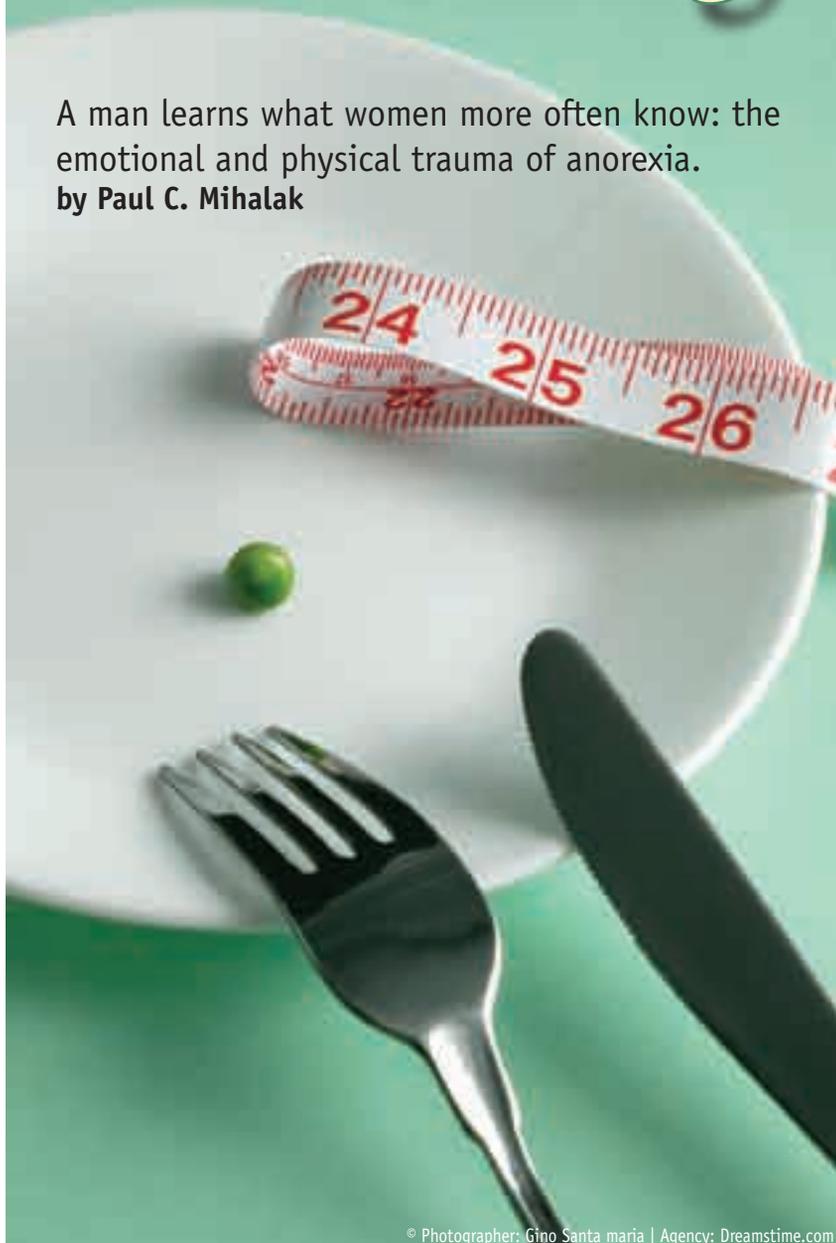
Because our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, we have a duty to eat responsibly. We invite you to follow a healthy diet and present your bodies to God so you can effectively serve the Lord and obey His Word. **PA**

John and Lizeth Kennedy attend CoG7 in Monterrey, Mexico. Scripture quotations from the *New International Version*.



Not Just a Girl Thing

A man learns what women more often know: the emotional and physical trauma of anorexia.
by Paul C. Mihalak



© Photographer: Gino Santa maria | Agency: Dreamstime.com

Why did I end up like this? How did my life turn out so wrong?

These questions and many others rumbled like a freight train through my foggy brain. The bright lights of the emergency room intensified the headache from my first suicide attempt. Exhaustion gripped my body after it purged dozens of sleeping pills I had taken.

Although only twenty at the time, I had already failed at several jobs. The fundamental social skills needed for even the most mundane work seemed beyond my comprehension. My depression and anxiety had worsened over the past several months.

Seeds of sickness

Not long before, I had dropped out of college because of my self-imposed time restrictions. I stepped on the bathroom scale daily, charting my weight to the quarter of a pound. In addition, I devoted three to four hours daily to exercise, usually weight lifting and running. Fatigue was a continual enemy I could not battle.

Although ultimately I can't blame anyone but myself, my father was emotionally abusive, always stressing perfection. He too was the product of an alcoholic, abusive father. Any change was viewed negatively, particularly changes in my body as I grew into adulthood.

Before being released from the hospital, I began a regimen of prescription drugs and psychotherapy to treat my depression and obsessive-compulsive behavior. Preoccupied with my body

shape, I ate only certain foods, which I measured to the ounce.

My therapist taught me that changes in body shape and attitudes were an essential part of the aging process. As I began to apply his lessons, I grew in self-esteem and developed an adventurous spirit. No longer did I dread family get-togethers around the holidays. I too could eat most foods in moderation. Gone were those long exercise sessions. The joy I was beginning to experience outweighed the one or two pounds I could possibly gain.

Renewed life

In 1979 I returned to college part-time to pursue my degree in Business Administration. Academic success came slowly at first but bolstered my confidence to try even more new activities.

My desire for social activity and exercise led me to dance class. Eventually, at a small party sponsored by the school I met Janet, the beautiful lady who would later become my wife.

Shortly before our marriage, several gifted mentors guided me to a career opening at the automobile club in Cleveland, Ohio. My life began to blossom with the lucrative income brought about by three promotions.

Later in our lives, my wife and I fostered four daughters who needed loving care and guidance. We wanted desperately to share God's goodness and generous provision. All are now grown women with careers and families of their own.

My father and I finally became close friends shortly after my

college graduation in 1993. Dad remained my best friend until his passing in 2004.

Final chapter

Unfortunately, my life's final chapter has been the most difficult. I was diagnosed with crippling arthritis and testicular cancer a year ago. The cancer nearly took my life, and for the first time in thirty years, I couldn't work. I rapidly returned to the inappropriate coping mechanisms of compulsive exercise and food rituals to regain control of my life.

Thankfully, God again sent wise counselors into my life. Dean became like a Christian brother to me. He still calls and visits just to "check out" my mind. He has been a faithful ally in fighting these recent storms of life.

In addition, another friend introduced me to a Christian psychiatrist. His sound counsel and wise use of prescription drugs have eased my emotional and physical pain. Chemotherapy and radical surgery have eradi-

cated any trace of cancer from my body. Though recovering my mental and physical strength has been long and hard fought, I am now back to work and progressing toward normalcy.

The ravages of the arthritis will last the rest of my life. My spine has degenerated too far to allow successful surgery. Keeping the pain manageable will continue to be a daily uphill battle, but one that I am willing to fight with God's help.

Christian fellowship and faith in Jesus Christ have ultimately helped me to overcome anorexia and cancer. Now I will rest my future in God's promise in Psalm 147:3: "[God] heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (NIV). 

Paul C. Mihalak writes from Hubbard, OH.



As I began to apply my therapist's lessons, I grew in self-esteem and developed an adventurous spirit. No longer did I dread family get-togethers around the holidays. I too could eat most foods in moderation.

Thanks to God



*L. L. Christenson
December 12, 1910
Independence, MO*



*K. C. Walker
March 27, 1911
Ft. Payne, AL*



*W. T. McMickin
May 16, 1912
Mesa, AZ*



*Jesus Sandoval
October 31, 1915
Chicago, IL*



*Harold Carlson
April 15, 1918
Springfield, MO*

Thanks for the Church . . .

- for the grace and truth of Jesus, our chief pastor
- for young pastors like Alex Ciurana, Manuel Molinar III, Monico Muffley, Israel Steinmetz, and others
- for older, retired pastors, especially those pictured on these pages
- for those who are preparing to follow these elders into pastoral ministry
- for all those faithful members and lay pastors who find their places of service and fill them
- for district superintendents, boards, and General Conference leaders
- for our brethren and for sister conferences in Canada, Mexico, and around the globe
- for growth in the Church internationally
- for promises given to all of God's beloved church at Christ's coming and kingdom

Thanks Dates

October - likely season of Jesus' birth
October - time to appreciate our pastors
October 9 - national Thanksgiving Day (Canada)
November 23 - national Thanksgiving Day (U.S.)

Thanks Verse (Old Testament)

"At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:62).

Thanks Verse (New Testament)

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him . . ." (Colossians 3:17).

for the Church



*Aaron Fauth
May 5, 1921
Union Gap, WA*



*Jesse Rodgers
October 26, 1921
Rudy, AR*



*Hubert Weekes
May 25, 1922
Inola, OK*



*Manuel Rodriguez
October 15, 1922
Houston, TX*



*Delvin O'Banion
June 26, 1924
Denver, CO*

Thanks for CoG7 Ministers

The men pictured here are the ten oldest ordained ministers in the U.S. and Canadian church, with their date of birth and current residence. With appreciation for the hundreds of years of combined service represented, we salute these men, some of whom are still active in pastoral work. "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17).

Thank You for being God to Your people in the church. Thank You for who You are to everybody and for what You have done for us. Thank You for the redemption we have in Jesus and for plenty of love, joy, and peace through the Spirit.

We want to do our part in proclaiming Your glory in all the earth, with thanksgiving. We will not wait for the next report of progress or the next shower of blessings: We will praise You promptly and boldly – today. Despite the failures and losses we have experienced in 2006, we express our confidence in Christ as Savior and Lord, our gratitude for innumerable benefits from His hand, and our desire to faithfully follow Him as long as we live.

We have the opportunity of another day and the option of serving with zeal. You have forgiven our sins and promised us residence in Your eternal home, and You are not finished with us yet. While we have life and breath, we gladly exercise our right and duty to praise You in the here and now!



Corel Photos

Tampering

Swan, which turned the “extreme make-over” idea into a beauty competition, and MTV’s *I Want a Famous Face*, in which each contestant sought surgery to look like a favorite celebrity.

It doesn’t take great insight to recognize that plastic-surgery-for-entertainment is unhealthy. But many of us reflect the same attitudes that gave rise to those shows. We have come to value our personal appear-

ance to a dangerous — perhaps even idolatrous — extreme.

There’s nothing wrong with youth, beauty, slimmness, and physical fitness. But some of us fight aging so desperately that we exalt youth into an ideal. We spend so much time and money striving for beauty and thinness that anyone watching closely can see who our true god is. We place such emphasis on fitness that our workout rooms have become shrines. We color or comb our hair to look more youthful. We diet incessantly, even praying to improve our appearance.

And Christians are far from immune. In fact, examples of this idolatry can be found on Christian television, at Christian conferences, and in Christian bookstores. We don’t see it as a big deal, of course; we’re merely

dressing to impress, perhaps, or looking for that boost in spirit when someone mistakes us for our daughter’s sister. But in so doing, we are not pursuing God but something else. And in that pursuit is the root of idolatry.

God’s Word tells us, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit . . .” (1 Corinthians 6:19). Physical health and cleanliness is nothing less than taking good care of the temple of the Holy Spirit. But when does wise stewardship of our bodies cross the line into tampering with the temple? How can we guard against elevating our pursuit of youth, beauty, and fitness to the place of a god in our lives?

Temple care

God’s Word helps us answer those questions. In a letter to his pastoral protégé, Paul shared four key principles that, though addressed specifically to women, are appropriate for both genders.

Modesty. Paul commanded “women to dress modestly” (1 Timothy 2:9a), rather than pridefully and expensively. Pride is often behind an unhealthy desire to elevate ourselves above those around us. We know that when we wear that ensemble, heads will turn. But God’s will is for us to find what we need in Him. He longs for us to feel His approval so that we no longer crave the approval of others but dress modestly and economically.

Decency. Paul also urged

What an unhealthy emphasis on outer appearance says about the inner person.
by Bob Hostetler

At first, it was just shows like The Learning Channel’s *What Not to Wear* and Bravo’s *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

But the trend quickly spread, and worsened, into shows depicting surgical makeovers. ABC launched *Extreme Makeover*, a series in which two ordinary people, shown first in the “before” phase, undergo operations and tutorials that culminate in their makeover — always to tears, applause, and congratulations. Imitations quickly followed: *The*

with the Temple

women to dress “with decency” (v. 9b). Ephesus, where Timothy ministered, wore its sexuality on its sleeve — much as our culture does. Paul said their indecent fashions were not appropriate for women who professed to worship Christ. If Paul were writing today, he might address breast enhancement surgery and implants, as well as revealing fashions and styles of dress that leave little to the imagination.

Propriety. Paul specified that women should dress with “propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes” (v. 9b, c). Braided hair and fine fashions are not immoral in themselves, but they crossed the boundary of propriety in Paul’s day. Propriety is a sense for what is fitting in a specific situation. What is appropriate for the bedroom is not appropriate for the board room. What is suitable for the beach is not suitable for the street. What is OK among family is not always OK elsewhere. Standards of propriety have blurred and all but disappeared these days. Some young women have taken to wearing lingerie blouses to the office and pajamas to go jogging. Some young men will wear the same clothes to a job interview that they would wear to work out. Some folks forget that it’s *always* proper to be clean and odor-free! In such cases, it’s not primarily a question of modesty, or even decency; the issue is propriety.

Beauty. Finally, Paul advo-

cated a different kind of beauty — God’s standard: “good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (v. 10). Good deeds are the most attractive adornment for the person who worships God. And how like God it is: Your beauty in His eyes doesn’t depend on things outside your control, like good cheekbones or a creamy complexion, but on things entirely within your control, like mowing the lawn for an invalid or rocking a baby in the church nursery. God is less interested in whether your nose or teeth are crooked than whether your actions are. He is far less impressed by a flattering hairdo than by the deeds you do. He is much less concerned with the makeup on your face than with the makeup of your character. He is much less pleased by your sculptured biceps than by your surrendered heart.

Glorifying God

God doesn’t want people to marvel at your youthful beauty; He wants people to look at you and worship Him. He doesn’t want people to ask how you stay in such good shape; He wants people to ask why your life is different. He doesn’t want people to see you and ask for

your plastic surgeon’s name; He wants people to “see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, NKJV).

You may not always see these standards of modesty, decency, propriety, and true beauty in the church. You may not always see them on Christian television or among Christian performers. You certainly won’t see them reflected in the world. But that’s why they are so powerful: because they are so rare.

Men and women who apply God’s standards for personal appearance and adorn themselves with good deeds instead of expensive clothes will reap a rich harvest (Galatians 6:9). And those of us who remove the idols of youth, beauty, slimness, and fitness from the altar of our hearts will open the way for God to work in us and through us in new and greater ways. ■■■

This article is excerpted from **Bob Hostetler’s** new release, *American Idols: The Worship of the American Dream*. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.



God is less interested in whether your nose or teeth are crooked than whether your actions are.

Obsessed with Dress

by **Julio Martinez**

Some Christians seem overly focused on ever-changing fashion, expressing their disapproval of current trends and proclaiming that Scripture is against those trends as well. On the other end of the debate are those who say that clothing styles are neutral and have nothing to do with our relationship to Christ.

Without a doubt, fashion is a business and, many times, a profitable one. The goal of constantly creating new trends is driven mostly by the designer or company that desires to keep a share of the market. They must compete to get everybody – even Christians – to buy their latest style. For the fashion industry, all is valid to get our attention.

Celebrities are often excellent fashion promoters. Whatever these people wear tends to become a fashion statement that others imitate. Advertisers invite us to buy a specific type of clothing so we can look like someone else.

This can present a threat to those who have new life in Christ. They too quickly take their eyes off the only one whose

character is worthy of imitation: Jesus Christ.

Believers shouldn't let anything interfere in their relationship with Jesus, especially since He warned against worrying over what God promises to provide:

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” (Matthew 6:25).

Besides getting our eyes off Christ, fashion puts most of the emphasis on our outward appearance, rather than on who we are inside. Even Samuel the prophet picked David's older brother, Eliab, to be king instead of David simply because of his good looks. But the Lord told Samuel:

“Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV).

Another problem with dress is

the conflicts that can arise over it in a congregation. Believers should realize that the Holy Spirit never inspired any of the writers of Scripture to command or even recommend a special style of dress. A Christian who lives a new lifestyle is known to others by the fruit of the Spirit in his life, not by the fashion he adopts (Galatians 5:22-25).

If someone in the church is struggling to understand where the Scripture draws the line regarding a popular style of dress, those who see the fault should exercise love, tolerance, and patience. Keep in mind that it is the job of the Holy Spirit to teach us all things, to bring all things to our remembrance, and to guide us into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). In Christ we all are instruments of God, workers in and for His kingdom; but only God himself can enlighten people on this issue. ■■■

Julio Martinez, his wife, Brenda, and three daughters live in Montreal, Quebec, where he serves as pastor and district superintendent.

by Israel Steinmetz

Bad Choices

OK, I have a confession to make that won't shock anyone who knows me. I'm fat. Specifically, I'm six feet tall and weigh two-fifty, which makes me fifty to seventy-five pounds overweight. No, that extra weight is not all muscle.

The hundreds of readers who know me may be enjoying an awkward chuckle over my "confession," while the thousands who don't may be wondering, "Why is he telling us this?"

Here's why: because others can learn from what I'm going through. First, I don't carry excess pounds because God made me like this or because I have a metabolism problem or enjoy extra weight. The real reason is that I make bad choices. I choose not to exercise, and I choose to eat — a lot — of good-tasting, unhealthy food.

I could excuse my weight by saying that I have a wife and two small children, work full time, go to school full time, and am involved in my church. I'm too busy to use the YMCA membership I've got. I could say that it's too expensive or too much bother for me to eat properly. I have to eat what's cheap and convenient, which is usually not very nutritious.

But the real reason I make poor choices is that I have a discipline problem.

Some of my friends might say, "No way! He's one of the most disciplined people I know." True, in many areas of life I am disciplined. But in other areas, including my appetite for food and bodily exercise, I am not disciplined at all. I'm lazy, foolish, and irresponsible. As a result, my body suffers.

Some might say, "So what? Our bodies will last one hundred years at best. Then we'll die and they'll rot. God will give us immortal bodies in eternity, so who cares about the ones we have now?"

Here's the problem with that reasoning. When He died on the cross, Jesus purchased us — *body, soul, and spirit*; we belong to Him now. What I do with my body matters to God because it belongs to Him. But it doesn't matter just because He cares about my health and appearance, which He does. It matters mostly because *the way I look on the outside reflects who I am on the inside*. All the factors we have control over — our disposition, our weight, our clothing, our alterations (hair styles, piercings, tattoos, make-up, and makeovers) all reflect inward realities.

I'm fat because I lack inward discipline in that area. That's the bottom line.

So ask yourself, *Why do I weigh what I weigh?* or *Why do I dress the way I do?* or *Why do I want that tattoo?* or *Why do I wear makeup the way I do?* Does your appearance tell people that you're self-controlled, or lazy? That you're excited about your life in Christ, or depressed? That you're discreet, or immodest?

I encourage you to pray and find wise Christian people to help guide you through these questions. Finding answers that heal can be a difficult and painful process, but physical and spiritual wholeness is always a worthwhile pursuit.

Your outward appearance may express who you are on the inside. What is it telling the world about you? Let God transform your inward motivations and desires — not so that you can conform to what everybody else looks like and does, but so that you can be transformed into the image of Christ. That's my goal.

Makeover Needed

by **Thelma W. Kephart**

I need a complete remodeling job. I know I do, because it screams at me everywhere I look: TV, newspapers, magazines, shop windows. Everything tells me I can look better if I just do something about it. Maybe you feel that way, too. But where to start?

Why not just start at the top? I need to become a blonde. I've always heard blondes have more fun, but I'm beginning to see there's another reason that my friends, one by one, are becoming blonde: the aging factor. Soft, blonde hair looks better with those lines that show up in the face as we grow older. So I'd be better off a blonde.

But wait — there's Botox! Maybe I don't have to worry about those lines; I can go to a Botox party and have them removed with just a simple injection. Or I can choose one of a multitude of anti-wrinkle face rejuvenating creams, but that's slower than Botox. And if I could shed my glasses by having Lasik surgery, that wouldn't be a bad thing. Then a trip to the dentist to get that dazzling white smile would definitely give my whole face a new look.

But then there's the body. All those other things are done by some expert, but getting the body in shape depends on me.

I'll have to enroll in a fitness class and be faithful in my regular workouts if I want to see any improvement. And no more Turtle Cheesecake or Fruit of the Forest Pie if I want to take off those extra pounds. But I can do it. And when I've reached my goal, I'll spend a few sessions in a tanning salon to get that gorgeous golden color that always gets compliments. A new set of fingernails, a pedicure, and a good-looking new outfit will finish the job. I can see it now — the new me. I'll be truly beautiful.

Something's nagging at me a little, though. Now that the outside is fixed up, what about the inside? Does it need a little work? I'm afraid so. Could I be focusing on the wrong things? That Scripture verse "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV) sends a guilty shiver through me. What does He see?

Is He more interested in the color of my hair or what goes on inside my head — that critical spirit that generates unkind thoughts about people I work with, that self-centered desire for my own way, my lack of concern for others? And my eyes — does He care about what I look at? Are the TV shows I watch making me a better person? Am I

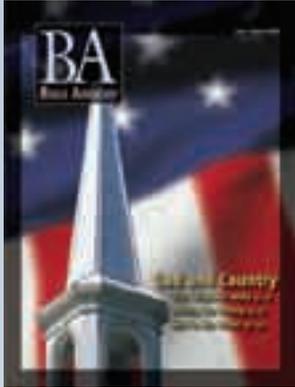
reading books and magazines that will strengthen my faith and help me communicate it to those who don't know Him? Am I building a better spirit as well as a better body? It's what comes out of my mouth, not the diet I follow, that He is concerned about (Matthew 15:11).

I know I would look good in that new outfit, but would the "me" inside it look good, too, because I have been with Jesus? I can see I do need a complete remodeling job, but it's one that screams at me from the Scriptures about my heart, not what the world around me says is important.

So what can I do about it? Needless to say, I've changed my focus. I've shelved a lot of the exterior remodeling project and am concentrating more on the interior remodeling. I know God wants me to take care of the body He has given me, so I'm not going to the extreme abandonment mode. I'm just asking Him to help me seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). And when He makes me new on the inside, more like Him, it will show on the outside too. ■■

Thelma W. Kephart writes from Rock Hill, SC.

Mail Bag



Unbalanced on warfare

["On Warfare," July-August '06, p. 18] included many scriptures that must be considered, but it was also incomplete and misleading. First, it did not consider the war story in Genesis 14. Abram is a prime example of salvation by grace through faith. Second, any article on military service for Christians must include the New Testament account of Cornelius, the Roman centurion (Acts 10:1ff). I know BA is limited in length, but if a topic can't be balanced and complete, it should be covered over . . . several articles.

J. W.
Folsom, LA

Founders' failure

[Regarding "Would I Have Signed?" July-August, p. 12], No! Peter warned us not to despise authority (2 Peter 2:10-13a). Fighting against our mother country was the most stupid act of our Founding Fathers. We suffered for this many times over in our Civil War, which would not have happened if we were still colonies of Britain. When [we were] finally given independence, our northern border would have been the Arctic Ocean.

R. R.
Reseda, CA

Holy Spirit

Thanks for your answer regarding the Trinity doctrine ["Q & A," July-August '06, p. 8]. It is important to me, not so much for content (with which I agree) but for the caring way you addressed a "hot topic" that would not offend. . . . It's an issue where there is lots of room for me to grow.

R. S.
Westminster, CA

I consider the Holy Spirit to be what He was called in Acts 5:3, 4: God. One Friday evening I started running my bathwater, and I felt such a sweet presence in the room. I said, "Holy Spirit, if that's You, please linger." I could not think of any earthly thing, any need, any problem during that bath. It was all holiness and praise! I climbed into bed, and His presence came and bathed my heart and life. All peace; nothing lacking. Another day I got into my car and said, "Holy Spirit, would you consider coming into this car as I drive home?" He did, and His peace was overwhelming. I said, "Thank You so much, Holy Spirit." I only know about my blessings; I hold the Holy Spirit in reverence.

M. C.
Scotland Neck, NC

The stuff we sometimes see on TV of a holy angel on one side and a bad one on the other. . . . The bad one isn't needed, as that is our own natural man. The holy angel is present with us always; He never leaves us. He is the counselor of choice. He knows the mind of God.

S. J. (inmate)
Florence, AZ

I think you're wrong in your response to the Holy Spirit question. Peter does not say that Ananias lied to the Father or the Son but that he lied to the Holy Ghost (Acts 5:3). Only a functioning personality can be lied to — not a chair, for instance. Notice who speaks in Acts 13:2: the Holy Spirit. It was not the Father or the Son who called Paul and Barnabas but the Holy Ghost, who addressed them personally. You cannot directly quote an impersonal force or object. These verses prove that the Holy Ghost is not only a cognizant personality but [also] a separate person from the Father and the Son.

C. S.
Las Vegas, NV

Editor's reply: We agree that the Spirit is no mere impersonal force, as in Star Wars. If, however, the personal attributes you cite mean that the Holy Spirit is a third person of deity in the same sense that the Father and Son are persons, then . . .

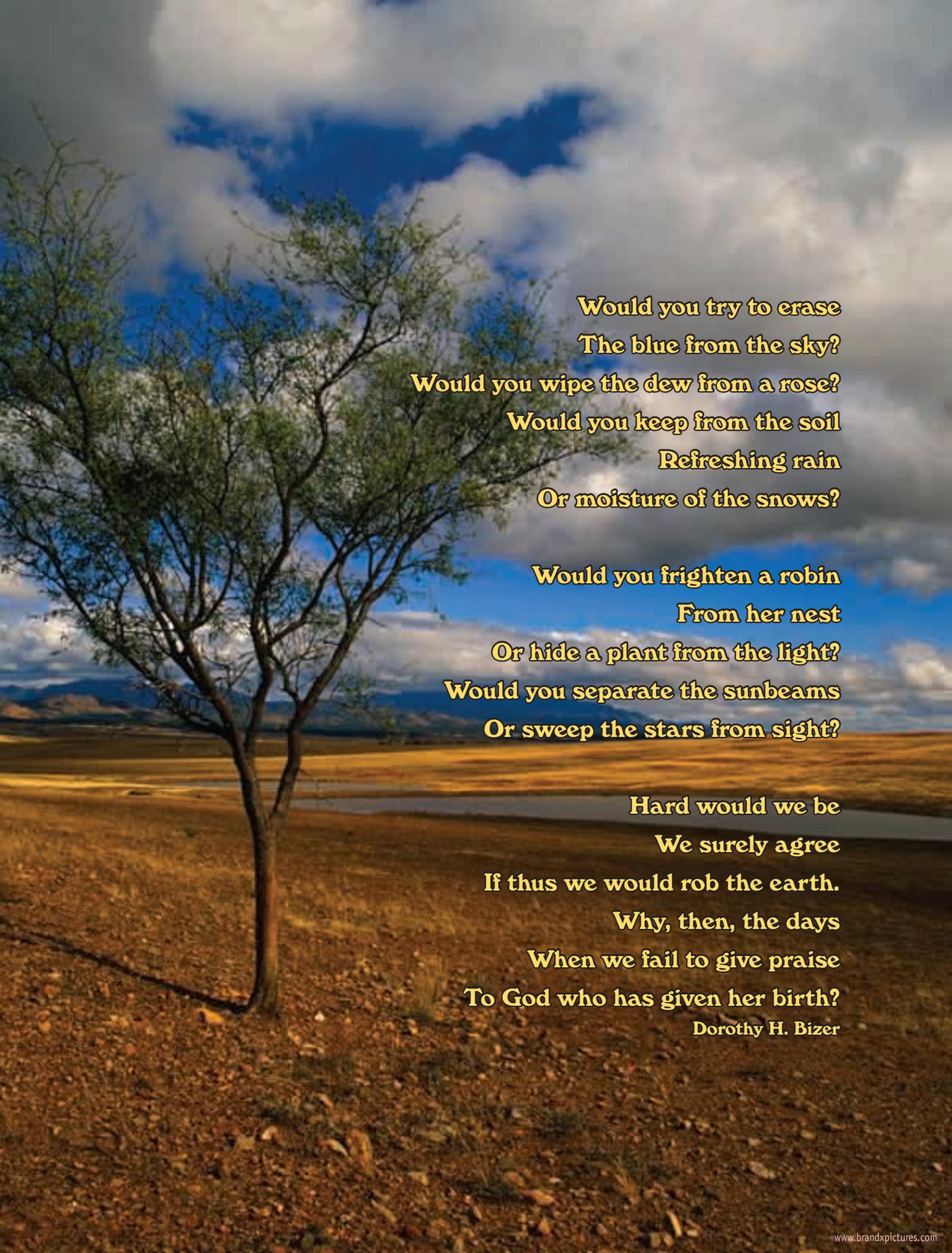
- *why is the Spirit not listed alongside Father and Son in most salutations, doxologies, and benedictions of the New Testament?*

- *why is the Spirit not reigning on heaven's throne alongside the Father and Son, who are depicted there?*

- *why is the Spirit not addressed in biblical prayers or worship, as are the Father and Son?*

- *why does the Spirit not engage in a dialogue with Father and Son and express love to them, as the Father and Son do with/to each other?*

Such omissions cause us to look beyond the symmetric view of three co-equal divine persons to other possible models for deity. Thanks for thinking with us.

A landscape photograph featuring a single tree on the left, a river in the middle ground, and mountains in the distance under a blue sky with white clouds. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**Would you try to erase
The blue from the sky?
Would you wipe the dew from a rose?
Would you keep from the soil
Refreshing rain
Or moisture of the snows?**

**Would you frighten a robin
From her nest
Or hide a plant from the light?
Would you separate the sunbeams
Or sweep the stars from sight?**

**Hard would we be
We surely agree
If thus we would rob the earth.
Why, then, the days
When we fail to give praise
To God who has given her birth?**

Dorothy H. Bizer



What's new with . . .

Publications

- *Now What?* celebrates ten years online in October; visit <http://now.what.cog7.org>

Ministries Training System

- Online course on Emerging Culture, October 29 - December 17; amber@cog7.org; <http://mts.cog7.org>

Spring Vale Academy

- Second semester openings; call 989-725-2391

National FYC

- Fall Challenge, suggested date October 21

Missions Ministries

- Pioneer Missionary Training to Mexico, December 21-30

North American Ministerial Council

- Overland Park, KS, October 2-7

G. C. Ministries

Eddie Villalba, Director of Administration

We are amazed at the wonderful things the Lord does in our church. Working with the G. C. Ministries personnel and seeing their efforts brings me to this place of great thanksgiving. We would like to challenge every member and church to use what these ministries offer.

Publications Director: Keith Michalak

Editor: Calvin Burrell
Associate Editor: Sherri Langton
Translation: Sylvia Corral

Missions Abroad Director: Bill Hicks

Ministries Training System Director: Calvin Burrell

Assistant Director: Raul Lopez
theLink@MTS: Amber Riggs
Instructor/Writer: Richard A. Wiedenheft

National FYC Directors: Kurt and Kristi Lang

NAWM Director: Mary Ling

SWORD Director: Christy Lang

Please pray for these people and for everyone here at the General Conference offices. And do not forget your financial support to continue the Lord's work. You may contact us at 303-452-7973 or offices@cog7.org.

Eddie Villalba





Ministers Meet in Mid-America

“His Name is Wonderful” is the theme of the biennial meeting of the North American Ministerial Council (NAMC) planned for October 2-7 in Overland Park, Kansas. The NAMC consists of each licensed and credentialed minister of our church in the United States and Canada. These ministers study the Bible and determine the official doctrines of the Church, develop pastoral and evangelistic programs, and set standards for ministerial documentation.

Worship is intended to be the highlight of the 2006 NAMC meeting. The songs, led by Elder Heber Vega and his team, and sermon in each worship period will focus on a different biblical name or title of Jesus.

The business agenda of the council will include reports, election of officers, and consideration of resolutions. Resolutions may be offered to adopt a new format for our doctrinal statements, create a study committee regarding the new covenant, recommend amendment of the bylaws of the International Ministerial Congress, amend the NAMC *Bylaws and Ministerial Documentation Manual*, and rescind the 2004 interpretation of our doctrinal statement regarding Jesus.

Seminar topics may include Ministerial Ethics, Managing Stress in Ministry, Staying Physically Fit for Ministry, Taking Care of Yourself in Ministry, Developing a Men’s Ministry, How to Win Friends and Influence People in Ministry, and other topics.

Time not spent in worship, business, and seminars will also be well used. Ministerial picture identi-

fication cards will be created for each NAMC member attending this meeting. Special discussions, Bible studies, and committee or board meetings may be scheduled during free times. Since time spent in fellowship and building relationships is always valuable, we hope to enjoy an outing one evening.

Your prayers for the success of this meeting are requested. May God’s will be accomplished; may our church and its ordained ministers be further unified; and may Jesus Christ be exalted to the glory of God the Father in all that is said and done.

— Loren Stacy
NAMC President

News and Notes

NFYC Fall Challenge. Suggested for October 21; info packets available at <http://fyc.cog7.org>; contact Kurt or Kristi Lang, 541-517-1079.

MTS Online. Ministries Training System recently taught its first online core course. Nearly a dozen students completed Church Polity under the instruction of Elders Max Morrow and Monico Muffley.

Octoberfest. The annual Octoberfest Family Retreat at the Jasper, Arkansas, church campgrounds is October 20-22; contact Jason Overman, 870-577-3647 or 870-447-5736.

WCD Convocation. A Hispanic Convocation is planned for November 23-36 at the Radisson Hotel in Fresno, California; contact Juan Cervantes (916-789-1238 or juanc1@earthlink.net) or Sylvia Corral (209-869-0777 or sylral869@aol.com).



MTS students in the Boston area pose in front of the Dorchester YMCA, where they met for the Sunday morning conclusion to a ten-hour course in personal evangelism.

Pioneer Missionary Training

Interested in serving foreign fields? PMT Level 1 could be for you! This short-term mission trip, an introduction to missions work, takes you to Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico, for training December 20-31, 2006.

Hosted by the Mexican CoG7 and facilitated by G. C. Ministries, this event teaches service to the unsaved through classroom training and hands-on experience in a third-world country.

For an application (due by November 15) or more details, contact Kurt Lang, NFYC (541-517-1079 or kurt@cog7.org); Bill Hicks, G. C. Missions (carlylehix@aol.com); or Christy Lang, SWORD (sword@cog7.org).



MISSION POSSIBLE camp group, Jasper, AR



Spring Vale Academy students enjoy Welcome Back BBQ in early September at the Owosso, MI, campus. New staff this year include Mark Caswell, director; Marleen Edwards, Amy Marlin, Pam Noble, Melissa Pederson, Aaron Coulson, Tim Hinds, Judith Gomez, and Josh Edwards.

MISSION POSSIBLE, the National FYC ministry youth camp, was held July 16-23 at the Jasper, Arkansas, church campgrounds. Twenty-three students converged at this location to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the community through visitation and service projects. Each day found groups of young people at the local nursing home or senior care center, helping with odd jobs or going room to room to visit the bedridden and to sing or pray with them. Others visited neighborhood homes, many occupied by widows, to perform service projects from washing windows and cleaning bathrooms to clearing brush, mowing, cleaning gutters, and stack-

ing wood. At other times we helped build picnic pavilions, clear trails, paint buildings, set benches, and other things at the campgrounds.

Recreation included cooling in the Buffalo River from the one hundred-plus degree, humidity-laden days. Intense heat made it difficult to want to work outside, but the intensity of the youth was stronger. They accomplished any task set before them.

Evening services were led by Kurt Lang, with teaching by Jason and Rose Rodriguez (SWD youth coordinators), Jason Overman (lay pastor in Jasper), and Larry Marrs (LITES director). Students and staff members received a wrench engraved with the camp theme "I Am God's Tool" to challenge them to be God's tool wherever they go. The highlight of Sabbath afternoon was the baptism of Ashley Harrison, a local youth.

We are thankful to the Jasper, Arkansas, congregation for hosting us and to the twenty-three students who gave a week of their summer for others. You have exemplified the power of serving others without gain for self, and you encouraged the Church in seeing young people who stand against the culture to walk with God.

— Kurt Lang

Notice to foreign readers: Many BA readers in other countries have received a survey form to determine their interest in the magazine. If you received this form, you must respond now to continue receiving the BA.

Notice to all readers: Please notify the BA office anytime your address changes.



Gloucester, England - On June 6, Robert Crawford and Courtney Johnson met Bill Hicks at London's Heathrow Airport and traveled with him to a missions weekend here. These men, with Pastor Garvey of the Gloucester Church, are active with Missions Abroad in assisting leaders in East Africa with training and funding for projects. A series of training classes in Biblical Foundations served to orient the Gloucester brethren to a basic covenant theology and to avoid the antinomianism of other views. The rich Jamaican heritage of our British Conference reflects the missionary zeal that brought CoG7 to the U.K. from the Caribbean forty years ago and that is now stepping into the continent of Africa to share their faith.



Calgary, Alberta - This congregation hosted a Super Sabbath for the Western Canadian District on August 5. District Superintendent Orville Rose is the pastor, and G. C. Missions Director Bill Hicks was speaker for the day. With immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and Jamaica attending, it was an international worship event celebrating our calling and work in gospel missions around the world.

Skoczów, Poland - In June, Ivan Senina of Oregon and Bill Hicks of Tennessee visited Poland to attend a conference of the Zbory Bozych Dnia Siodmego [ZBDS], a participant in the International

Ministerial Congress. Sabbath services were attended by 240 people from Poland, Switzerland, Germany, Czech Republic, Ukraine, and the U.S. Music and messages centered on unity and reflected the diversity of the regional Church's membership.



On Sunday, meetings with leadership revolved around how the Church in Poland can focus more on administration and evangelism, become integrated with the IMC, and address current challenges. From Poland, Brother Senina was transported by Jan Jurecka of the Czech Republic to visit groups in Ukraine and Romania.

San Salvador, El Salvador - Elders Ramon Ruiz and Bill Hicks arrived for an eventful week August 6-12. Leaders of the Guatemalan Church came also. After a day of leaders' meetings, the team traveled to San Miguel to hold dedication ceremonies for the new 880 AM radio station. This is the second in the Radio ABBA - Voice of the Church of God network, which began with 1260 AM. Missions Abroad assisted in acquiring both transmitters, one donated by a station in Tennessee and the other purchased and rebuilt in Canada. Most funds for this network, which envisions one more station to cover all Central America, were raised in the El Salvadoran church. The stations are owned and operated by it, and all airtime goes for outreach in music and teaching - a tremendous outreach tool in Central America. In recent years the El Salvadoran church has grown to 5,000+ baptized members in 125 congregations throughout the country.



Let God use **you** in . . .

Missions Ministries

Bill Hicks, Director

Sowing gospel seeds around the world: It's easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the task. It helps to reflect on God's goodness and consider our investment in the Great Commission. Working through all His children, our heavenly Father reaches worldwide to spread the good news of humanity's only sure hope, Jesus Christ. Take a moment to read about the opportunities, and consider how you can partner with us to go into all the world. Your special offerings to missions make this possible.

Church Planting establishes new churches in the U.S. and Canada through our Missionaries to America initiative. Is God calling *you* for this?

Home Missions fosters growth within the local church through evangelism and training resources. Are *you* learning to share your faith and grow your church?



Cambodian pastors receive ministry radios from Far East Broadcasting Company, thanks in part to support from Missions Abroad. A total of 365 wind-up radios and 58 bicycles were distributed to 200+ Church leaders in April 2006.



First constructed building of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Myanmar (formerly Burma) in Letpanchhang Village

Missions Abroad supports missions on every inhabited continent, helping you and your congregation bless those in need. A donation marked for Missions Abroad will be used in ministry outside the U.S. and Canada.

Disaster Relief responds to natural and man-made disasters when — not if — they strike. Your support helps us replenish funds expended in Kenya and Zambia for drought relief efforts and prepares for tomorrow's needs.

Christ is Coming! With five hundred-plus associates now giving \$20 monthly, you provide salaries and subsidies for seventy-plus missionary workers in fifteen countries. We seek 4,500 more donors to help us reach into other waiting countries. If *you* believe Christ is coming, help us send missionaries and evangelists around the world so the lost can know Jesus.

Change for Your World is a program to save your daily pocket-change in a jug, box, or drawer and send it yearly to support our growing church through the International Ministerial Congress. Your support now will help bring mission representatives to the IMC meeting next summer.

Medical Missions helps our CoG7 health care professionals relieve suffering for third-world peoples. Our next medical mission is planned for Guatemala in early 2007. To help, mark your love offering "Medical Missions."

*GC Missions Ministries:
Working for you around the corner and around the world sharing the good news of Jesus Christ!*

International Tour

IMC Coming to North America

As many readers know, the International Ministerial Congress (IMC) is the organism that unites countries where the Church of God (Seventh Day) exists. Its purposes are to promote doctrinal unity among member churches and develop evangelistic projects around the world. We expect delegates or observers from more than thirty nations at the next quadrennial meeting.

During the next congress, the IMC will use much of its time

- analyzing the theological topic "Other Days" to clarify our position regarding the observance of days other than the weekly Sabbath.
- considering amendments to the IMC structure that would permit the congress to offer better service to its members.
- reflecting on the actual state of the Church around the world. Each country will report on its current size and progress, relating its most urgent needs and other details.

In addition to the work sessions, public worship services will be held. We appreciate the prayers of readers for the next session of the IMC, and we hope to offer good news when it is finished.

— Ramon Ruiz
IMC President



Ramon Ruiz

NOTICE: The 2006 IMC meeting was first scheduled for Brazil, then for Mexico City. Due to civil unrest after a disputed election and the difficulty of obtaining visas for foreign delegates, this congress will not take place in Mexico City in November, as previously announced. It has been rescheduled for July 8-11 in Overland Park, Kansas, U.S.

IMC Member Conferences/Councils

Argentina, Australia, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Trinidad/Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay

IMC Officers (2002-2006)

President: Ramon Ruiz, Monterrey, Mexico

First Vice President: Calvin Burrell, Colorado

Second Vice President: Wilson do Nascimento, Florida (and Brazil)

Secretary: Lynn Taylor, Missouri (deceased in June 2006)

Treasurer: Carlos Ceron, Tijuana, Mexico

IMC delegates representing the U.S. and Canada: Elders Robert Coulter, Bill Hicks, Chip Hinds, Ken Knoll, John Lemley, Raul Lopez, Carl Palmer, Whaid Rose, Loren Stacy, Antonio Vega, Heber Vega, and Richard Wiedenheft have been selected by the North American Ministerial Council as its delegates. Should any of these be unable to serve, Elders Melvin Sweet, Joel Hernandez, and Wesley Walker are the alternates.

The IMC has resulted in the Church of God (Seventh Day) becoming a truly worldwide fellowship of believers in Jesus Christ. As national churches sponsor mission activities beyond their frontiers, a greater international gospel ministry is developed, and the congress becomes the means of their affiliation with the Church.

— Elder Robert Coulter
IMC President (1976-86)

Rethinking Abundance

Genocide, poverty, and persecution weigh heavily on my mind. Perhaps it's because of Thanksgiving, the time to reflect on our national blessings from God. We live mostly peaceful lives here and enjoy much of the world's wealth. Despite attempts to undermine it, religious freedom remains one of the legacies of America. Born on foreign soil, I am grateful for the benefits this country affords, and I join my fellow citizens in welcoming the annual emphasis on gratitude.

But reflection on our blessings can be an unsettling reminder of the plight of others. A recent magazine article provided me a needed nudge regarding the "dark continent," Africa. Despite the end of multi-state conflict and the presence of UN troops, 3.9 million persons have died in the killing fields of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), and 40,000 more have been raped. In Rwanda millions of lives have been lost to genocide. Christians in Sudan are killed or sold into slavery, in part because of their faith in Jesus. And in those places where genocide and persecution aren't widespread, poverty is.

Africa was once exceedingly wealthy. Its gold and diamond fields yielded precious stones. But years of colonialism and imperialist enterprise have stripped the land of its wealth and displaced generations of its people through slave trade. Thus, as Zac Niringiye, assistant bishop of Kampala in the Church of Uganda, says, "Africa's crisis is not poverty; it is not AIDS. Africa's crisis is confidence" (*Christianity Today*, July 2006). Loss of confidence is one trait of an oppressed people.

In "Experiencing Life at the Margins: An African bishop tells North American Christians the most helpful gospel-thing they can do," Niringiye notes, "One of the gravest threats to the North American church is the deception power — the deception of being at the center." He says some of the most significant events in the New Testament happened on the periphery. An emerging church is reshaping the

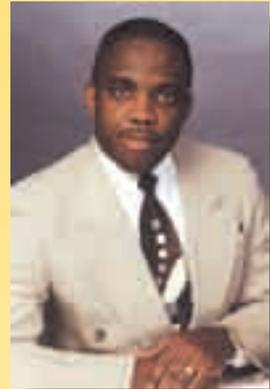
future of Christianity, but it is happening in Asia, Africa, and Latin America — not in North America.

Niringiye suggests we should read the Bible differently. American Christians tend to read from Matthew 28 (the Great Commission), where we're told, "Go and make." We've become the "go-and-fix-it people," keeping us at the center. Instead, we should focus on the beginning of the gospel, where the Great Invitation is to "Come, follow me . . . and I will make you. . . ." (4:19, NIV). The former reinforces our cultural centeredness, the latter reminds us it's all about Jesus. And if we read Matthew 25 differently, we'll discover that His heart bleeds for the "least of these" — the poor, the weak, the oppressed.

We will read differently when displaced from our comfort zones, Niringiye reminds us. This happens when we move and live outside our culture, our language, and our abundance. We must be with our oppressed brothers and sisters, with no agendas, no plans to fix — just a desire to be with them. I have not yet visited Africa but hope to do so soon. I invite North American Christians to do the same, not to go and make or fix but to come and let Jesus make you as you experience life on the margins.

Poverty and the persecution of Christians doesn't happen only in Africa. Christ's kingdom *does* advance because of our nation's abundance and North American missionaries who still say yes to the gospel call. Even so, we yearn to identify with God's heart for the world and to see life from the perspective of those on the ragged edge of existence. So may this Thanksgiving be one of conflicting emotions: gratitude for our plenty and a deep burden for the plight of the oppressed.

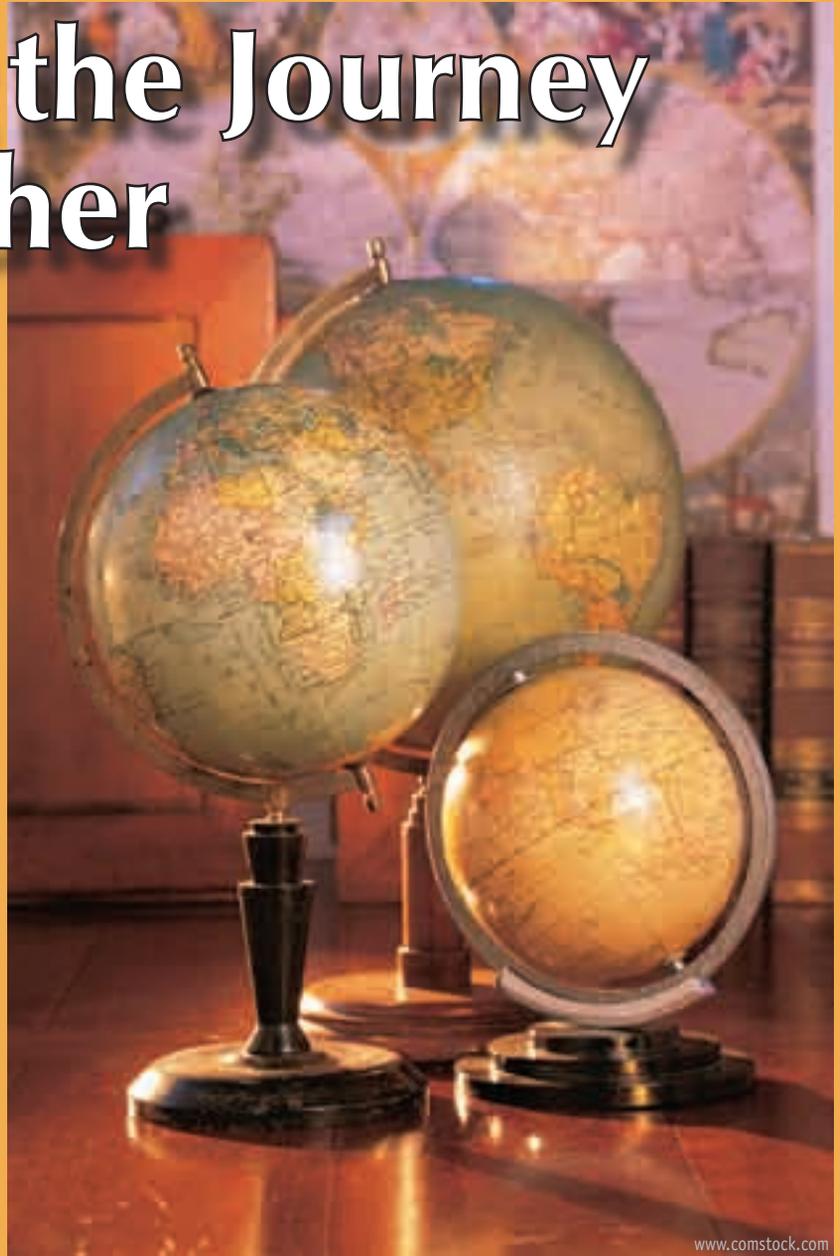
— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President



Making the Journey Together

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around the
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the good news
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