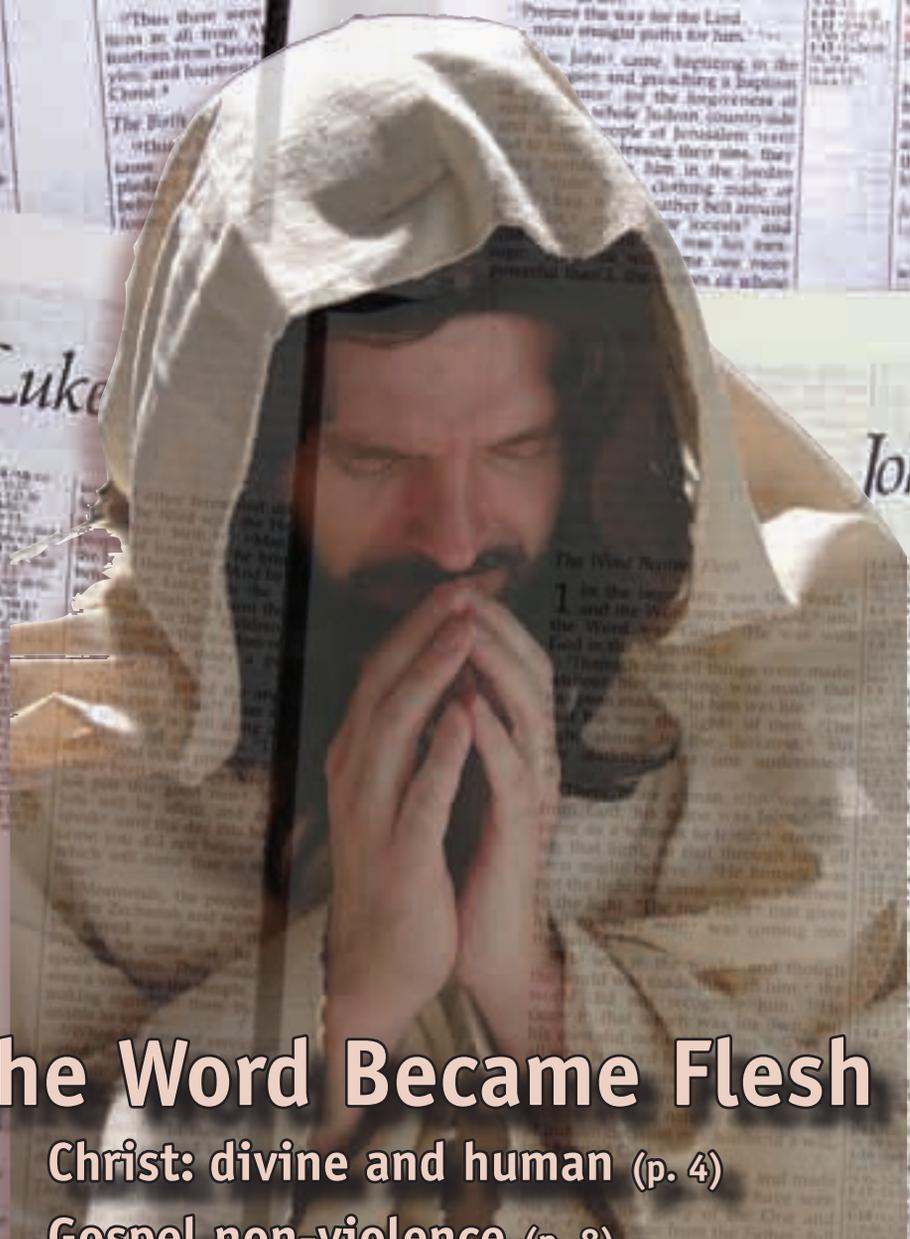


BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE



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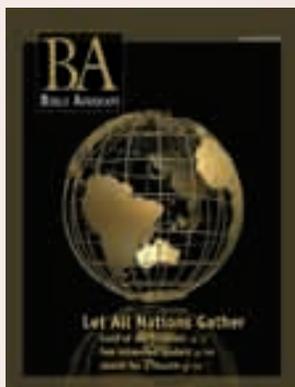


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G. C. convention, IMC, and more



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Coming in the October-November '07 BA: Acts, epistles, evangelism, and missions

In the September issue of *Now What?*: a woman's bitterness over her baby's death (<http://now-what.cog7.org>)

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Beyond Sabbath



Fifty-seven delegates representing twenty-three member nations of the International Ministerial Congress sit with me in a crowded hotel conference room as I begin this writing in early July. Their fraternal discussion to advance our global mission mixes with my editorial thoughts, but I write on so you can have this BA by August's end.

An item of study for this congress in Kansas is titled "Other Days." It's on our agenda because among seventh-day churches around the world are those who also observe one or more of the following: birthdays, wedding anniversaries, national holidays, Mother's and Father's days, thanksgiving days, days of fasting, annual Hebrew festivals of Leviticus 23, and more. This study reflects on our freedom in Christ for such celebrations and on our attitude toward those whose celebrations do not exactly match our own. Some Christians observe more days than we, and some less.

While not for official action here, this topic is being presented simply to stimulate thought and study. The delegates' response suggests that they understand Paul's counsel in Romans 14 regarding such doubtful issues — those not settled in Scripture: "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike" (v. 5a).

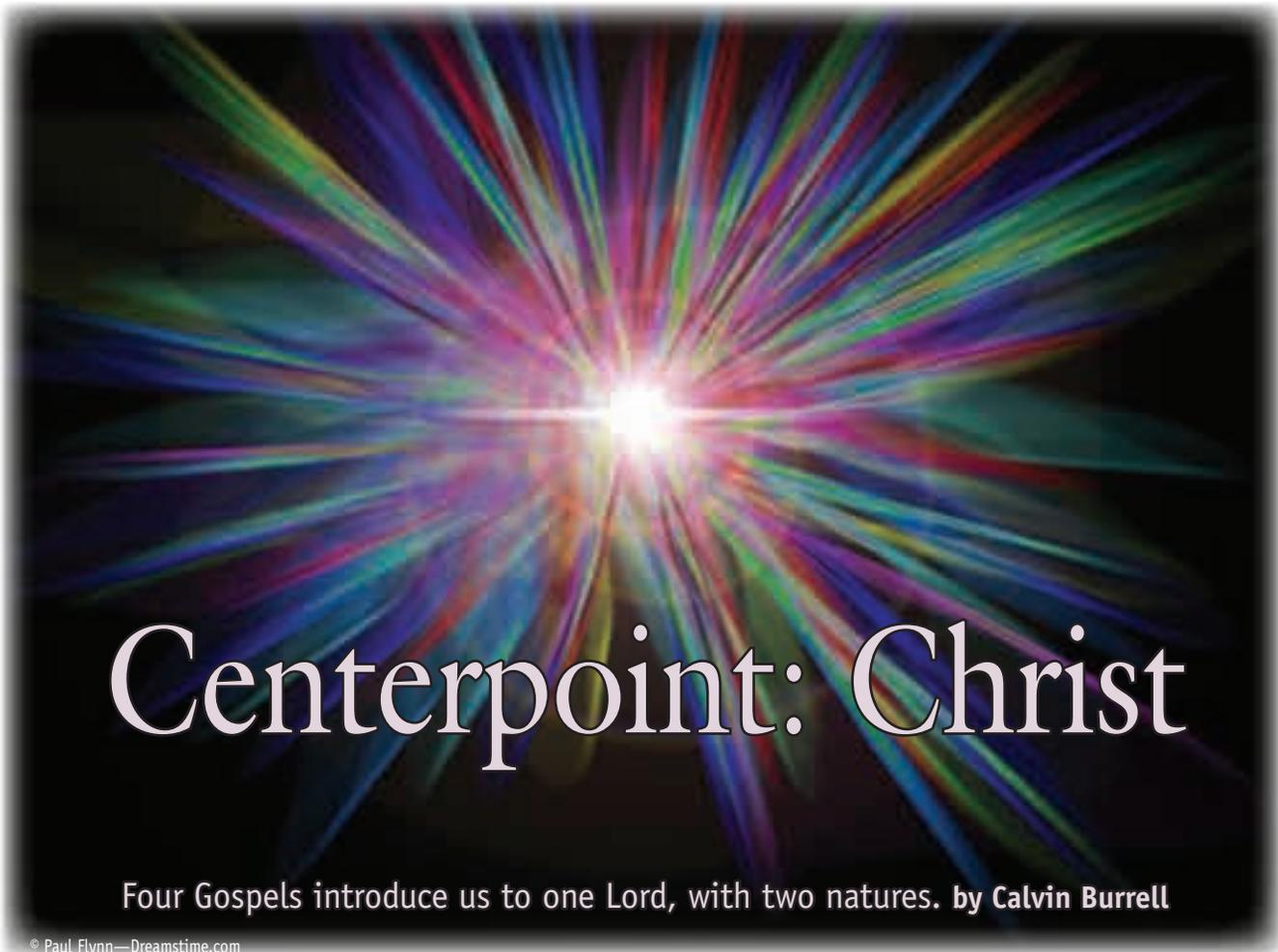
Based on the gospel of Christ and the liberty it brings, the congress seems to say we are free to observe or not observe days according to personal persuasion (vv. 3-13). Lest this liberty be abused, however, they note these provisions for celebrating "other days":

1. Celebrations may not violate clear Bible teaching (v. 22b).
2. They must be done in faith, not as a legal requirement (vv. 18, 22a, 23).
3. Observers and non-observers alike should take care not to offend others by their freedom, nor to impose their convictions upon others (vv. 15-21).

This CoG7 congress continues its firm commitment to the weekly Sabbath of Scripture. Beyond Sabbath, the tolerance of Romans 14 to regard other days — or not — is accepted: "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore" (v. 13). In my opinion, this demonstrates Christian maturity and increases our opportunities to work in concert with more of God's people on the planet. What do you think?

See a pictorial report of our July 7-11 congress and the General Conference convention that preceded it (beginning on p. 26).

— Calvin Burrell



Centerpoint: Christ

Four Gospels introduce us to one Lord, with two natures. by Calvin Burrell

© Paul Flynn—Dreamstime.com

All the Bible is God’s Word, and the New Testament is His final Word. In Christ and the apostles, we see and hear the fullest gospel. In the person and work of Jesus, we meet the true and living Word made flesh.

The early Bible (Old Testament) looks forward to the coming of Messiah, puzzlingly pictured as both a suffering servant and a conquering king. The later Bible (New Testament) reports His coming and completes the picture of the divine-human Savior and Christ (Messiah) — crucified, risen and ascended, reigning and returning: Jesus.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are central to all of Scripture. The four Gospels are pre-

ceded by Moses and the prophets: This is preview. They are followed by apostles and epistles: This is application.

As the Gospels are central to the Bible, so is Jesus the Christ central to our biblical faith. This is true for many reasons, but precisely because He occupies the mid-point between God and man. The word *God-man*, though not found in Scripture, is appropriate to describe the Son of heaven.

We must not infer from this that Jesus is half man and half God. Rather, the Scripture leads us to conclude that He shares fully in both natures — human and divine.

Divinity

Regarding the divine, we read that Jesus dwelt in full communion with His Father before the world began. This supernatural start gave Him the direct and personal relationship with God that many of us seek but none have yet found. Our divine connection is by faith alone; His was by heritage and face-to-face knowledge as the only begotten Son.

While not a semi-god, junior, or honorary “god” as some would have it, Jesus Christ was deity by virtue of His inherent and essential relation to the everlasting Father in heaven. He demonstrated divinity by His roles in beginning the universe, ruling the created order, accept-

ing worship, forgiving sins, and answering prayer.

Only the true God is long and strong enough to rescue humanity from the eternal condemnation of sin; lesser gods are insufficient for this task. Christ did it for us, reconciling us both to heaven and to one another.

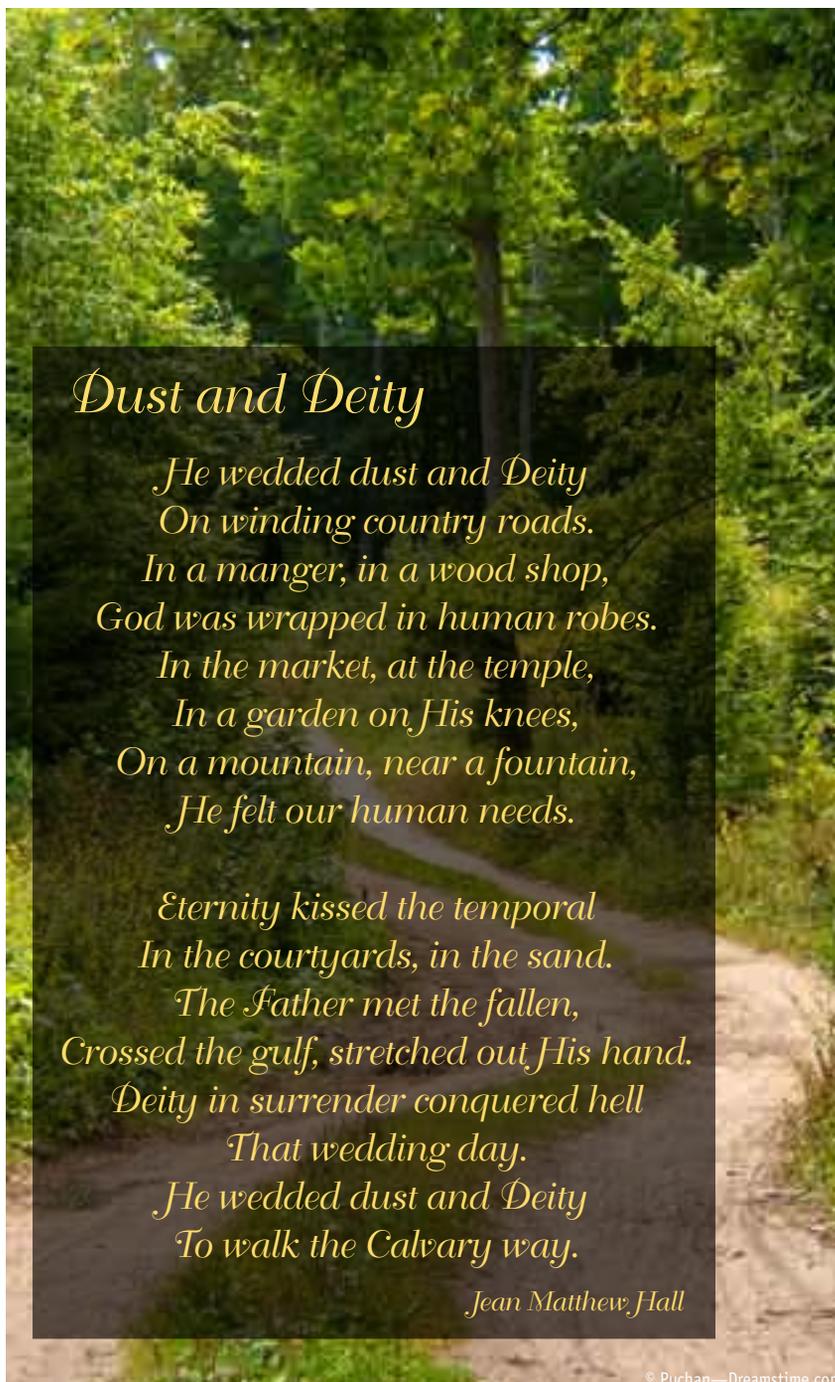
Humanity

We must not limit our concept of Jesus to the divine side. Just as truly, just as importantly as He was deity, the Christ of God was also one of us. He became a member of the human family in Bethlehem, suffering and struggling through all our common frailties during His sojourn on earth.

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” Jesus said to His disciples; and to His Father-God, “Why have You forsaken Me?” The Bible does not permit us to think that our Lord was tested in lesser ways than any of us may be. The only difference is that He never once lost the battle by unbelief or sin.

Again we insist that Jesus was not a half-man, an imitation, or a look-alike, as has been claimed. Rather, He was a real-world man, as much as any who read these words today, except for the usual human sinfulness.

Only a true human can mediate empathy from and intimacy with God that we men and women long for and need. “He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).



Dust and Deity

*He wedded dust and Deity
On winding country roads.
In a manger, in a wood shop,
God was wrapped in human robes.
In the market, at the temple,
In a garden on His knees,
On a mountain, near a fountain,
He felt our human needs.*

*Eternity kissed the temporal
In the courtyards, in the sand.
The Father met the fallen,
Crossed the gulf, stretched out His hand.
Deity in surrender conquered hell
That wedding day.
He wedded dust and Deity
To walk the Calvary way.*

Jean Matthew Hall

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Analogies

The Mediator’s role — midway between God and man, yet fully representing both — is only one analogy of Jesus’ centrality to those who trust and follow Him. Here are others:

- Just as all spokes of a wheel come together at a center hub, so do all the elements of our

faith come together in Christ.

- Like metal filings in a magnetic field are drawn to the magnet at the center, so we are drawn to Jesus by the invisible force of the Spirit.

- Because Jesus is the only Godhead member to be seen, heard, and touched on earth and because He feels our pains and

weaknesses, humans more easily identify with Him as the focus of our faith. Christ fascinates us and fulfills our deepest desires!

Clarifications

Being Christ-centered does not mean that we avoid exploring a variety of related topics and issues. Paul declared the whole counsel of God — all the Bible. And Jesus himself said that we live by every word from God’s mouth. Whatever our topic, however, it should link closely to Christ and find its justification in Him. The living Word is at the heart and center of the written Word — in both testaments.

Being Christ-centered does not mean that we cease taking our stand for the truth and rightness of God’s law. Rather, it means that we will obey God’s commandments and celebrate His Sabbath, precisely because Jesus Christ did those very things and taught us to do the same.

Being Christ-centered does not mean that God the Father is outside faith’s center. We affirm that Christ is at the center because the Father placed Him there. When Jesus has first place in our hearts, where we bow the knee to worship Him, then and there the Father is well pleased and supremely glorified. As

Christ becomes the center of our faith, the Father reigns over all at the top.

To be Christ-centered is to be gospel-centered, grace-centered, and God-centered because the gospel of God’s grace is wrapped up in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. To be Christ-centered is to follow Paul, the Christ-intoxicated apostle who said, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Crucifixion

His crucifixion was the focus for Jesus Christ, and becomes with resurrection the climactic events of His earthly journey. The word *crucify* itself suggests a crucial act — a crux, a cross, a crisis where two paths, or crossbeams, meet. How true for the torture stake of Christ!

All major players in the drama of the ages met at Calvary’s crossroads on that awful-yet-awesome day: heaven and earth, time and eternity, love and hate, justice and mercy, life and death, God and Satan.

It didn’t seem so weighty to onlookers then as men mocked, women wept, soldiers gambled, disciples fled, and criminals

recriminated.

Transposed by the Spirit-Word, however, the scene changed: Skies darkened, angels covered their eyes, rocks rent, saints arose, sin was borne, sacrifice ended, Satan slunk, and a way into the holies opened wide. Christ’s cross is the heart of the gospel, and an echo from the empty tomb calls us in.

Four witnesses

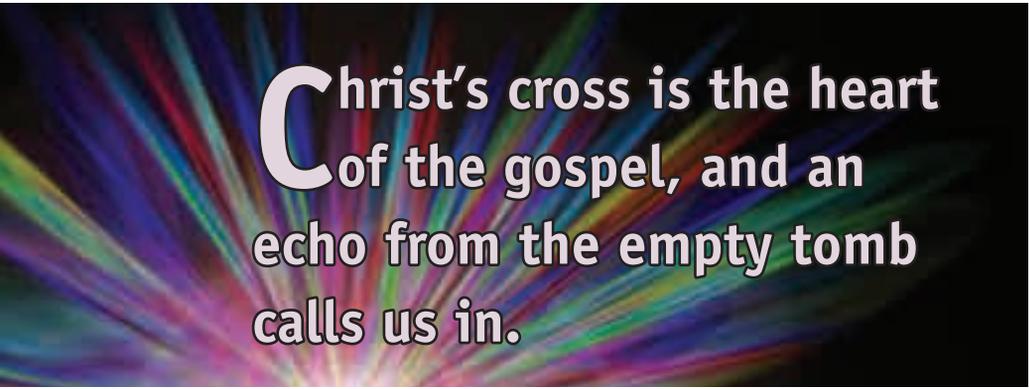
No other portion of Scripture is as concentrated, as potent, as the Gospels. Eighty-nine chapters in four books focus on three-plus years of Jesus’ serving and teaching. Twenty-eight chapters hone in on the single week of His passion. Seven of these shine all their light on the day of Crucifixion, and four more on the Fantastic Finish three days and three nights later.

None of God’s words should be ignored, but when He speaks thrice at length — no, four times — we pay full heed lest the truth slip from us as water from a leaky vessel. If two or three witnesses suffice in most cases, how much more certain are the eyewitness accounts and direct testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John!

After God speaks to us through His Son, including the apostles who taught all things He commanded, nothing more is left to say. Jesus says it all.

Never was a greater story told, nor one more needed: Though we are bad, God is good and gives us — in Christ — the ransom needed for fullness of love, joy, peace, and longsuffering — by the Spirit — through time’s trials and into perfected eternity.

Come, Lord Jesus, come! **BA**



Christ’s cross is the heart
of the gospel, and an
echo from the empty tomb
calls us in.

Questions & Answers

What did Paul mean when he said women should keep silence in the Church (1 Cor. 14:34)? What leadership roles do women have in CoG7?

A First Corinthians 14 discusses the problems faced by one early congregation regarding public worship. Confusion often visited that church's gatherings, evidently, because some in Corinth preferred the more thrilling (i.e., speaking in tongues) over the less dramatic gifts of God's Spirit (teaching, preaching, and the like).

This chapter's purpose, then, is to compare and contrast two elements of worship: tongues with prophecy. The apostle states his primary concern that all things in public worship be done for building up the body, "decently and in order" (vv. 26b, 40).

As a secondary element of this larger discussion, Paul raises the issue of women participating in the Corinthian church. Apparently, some of them had contributed to the confusion there; read vv. 33-35. In view of the larger problems of this congregation, Paul feels it necessary to request that women "keep silent in the churches," perhaps indicating the several house churches that made up the body of Christ in Corinth.

Regarding this difficult phrase, most Bible students have concluded, with William Barclay, that "It would certainly be very wrong to take these words out of their context and make them a universal rule of the church."

This conclusion is supported by at least three accepted facts:

1. The culture of Paul's day was much less tolerant of women being seen and heard in public than we are accustomed to in 2007.

2. The practice of the church in Corinth evidently allowed women sitting apart from men to disturb the meeting by chatter or to interrupt the speaker

by comments or questions directed to their husbands. It is this disorder that Paul seeks to correct (vv. 33-35).

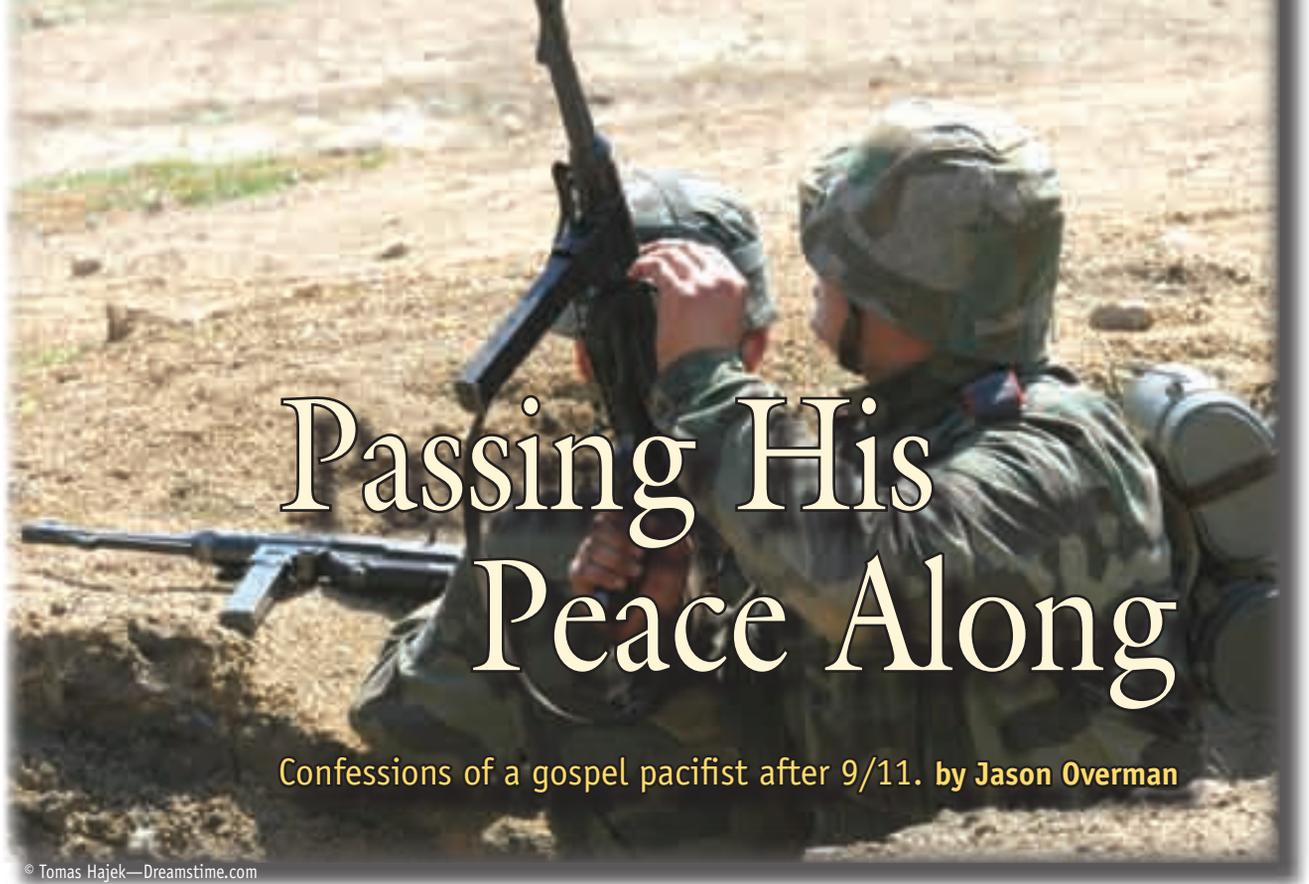
3. Elsewhere in the Bible, women are permitted a part in public teaching and prophesying, provided they do so with decorum and under proper order. Examples of this are the many inspired prophetesses in both testaments: Exodus 15:20ff; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36; Acts 2:17, 18; 18:26; 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:4, 5. In giving full credence to these texts, it would place too great a strain on the harmony of all scriptures if we universalized Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 14:34 by claiming that they require all women in all churches to keep silent at all times.

This passage goes on to speak of the submission of women (v. 34b), as addressed in the law (Gen. 3:16, probably) and elsewhere by Paul (1 Tim. 2:8-15). The principle of submission, also required of men (Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5), captures the spirit of everything the apostle urges in this chapter. "Keep silent" is merely one way submission might be demonstrated in first century Corinth, as well as in any similar modern circumstance.

Looking at these verses in their historical and biblical context, then, we see them as a particular counsel addressing a specific problem in one local church, not necessarily as an ecclesiastical command for every church in all places and cultures.

In today's church, women find their places as teachers; as leaders of children, youth, and other women; as musicians; as worship leaders; as deaconesses; as board members; as counselors; as presenters in matters of their expertise; and so on. About the only roles that women do not typically fill in the Church of God (Seventh Day) are those of ordained elder and senior pastor.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



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Passing His Peace Along

Confessions of a gospel pacifist after 9/11. by Jason Overman

My dad was a conscientious objector. I grew up hearing how he as an unsaved rock musician was drafted to Vietnam, excelled in basic training, then unexpectedly met Jesus; how his new faith and the guidance of a CoG7 minister led to a radical about-face and a confession that he could not kill; and how after enduring the ridicule, he was deemed sincere and was honorably discharged. He pursued the ministry. I was four.

At eighteen I too registered C.O., but my conviction went mostly unexpressed prior to the catastrophes of 9/11. As fear faded to anger and talk turned to war after the terrorist attacks, two Christian co-workers asked me, “What do you think we should do?”

With some reluctance, I said, “Do you mean we Christians or we Americans? There is little doubt that we *Americans* will retaliate, but should we *Christians*?” Opening to Jesus’ Sermon on the

Mount, I shared with them the message that turns everything upside down.

Complicated silence

I am a pacifist. The words often stick in my throat. Since 9/11 many who have renounced war for Jesus’ sake find it hard to speak. Our silence is complicated. For some it names a grief that is reluctant to voice its ideals in the company of pain. For others it reflects a fear of being thought cowardly, unpatriotic, or judgmental. For many, however, silence simply speaks to our doubts and hard questions: “What about defending justice or protecting the innocent? What if everyone was like you; who would resist evil? Isn’t pacifism unrealistic, even irresponsible?” Pacifists are silent mostly, I think, because we don’t know what to say.

As weighty as these objections are, discipleship begins

elsewhere. We ask not, “Does the pacifist position work?” but rather “What has Jesus called us to be in the world?” Not “Will everyone do this?” but “Will I?” We are witnesses to nonviolence not because it is practical but because we worship a crucified Lord.

The peace of Christ is not like the world’s. That His peace is bound up in a cross and not in a gun prepares us for the scandal of faithfulness. We seek not, then, to reconcile our convictions to human logic but to His story instead. And it challenges every Christian: Can disciples of the Crucified kill one for whom the Lamb was slain?

Contradictory peace

In the old West, “the peacemaker” was a Colt .45. In more recent times, it was the B-36. For the world, it has always been thus. But the Gospels tell a different story: “Peace on earth”

begins with a “babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:14-16). The prophets had predicted a prince of peace who would “establish peace” and “guide our feet into the way of peace” (Isaiah 9:6, 7; 26:12; Luke 1:79), but no one expected this. A warrior, yes, but not a babe; it contradicted everything.

Paul says of our universally violent world, “The way of peace they have not known” (Romans 3:17). We look the wrong way. We trust that war can be a peacemaker, that we are justifiably innocent while the enemy is irretrievably evil. But this way begets endless spirals of violence. In contrast, the gospel says God sent forth His Son as a sacrifice for sin (v. 25). A manger led to a cross. It is a scandal because it denies that our strength can attain its own peace, because it holds that God would redeem us without use of force, because it dares say that “all have sinned” and stand guilty before Him, yet He loves all and would save all still (vv. 19-23).

The good news is that in a world of lust-driven war, Jesus preached peace, made peace, and is our peace by way of a cross. The blood of Christ breaks down the walls of enmity that divide us from God and from each other (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14-17; Colossians 1:20). It disarms and triumphs over powers that enslave us (2:15, 16). It defeats our greatest fear: death (Romans 5:20, 21; 6:23).

The cross is a peacemaker because it is founded on God’s love. This is no sentimental love but a sacrificial love that gives itself for another. God is love precisely because He “gave His only begotten” (John 3:16) for

the sake of His enemies: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us . . . when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son . . .” (Romans 5:8, 10).

As the Son embodies His Father’s love and gives Himself for us (Galatians 2:20), the seeds of war – fear, anger, greed – are stifled and reversed. The cross names the intersection where the self-giving love of God meets the self-destructing hate of the world head-on and does not return in kind. Absorbing the evil, God makes space for peace as He accepts the worst that humanity can hurl – crucifixion – and offers an unexpected and reconciling forgiveness in return. The cycle is broken; resurrection trumps revenge; retaliation gives way to restoration. This is the gospel of peace that we preach (Isaiah 52:7).

Shaping discipleship

The cross of Christ dictates the shape of discipleship. When Jesus told His disciples, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”; when He called them to exchange “eye for an eye” thinking with “do not resist evil”; when

He commanded them to love, bless, do good, and pray for the enemy, He did so because this is what peacemaking sons of God do (Matthew 5:9, 39-45).

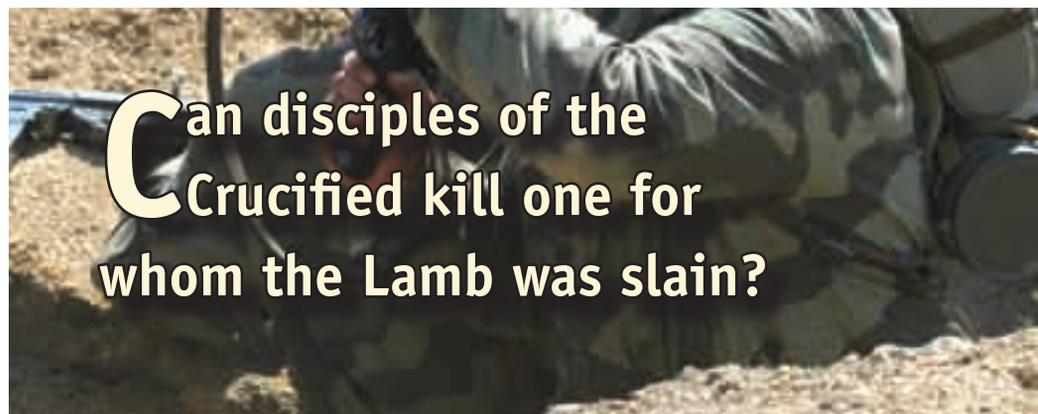
The New Testament is remarkably consistent. The sacrificial, nonresistant, love of God seen in Christ’s cross finds fresh incarnation in His spiritual body. The church partakes in Christ’s sufferings (1 Peter 4:1, 13), takes up her cross to follow Him (Luke 9:23, 24), and models His sacrificial love to the world (Ephesians 5:1, 2).

But it’s easier to wield a sword than a cross. John and James would call fire down on their enemies, and Peter would lop off the head of his. But Jesus said:

“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them. . . . Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Luke 9:54-56; Matthew 26:52).

Jesus explained to Pilate that His kingdom was not like theirs; it didn’t require war to create or sustain (John 18:36).

But the Resurrection enabled the disciples to rise above their fears and live the way of peace with courage. Stephen prayed with his last breath for those kill-



ing him, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:60, NIV). Paul, a violent enemy initially, encouraged his churches to not render evil for evil but to “accept wrong” (1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Corinthians 6:7). To the Romans, he challenged not to be conformed to this world but to be a “living sacrifice” instead (Romans 12:1, 2).

The contrast between church and state escalates in the next passage as the authorities of this world are said to exercise the very wrath and vengeance that the church is told to refuse. We do not resist even unjust rulers like Rome because God providentially uses them to restrain evil with evil. But we are called to a better way; we “overcome evil with good” (13:1-4; 12:21).

Subverting war

The New Testament does not dismiss war from our vocabulary; it subverts it. Faith is a battle: We are more than conquerors fighting the good fight as soldiers of Jesus Christ, because Christ has “led captivity captive” and secured our victory over evil (Romans 8:37; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3; Ephesians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 15:57). This military language is emptied of its ordinary content and put into

the service of the Lamb and His peaceable kingdom.

Paul describes this reversal in 2 Corinthians: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds . . .” (10:4). These weapons are detailed in Ephesians: truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the Spirit, and Word of God. With these we battle spiritual wickedness, not flesh and blood (6:10-18). We really do conquer, but it is by our faith and the blood of the Lamb (1 John 5:4; Revelation 12:11; 15:2).

Pacifism is not *passive*. To “seek peace and pursue it” with everyone requires creative and courageous *action* (1 Peter 3:11; Hebrews 12:14). We do not just say no to war; we say yes to peace. We do not refuse to fight; we refuse to fight on human terms. God has not abandoned the world to war; Resurrection names the victory that can turn enemies into friends. Still, we do not deny that battles will be lost or that we may even suffer and die; we deny that war risks less. If evil’s threat should overwhelm, we, like our Lord, commit ourselves “to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23), knowing that the cross is not a surrender to evil but its sure defeat.

Facing the enemy

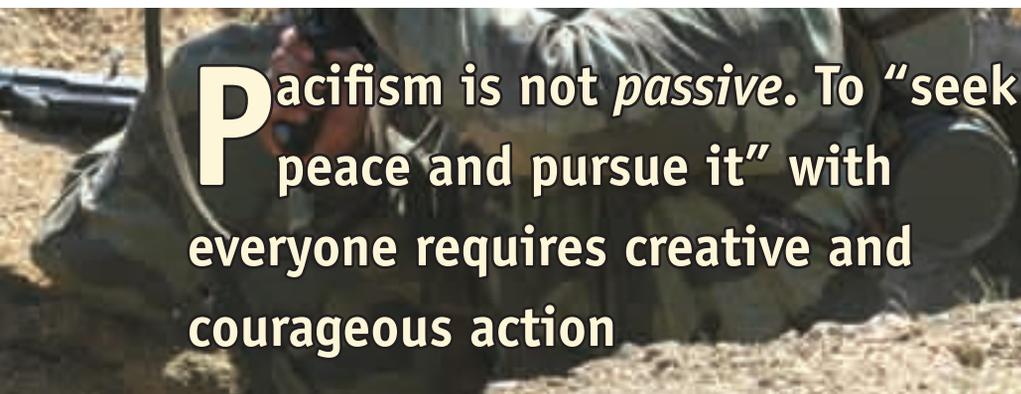
September 11, 2001, presented Christians in America with a new enemy. But is it really new? The world Jesus inhabited was no less evil than our own, and resorting to violence was no less tempting. Yet Jesus resisted this option and calls His disciples to do the same. Is our enemy more an enemy than the one Jesus called us to love, more evil than the one who hung Him on a cross and for whom He prayed, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34)? The world will think so; we cannot.

As wars drag on, their logic and limits are painfully clear. As a gospel pacifist, I humbly put my trust elsewhere. I look back to my peacemaking Lord and forward to His peaceable kingdom; I patiently proclaim the end that He began. Isaiah foretold of a time when “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (2:4).

My dad summed it up this way: “In the kingdom, there will be war no more, but I don’t have to wait for that. In Christ, that kingdom has come, and for me war has ended already.”

“Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen” (Romans 15:33). 

Jason Overman serves the congregation in Jasper, AR.



Pacifism is not *passive*. To “seek peace and pursue it” with everyone requires creative and courageous action

‘Who Do You Say I Am?’

This question isn't just for believers in bygone days. by **John R. Kennedy**

Perhaps you've heard of Caesarea Philippi, a city in northern Palestine during New Testament times. Here, Christ asked His disciples a crucial question — one so large that everyone will eventually be faced with it: “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15b).

That was a significant question at the time, considering the history of the city. Caesarea Philippi was first named Paneas in honor of Pan, the Greek god of shepherds. In 2 B.C., Herod Philip, son of Herod the Great, enlarged Paneas and renamed it after Augustus Caesar, the stepson of Julius Caesar. In Jesus' day, Caesar — both Augustus and later Tiberius — were considered sons of God. Eventually, the city became known as Caesarea Philippi to honor Herod Philip and to distinguish it from the larger port city known as Caesarea Maritima.

Interestingly, Jesus asked His followers about His identity in a city that esteemed its human leaders. Their answers and what follows them in Matthew 16 give us insight into who Jesus is and why He came.

Son of Man

“Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets” (Matthew 16:13, 14).

When Jesus identified Himself as *the* Son of Man in this passage, His disciples' reply reflects their confusion about the identity and role of the Son of Man. Apparently, many people back then expected Jesus to be a prophet.

Jesus used the enigmatic title Son of Man most often when referring to Himself — eighty-two times, more than Son of God or Messiah. To understand His reason for using Son of Man, we must turn to the Old Testament.

In the book of Ezekiel, the title son of man appears ninety-three times. God used it to address the prophet (Ezekiel 2:1). Drawing on the earlier Hebrew usage of a son of man in Numbers 23:19 and Psalm 8:4, where it means “humanity” or “human being,” the Lord differentiated Himself (deity) from Ezekiel (humanity). Therefore, the frequent application of the term to Ezekiel helps explain why so many people thought that the Son of Man

would be a prophet. Actually, Jesus was much more than just a prophet.

From early church times, many have argued that Son of Man expresses Jesus' humanity and humility, whereas Son of God speaks of His divinity and power. But Jesus possessed both human and divine natures. Whereas John 1:14 and Philippians 2:7 speak of Jesus' humanity, Son of Man, as understood in Daniel 7, actually points toward Jesus' divinity.

The prophet Daniel employed Son of Man to describe Jesus' unique role and status as Lord. In a vision, Daniel saw the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, receive “authority, glory and sovereign power” from His Father, the Ancient of Days (7:13, 14).

Jesus clearly claimed this passage when He said to His disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). Furthermore, Jesus' first-century followers would have distinguished between the Aramaic title *bar 'anash*, spoken in Daniel 7, from Ezekiel's *ben 'adam*, because Daniel 2:4b–7:28 was originally written in Aramaic and Ezekiel in Hebrew.

Son of Man, then, designates Jesus' role and authority on earth, including that of Savior (Matthew 9:6, NKJV).

Son of the living God

In answer to Jesus' question in Matthew 16:15b, Simon Peter added another dimension to Jesus' identity: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). In Matthew and Mark, the Magi, the Gerasenes demoniac, and other demons recognized Jesus' unique nature and identity. Later, the Jews realized Jesus' divine claims and tried to stone Him for blasphemy (John 10:31-39).

None of these, however, would match Peter's powerful statement in Caesarea Philippi — not only a recognition of who Jesus is but also a confession of faith, marked by obedience to follow.

Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew title Messiah. Both mean "anointed one." In the Old Testament, Messiah is used roughly thirty times, foretelling Jesus the Christ *before* the incarnation of Jesus the man.

Simon Peter's confession included the belief that Christ is the "Son of the *living* God." This distinction points to the God of the Old Testament (Genesis 2:7; 1 Kings 18:36-39; Jeremiah 10:10), so Peter's confession

stands out as both biblical and unique, unlike the Caesars' self-imposed titles.

Suffering Servant

In the early twentieth century, German scholar William Wrede coined the term Messianic Secret to refer to Jesus both revealing and concealing His true identity in the Gospels: "Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ" (Matthew 16:20). Jesus said this because He knew that people would misunderstand His mission, which could incite a riot.

Many Jews wanted a messiah who would lead them in a war against the Romans and free them from Roman occupation. At least one community — the group that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls — believed in a warrior-messiah of David to lead the community in a cataclysmic battle against the Romans.

But this wasn't this Messiah's mission. Jesus explained it:

"He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (v. 21).

But why? The answer rests upon the fact that Jesus is both the Son of Man, who received dominion and authority from His Father, *and* the Suffering Servant,

whom the prophet Isaiah spoke of (53:7)

The rest of Isaiah 53 tells why it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer. Whereas Jesus Christ was the Suffering Servant who came into this world poor and then humbled Himself, the Caesars of Rome flaunted their might and power while subduing their enemies by force and threats. Paul's hymn in Philippians 2:6-11 combined elements from both the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant to describe Jesus' divine nature and humility.

Essence and purpose

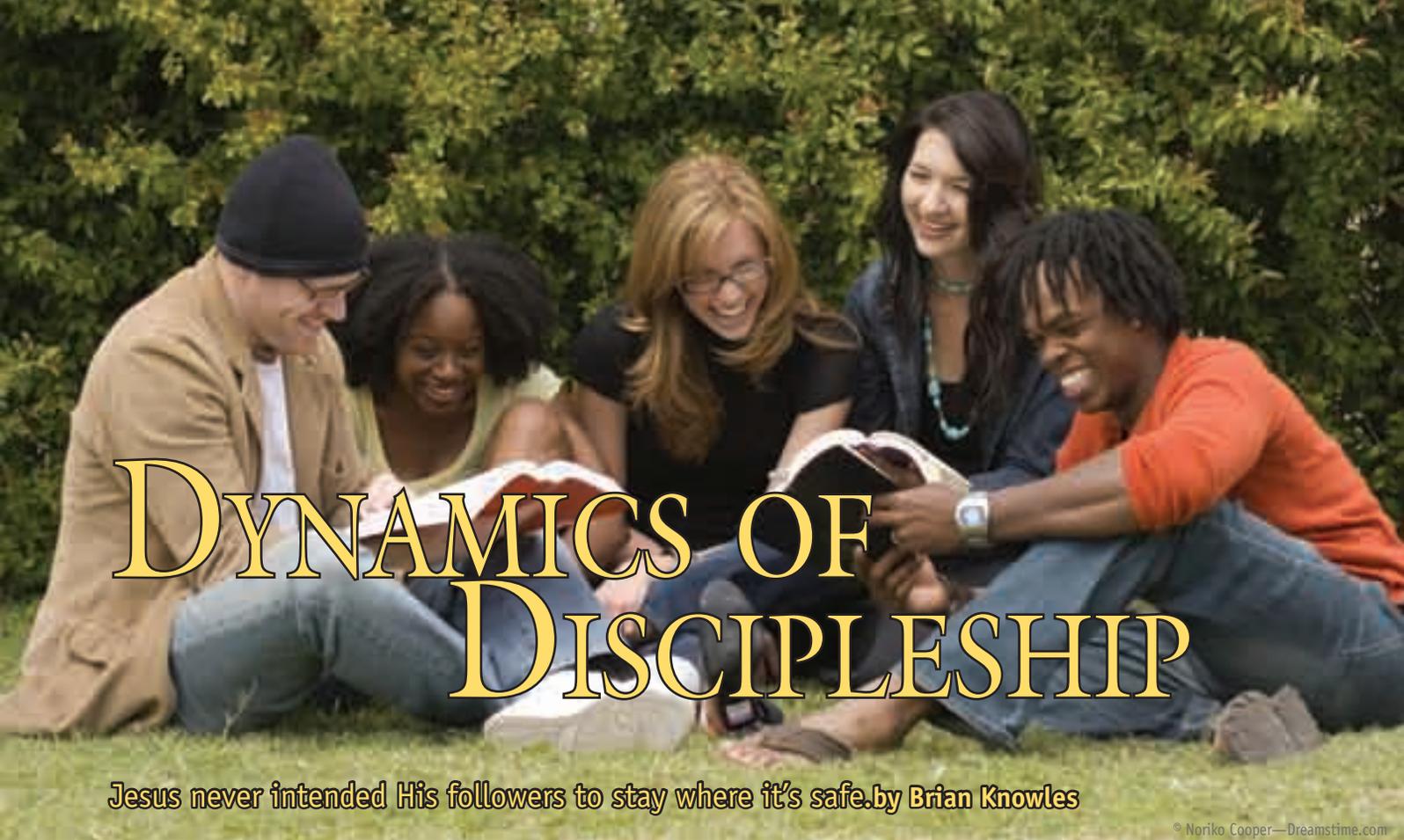
Son of Man and Suffering Servant are Old Testament roles that illuminate the lordship of Jesus Christ. Son of Man speaks of Jesus' authority, while Suffering Servant speaks of His atonement for our sins. Thus, the titles of Jesus are more than mere titles; they describe His essence and purpose. The Old Testament foretold the story of Jesus hundreds of years before the New Testament confirmed it as a historical event.

How will you answer Jesus' question concerning His identity? Who do you say Jesus is? Either we recognize, accept, and surrender to the salvation and authority of Jesus Christ, or we don't. It's as simple as that. **BA**

The titles of Jesus are more than mere titles; they describe His essence and purpose.

John R. Kennedy writes from Monterrey, Mexico. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.





Jesus never intended His followers to stay where it's safe. by Brian Knowles

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In Jesus' commission to the church, we find these words: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . ." (Matthew 28:19). What did Jesus mean by the term *disciple*? And how do we "make" one?

In addition to being the Son of God, Jesus was both a Jew and a rabbi. His teaching nomenclature and methodology were Jewish to the core. When He spoke of making disciples, Jesus had something specific in mind — something grounded in the original language.

Defining 'disciple'

In Greek, the word for *disciple* is *mathetes*, meaning literally "a learner." This contrasts with the word for teacher — *didaskalo*. A "didactic" person is inclined to teach; a disciple is inclined to learn. In the Hebrew language, the word for *disciple* is *talmid*.

Jesus wanted His own disciples to go out into the world and make more *talmidim* (the plural for *talmid*) like them.

Within the culture of second-temple Judaism, *talmid* had a specific range of meanings. Typically, *talmidim* were the followers of great rabbis, many of whom were itinerant teachers. In Jesus' day, *rabbi*, which meant "master," was a term of honor, not an ordained office. Great rabbis gathered disciples based on their reputation, not because of a line position in a hierarchy.

A disciple was not just a student of the rabbi, but an adherent. Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (John 8:31). The result of discipleship was spiritual fruit-bearing, which gave glory to the Father (15:8). Anyone who is truly a disciple of Christ bears fruit for the kingdom.

Characteristics

A disciple often sat at the feet of his master (Luke 8:35; 10:39). Of course, the physical posture wasn't so important, but the relationship of rabbi to his disciples was. A lower position illustrated humility before the master and showed itself in childlike teachability and obedience (Matthew 18:1-4; 19:14).

Teachability is not gullibility, however. The pupil could question the teacher, as Jesus did His teachers when He was only twelve (Luke 2:46). In the Jewish school, in fact, discussions between rabbis and their disciples could be boisterous and assertive. This is the principle of "iron sharpens iron" at work (Proverbs 27:17) — a process of thought refinement that reveals truth and understanding.

Jesus felt that such learning couldn't stay within a small group. That's why He instructed

His disciples to take His teachings into the world (Matthew 28:19, 20). This is the content of the commission — to teach “all nations” the same things Jesus had taught His followers.

A disciple, then, is one who sits at Jesus’ feet by hearing those who preach His gospel. He is humble, teachable, and obedient, and shares Jesus’ teachings with others.

Making disciples

So how do we make disciples?

First, we expose them to the gospel. People learn that Christ came into the world to be offered as a sacrifice for sins. He was the foundation and capstone of God’s plan to rescue doomed humanity. Jesus died, rose, and now sits at the right hand of God to intercede for us. Those who accept His sacrifice have eternal life in Christ. Once they receive the Holy Spirit, they are “sealed” (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

Whenever people have heard the gospel, accepted it, and are baptized, they enter into lifelong discipleship as students of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit and through the written Word, He teaches them.

As with the original disciples, Jesus doesn’t teach only through words but also through example

and experience. This often means suffering. Life for a disciple is boot camp for eternity. We endure this boot camp with Paul’s words in mind: “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

That ought to be a comforting thought. Jesus will not allow any of His disciples to slip through the cracks unless they, like Judas, choose to fall away. They will continue to grow in the knowledge, character, skills, and spiritual power they need to serve Christ now and to take their God-given places in the world to come.

Sometimes through excruciatingly painful trials and almost unbearable tests, disciples are readied for a higher calling. Like Paul and the other apostles, they can bear unjust suffering at the hands of evil or ignorant people (2 Corinthians 11:16-33). In this life we suffer loss: children, husbands, wives, parents, siblings, and friends. Yet all we have lost in this life will be restored in the next (Acts 3:21). The world swaddled in a sodden blanket of evil and sin will be renewed, refreshed, and restored to its Edenic state. God’s instruction shall go forth from Zion (Isaiah

2:3). The disciples of Christ will shine like Him, and all will come to resolution.

The world will finally understand why it had to go through these terrible eons of pain and suffering to get to divine closure. As disciples of Jesus, we have been given insight into the whys and wherefores of the human condition and into God’s redemptive plan.

Maturity and perseverance

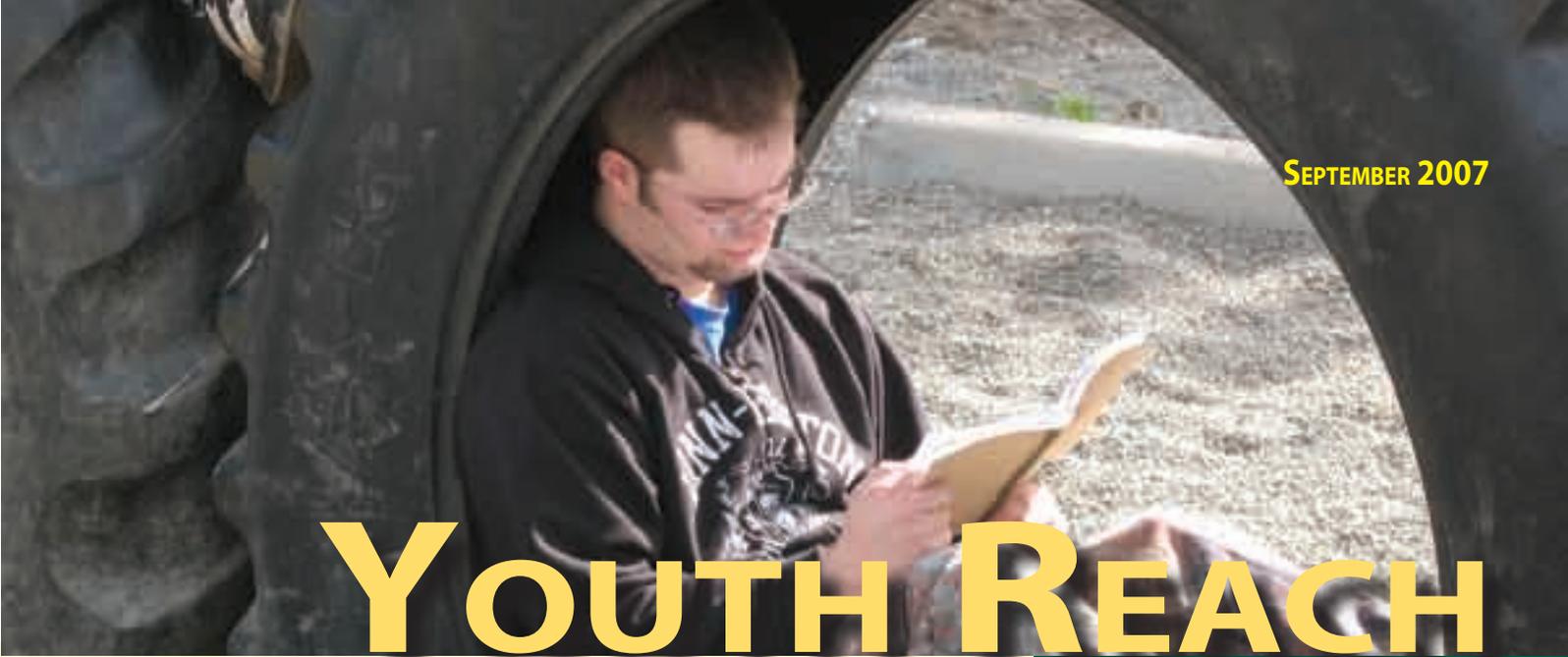
Until the Lord returns, it is our duty to go into the world and make disciples. The goal of discipleship is to move those God has called and who have been reborn by the Spirit in the direction of spiritual adulthood (Hebrews 5:11–6:3; Jude 20; Matthew 5:48). As the writer of Hebrews asserts, we must not freeze our spiritual development at an immature level. Rather, we must “go on to maturity” (6:1).

As disciples of Christ, we will encounter opposition, persecution, and ridicule. In our post-Christian culture, many people do not take God seriously. That reality didn’t stop the original disciples, and it must not stop us. We must go out into the world in humility, realizing that we are no better than anyone else. We simply have good news to convey and disciples to make. ■

ANYONE WHO IS TRULY A
DISCIPLE OF CHRIST BEARS
FRUIT FOR THE KINGDOM.

Brian Knowles writes from Monrovia, CA. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.





YOUTH REACH

Dating Jesus

by Hannah E. Brooks

How many of you love Jesus? Simple question, huh?

Now, how many of you have been on a date with Jesus? Sound weird? Just hear me out.

We are in a relationship with Jesus, like a couple to be married. The church (you) is His bride. Have you gotten a chance to know Him? Have you gone out with Him? I'm no expert on dating, but I have an idea on how a date with Jesus should go.

Get clean. Our Lord wants a clean heart. "Wash yourselves," He says, "make yourselves clean" (Isaiah 1:16); "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Choose the right clothes. It's fine to be attractive, but Jesus isn't the type who wants you to show much skin. "How do I know?" you ask. Jesus' love letter says, "I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly . . ." (1 Timothy 2:9, NASB). So girls, skip the halter tops. And guys, it's better to keep your shirts on.

Take a walk with Jesus. See all the beautiful things He made for you. If it's springtime, He has fresh flowers budding everywhere. If it's winter, the glistening snow represents the purity of your love.

Talk to Jesus. Tell Him how good He looks on the face of every believer. Tell Him you like His muscular arms: "You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand" (Psalm 89:13). Jesus won't get annoyed hearing all your problems. You can call Him morning, noon, or night, and He won't think you're obsessed.

Wait for Him to come. One day Jesus, dressed not in a tuxedo but in all His glory, will step down from heaven with the royal blow of a trumpet to marry the church. Then you will spend a honeymoon with Him, not for three or four days, but for an eternity.

So why don't you ask Jesus out. He made the first move 2,000 years ago; now it's your turn.

Enjoy a
'service with
a twist' . . .

the NFYC
Fall
Challenge!!

It's a day's worth of worship and fellowship designed to encourage long-lost members to return, and to invite new friends and neighbors. Recommended for October 20.

The packet includes ideas for morning services and an evening of fun and fundraisers. Download it at <http://fyc.cog7.org>.



Mission for God

Our team of 35 youth and eight adults from Washington and Oregon left Harrisburg church on Sunday, June 17, headed to the Yakima Indian Reservation near Toppenish, Washington. Our mission was to serve through a morning Vacation Bible School and planned events each evening. On Monday evening, we passed out fliers to announce these activities.

After breakfast Tuesday morning, we headed off to the Adam's View housing project in Toppenish and set up our tarps, tables, and shading. Our music around the neighborhood drew the kids to our first VBS class: music! Although they didn't know our songs, they had fun dancing and humming along. Then we switched to Bible class, crafts, recreation, and then lunch provided by the Union Gospel Mission. The next two days we did the same program, with lessons on God and craft projects.

We used the same

strategy of music in the street to invite families to our Tuesday evening social event in a common area. Once a group gathered, we played games with the children and then served root beer floats or ice cream sundaes to everyone, followed by skits from some of our team. These skits were real-life scenes that offered lessons of God's love and how He wants us to live.

After his sermon, Clark Caswell asked if anyone would like to pray and accept this wonderful gift. A few of the children in the audience raised their hands, and a mission team member went to sit by them and pray with them. We gave them a Bible, and Clark talked more about their decision.

Wednesday night we did the same program in a more difficult neighborhood, White Swan. Passing out lettuce and mushrooms door-to-door, we asked families to join us for the social event. The same basic program followed, but this time more hands went up to trust in Christ. It was awesome to see the children and



adults raising their hands to accept the wonderful gift of God's love.

Our fourth mission trip was great, and we appreciate our leaders, Paul and Janet Coffman and Curtis and Christie Ling, for making it possible year after year. We are on a mission for God every day, serving people the love of God.

— Brianne Feigum

High- lights: In Our Words

Watching our kids hearts' swell with compassion for the tribe children. — Clark Caswell

Singing "Jesus Loves Me" with the kids from Adam's View on the bus ride home from swimming on Thursday. — Leah Wallace

I give props to the entire work crew who worked as a team to get the jobs done. — David Smith

Praying with Sarah (an adult from Adam's View) while she accepted Christ into her life, and another child in White Swan. — Danielle Selleck

Family fun nights were a great ministry opportunity. It was an amazing feeling knowing we brought people to Christ. — Tracey Chalus

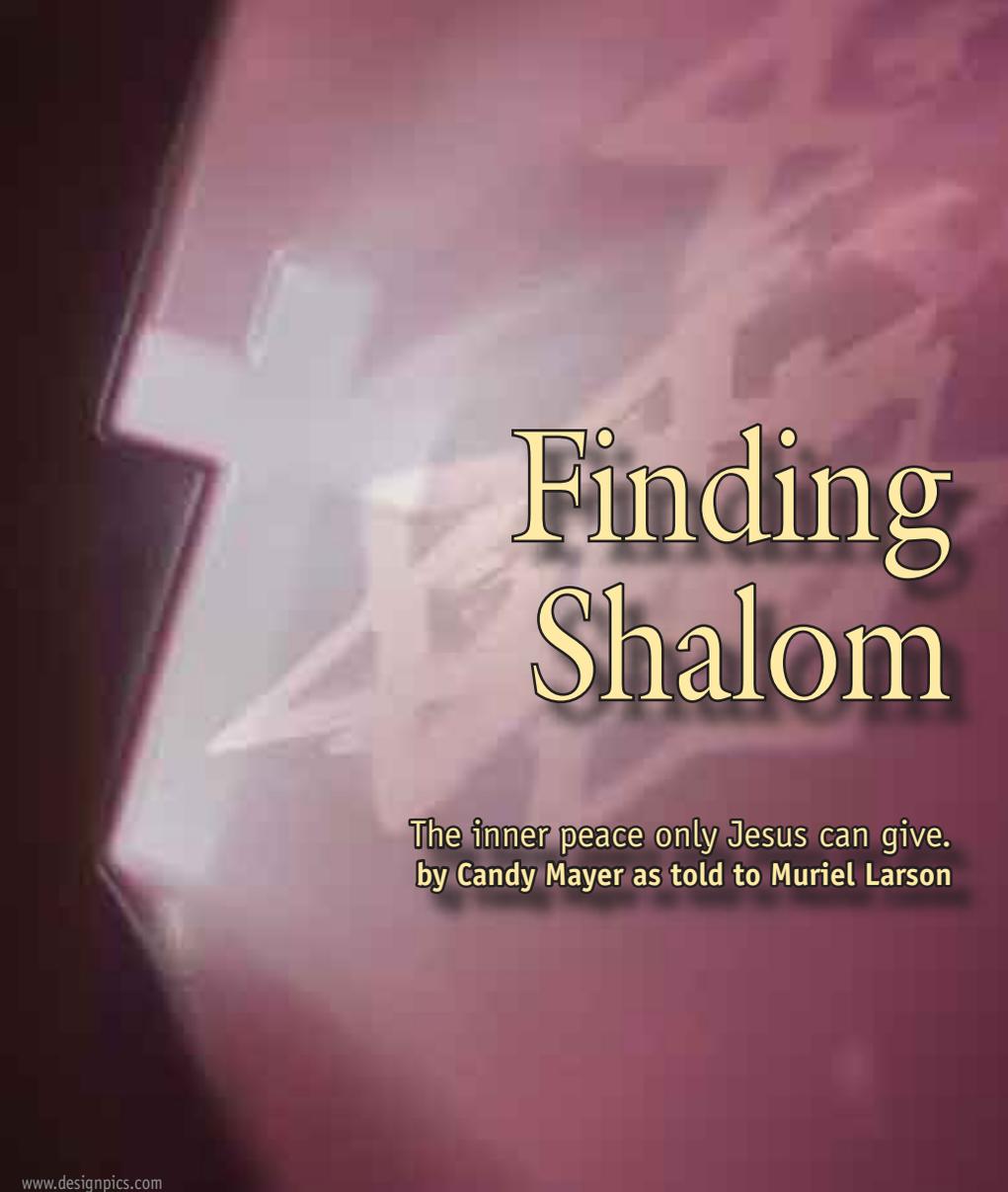
Getting to know a kid. I never knew him until that night, and it surprised me at how open this 11-year-old boy was to someone he had only known for half an hour. When he was leaving the bus, he said to me, "You are my best buddy." — Cameron Caswell

Being able to tell the lady whose locks we changed that [she and her family] could sleep safely for once. — Alex Lawson

Holding a little girl named Andie when we were performing music. The song was "Amazing Grace," and she really didn't know it, but I heard her mumbling. She really wanted to sing along with us. I almost cried, it was so cool! — Emily Curran



For more events and pictures, visit <http://nfyc.cog7.org>



Finding Shalom

The inner peace only Jesus can give.
by Candy Mayer as told to Muriel Larson

We're going to take you to a psychiatrist," my parents told me. "Maybe he can help you."

"But everyone will think I'm crazy," I protested.

"Well, we've got to do something, honey," my dad said. "We've tried everything else."

I had always been nervous. When I was small, my parents took me to a child psychologist. In my early teens, they took me to a hypno-therapist. More recently, Daddy put me on medication to help my nerves, but nothing really helped.

I always had felt lonely and unhappy. Sometimes I felt as though I were living in hell. I

never got a full night's sleep and often had awful nightmares. I thought of killing myself, but feared death.

How I longed to talk more to my parents about my depression! But both were busy with their professions. A series of housekeepers cared for my two older sisters and me as we grew up. Not until Eleanor came along, when I was 13, did I find someone to talk to.

Caring housekeeper

Eleanor Stoppe was different: She always bubbled. After a while, I went to her with my problems. Sometimes she invited

my sisters and me to her house to eat. What a warm, pleasant place it was! I always felt tense at our house, but at Eleanor's I felt at ease.

When I was 16, Eleanor took me to a Christian youth rally. A line in a song, "Lord, make me whole," made a special impression on me. Was being "whole" what made the difference between Eleanor and me?

My parents are Jewish, but, like many Jews, they were agnostics. Though they went to synagogue only two or three times a year, they made certain my sisters and I went for religious training every Saturday at the Reformed Synagogue. I later dropped out of these classes and became interested in art.

Now I realized that even though I had been religious, I had never known the peace and joy Eleanor experienced in Jesus Christ.

Close call

Not long after the rally, all my family went to a benefit dance. But I didn't go. "I don't want to leave you alone," Mother said. "Whom would you like to have over?"

I opted to go to Eleanor's house, and Mother agreed.

Eleanor picked me up the next afternoon. As she drove toward a shopping center, two cars suddenly careened toward us. Eleanor swerved, just missing the cars.

My heart pounded wildly. "Wow, that was close!"

We started talking about death. "If I had died just then," Eleanor said, "I know I would live in eternity with the Lord one day because I have received Jesus

Christ as my Savior.”

I didn’t understand that kind of talk. Nor did I understand her quiet confidence.

We didn’t shop that day; we just talked. And when we returned to Eleanor’s house, we kept talking.

Spiritual discussion

Eleanor’s husband and sons came home from a church ball game, sat down in the kitchen, and talked with us. *Here I am a Jew, I thought, yet these people know God better than I do!*

Mr. Stoppe brought out a Bible and showed me verses that said all have sinned and that Jesus died for our sins. He also explained what it meant to believe in Jesus.

When the Stoppes’ sons went to bed, we kept talking about God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. I later learned the boys were praying for me in their rooms.

“I want to believe!” I finally cried. “But I’m a Jew. A person is either a Jew or a Gentile. If I accept your religion, I’ll be a traitor and outcast to my people!” Somehow I could not take that step, though I wanted so much what the Stoppe family had.

Around 2 a.m. I sat alone in the room and felt compelled to look up. I saw Jesus Christ — yes, I actually saw Him!* He was reaching out His hand to me. And oh, what compassion and love I felt!

“Take My hand,” He said. “Believe in Me. I’ll replace your miserable life with a new one and give you peace.”

“Eleanor, I believe!” I cried.

Eleanor ran in. “What did you say?”

“I believe!” I repeated.

“Well, praise the Lord!” she exclaimed.

The heavy burden was lifted from my heart. For the first time in my life, I felt happy. Eleanor asked me to pray, and to my amazement, I knew God and could pray to Him.

“I have been praying for your salvation for several years now,” Eleanor told me.

When Mr. Stoppe came back and saw me, he knew what had happened.

Although I slept on the floor in a sleeping bag that night, I had my first peaceful sleep.

Profession and peace

When I went home the next day, I didn’t know how to tell my parents. Mother just looked at me strangely. “You look different. What happened to you?”

“I’ve found something, Mom,” I replied. “I’m a Christian now. I believe in Jesus Christ!”

To my surprise, my parents took the news well. I guess they were just glad to see me happy and peaceful at last. Even the psychiatrist thought it was a good thing. I told him Jesus Christ changed me.

Right away I started attending church with the Stoppes. The services were new and strange

to me, but I still made public my commitment to Christ. I wanted to be baptized, but hesitated. If I carried through with baptism, my family would really know I was a Christian. Would they reject me?

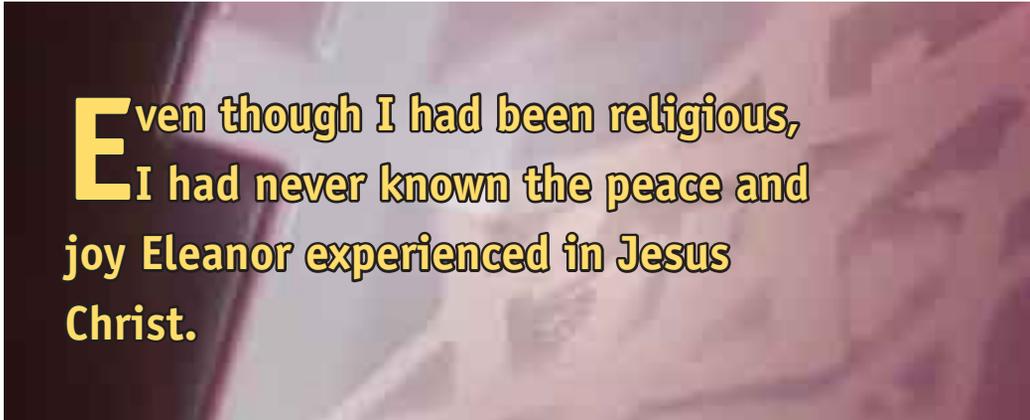
I finally decided to take my open stand for Jesus Christ and was baptized. My family, being broad-minded, did not reject me as I had feared.

I had always been a self-centered person, but now as a Christian, I began thinking of others. Eventually, God led me to attend a Christian university, where I grew in my faith and learned more of the Bible.

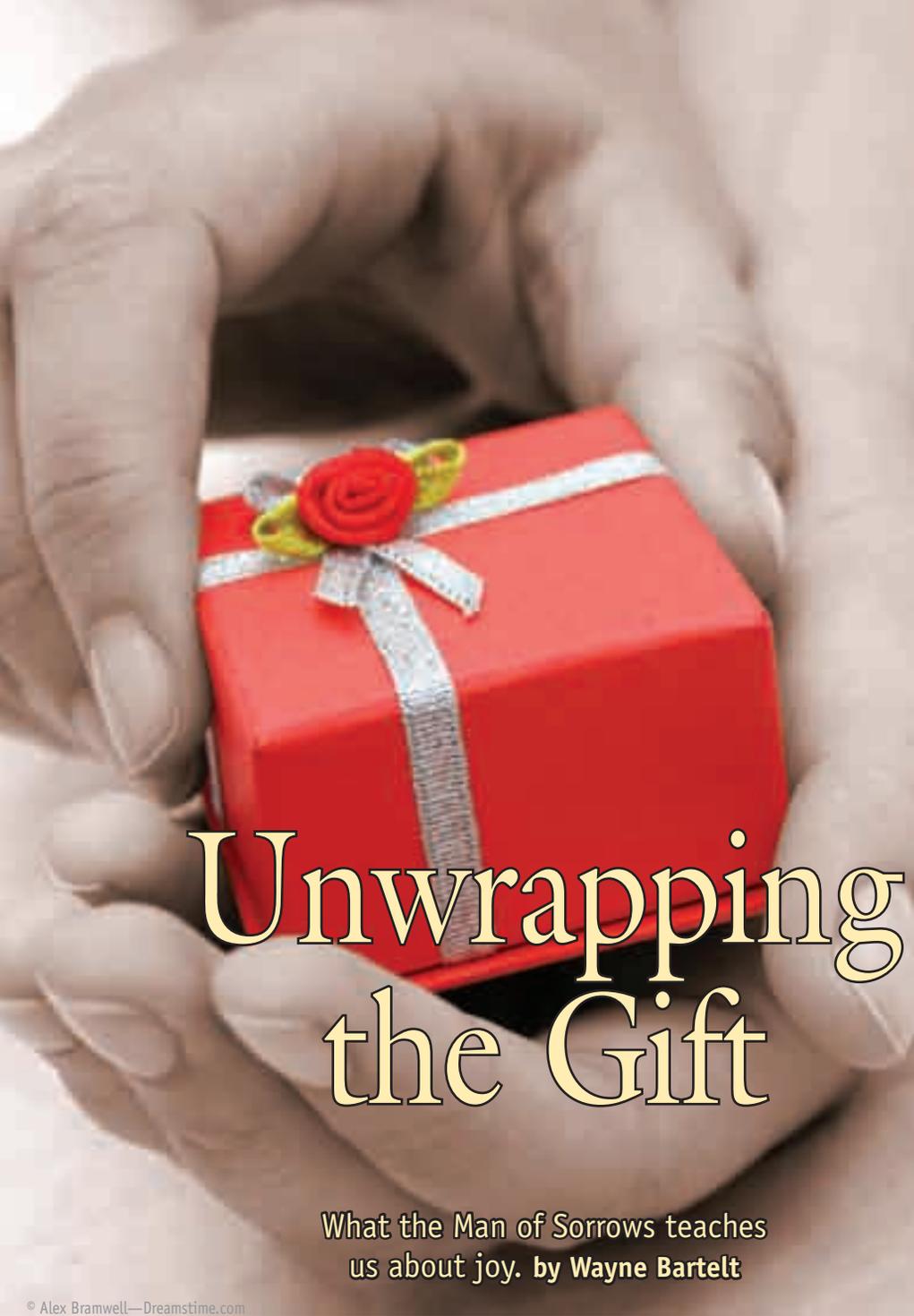
A favorite greeting of Jewish people is “Shalom” (peace), but people really don’t know what it means until they come to know the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Thank God, I know what it means at last. I have the peace I desperately desired for so many years! 

** Author’s note: Several other Jewish Christians I have interviewed told me of remarkable experiences similar to Candy’s just before they yielded to Jesus Christ.*

Muriel Larson writes from Greenville, SC.



**Even though I had been religious,
I had never known the peace and
joy Eleanor experienced in Jesus
Christ.**



Unwrapping the Gift

What the Man of Sorrows teaches
us about joy. by Wayne Bartelt

It's pretty humdrum, isn't it, that life of yours. You get up in the morning, go to work, come home, eat supper, watch television, and go to bed so you can get up and do it all over again. No one cares about you. Your spouse hasn't sent a compliment your way in . . . you don't know how long. She only notices you when you forget to take out the garbage, ignore a birthday or

anniversary, or get thick around the middle.

And this religion business is another thing. You're supposed to be happy about going to church, pleasing God, and doing the right thing. The joy of being a child of God isn't inspiring you. Life shouldn't be so . . . humdrum.

Like many people, you may be confusing joy and happiness.

Joy is as different from happiness as oatmeal is different from corn flakes. Happiness can last a week, a day, or thirty seconds, depending on whether you have enough money, security, and toys. Joy, however, is a way of life, a frame of mind that casts every event of life in the context of God's rule in the world. It's a philosophy that views the world as a way station where laughter and sorrow combine during our pilgrimage to an eternity with God.

Jesus and joy

Where do we get such ideas about joy?

From Jesus. He was born into joy. When the angel announced His birth to the shepherds, he didn't just say, "I've got good news for you." He said, "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

That abundance of joy is reflected in Jesus' personality. With subtlety and humor, He turns serious subjects into memorable pictures. The difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom of God. Camels on their knees trying to crawl through a human-sized gate. A two-by-four splinter in a person's eye. Can't you imagine a hearty laugh from Jesus seeing that short fellow perched in a sycamore tree, waiting for Him to pass? "You don't have to stay in that tree, Zachaeus. I'm coming to dinner at your house today." Go ahead: Laugh!

No one can mistake Jesus' joy of living and doing. He can hardly wait to get on the road again to meet the crowd in the next town. Sick people to heal. Blind ones to receive sight. Demons to

cast out. Sinners to forgive.

When sinners and tax collectors crowd around Him, Jesus tells a series of parables emphasizing the joy of recovering a lost coin, finding a wandering sheep, catching a draft of fish, and celebrating a returned son. They visualize themselves as the wandering sheep and the lost son. No one had shared such joy with them before.

I know what you're thinking: Even Christians can't be joyful all the time. When despair spills into your life, joy dries up and peace is a stranger. A life-changing sin stains your pillow with tears of shame. Frail flesh paralyzes you before the unrelenting assaults of Satan. A weakness of faith drives you to despair.

Jesus knows about joy in sorrow. On the way to Calvary, He zeroes in on the "joy set before him . . . and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). Saddened by His betrayal, He glories in the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. In the midst of agony, He delights that justice is satisfied, that peace between God and man is restored. He sees beyond His lash-torn flesh, beyond the cross of shame, beyond the empty tomb, and fixes His eyes on His place at the right hand of His Father.

Christianity and joy

Our Savior's delight is to share His joy with us. Joy is the fruit of what He has done for us. It's the bow on top of the package crammed with grace, forgiveness, love, and hope.

Such joy is neither contrived nor deserved. It has nothing to do with the size of our bank ac-

count, the success or failure of our last business venture, or the faithfulness or fickleness of our friends. We can lose our wealth and have a heart bubbling with joy. Mixed with tears and prayers for a failing marriage, we give thanks to God for His grace.

Leaving church one day, I talked with a fellow member about his recent illness and how sickness helps us think about spiritual things. Just before we parted, I told him, "Have a good day."

"Thanks for the sentiment," he answered, "but the Lord pours a measure of love and joy into each day. Every day is a good day if we do the same."

Joy is the very essence of Christianity. It saturates every teaching, every warning, every encouragement, every word of love. There is joy in the birth of a child, in the death of faithful grandparents, in the excitement of a sinner finding peace in Christ. There is the joy of living with His kingdom in our hearts and the joy of anticipating an eternity in His presence. There is joy in the world because it is God's world, and we are His.

If God didn't want us to be joyful . . .

- why does He remind us that He knew us long before we were born?

- why did He give us a Bethlehem?
- why did He give us a cross stained with His Son's blood?
- why did He give us a spouse or friend to share our joys and sorrows?
- why did He give us a blue sky by day and a feast of stars by night?

Pledge

In Jesus' name, I make this pledge:

To the best of my ability, I will live this day with joy in my heart.

I will find a way to cry with those who need comfort, sing with those who know happiness, and laugh with those who share my faith.

When troubles come, I will look to Him "who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning the shame" for my sake.

I will cling this day to the gift of joy my Savior has given me, confident in my faith and energized to live and love life to the fullest in His name. 

Wayne Bartelt writes from Milwaukee, WI. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



**There is joy
in the world
because it is
God's world, and
we are His.**

Mail Bag

Missing the point

Your articles on Leviticus [April-May '07] miss this key point: Everything under Aaron's priesthood is passed away. That includes all things written by Moses as the "added" law. It includes the sacrifices, feast days, unclean rituals, tabernacle services, priests, etc. The Ten Commandments still stand because they were not written by Moses, nor were they sprinkled by the blood of the old covenant. We need to be careful to remain under the priesthood of Jesus and not "borrow" from the Aaronic priesthood.

*D. G.
Meridian, ID*



Ponderings on 'Protest'

Your "First Word" [June '07] deals with my pain today also. The psalms you used brought tears as I read them. Our Lord was sinless and closer to the Father than anyone, yet He suffered most. "The closer we are [to Christ], the more we suffer" seems to be part of His plan for us, unless we are better than our Savior. "Though

he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15a).

*S. Z.
Newalla, OK*

Your "My Protest" seemed very genuine. Such doubts and anger are valid for any twenty-first century "Protestant." Many have become too comfortable in their theological skin and haven't wrestled with the big issues enough to appreciate the complexity, anxiety, tension, and nagging disappointment of a faith that truly chases after truth.

*A. C.
Houston, TX*

I know whereof you speak in your editorial. Between family, a fellow pastor, and our congregation, we have had fourteen deaths in as many months, including our granddaughter, eighteen, in an accident just three days before her graduation. It has been a rough year. Shalom.

*T. R.
Canyon Country, CA*

Thank-you for saying what we're all feeling. It has been so hard to see these people that we've known die of terrible stuff. Only God knows the plan, and He doesn't share it! It was pretty gutsy of you to say what you did. I don't think we offend God with our wrenching questions.

*D. G.
Brighton, CO*

I felt the pain of your protest and thought of my favorite verse. Keep working toward the goal God has set, and your eyes and those of [others who have gone] will see our Redeemer in the end, just like Job (19:25, 26).

*L. R.
Houston, TX*

What a much-needed and valuable presentation! Our sojourn here is spent in a very imperfect body in a very imperfect world. Jesus said we would experience tribulation, and we read that entrance to His kingdom is through the same (John 16:33; Acts 14:22). Stephen did no wrong, but it cost him his life. We love Hebrews 11 and those events where His people found deliverance. Then we come to "others" [and their experiences of suffering and death, v. 36ff]. What a contrast! That dark glass we see through leaves questions, [but] when we finally get home, I don't think we'll even remember we had these questions.

*L. P.
Manassas, VA*

How much I appreciated the last BA, particularly your very candid editorial.

*J. H.
Iowa City, IA*

I commend you for your editorial. I could tell it was written from the depth of your heart.

*J. C.
Conroe, TX*

I was touched by your article in the BA. We sometimes take you all for granted and think nothing fazes you. I could tell from your article that you too feel the pains and sorrows like we do. Brother, keep your head up and focus on Christ, for without Him, we are nothing!

R. A.
Midland, TX

Your editorial was an insight into you as well as sound wisdom. Popular evangelists “name and claim” promises in the Scripture. (Chiefly, “Send our ministry money, and God will bless you!”) This has the effect of making someone not healed or financially blest to feel rejected by God — a bad message. God is good, but sometimes life is bad.

T. P.
Austin, TX

We have all been there and asked the same question. God could have made that person well to continue the work so badly needed. As Christians, we have to trust that He is in control. I hope that your pain will lessen and that God will comfort you in the love of His Son Jesus. Numbers 6:24-26.

R. Y.
Corpus Christi, TX

I appreciated your heartfelt “My Protest.” I have had many of the same thoughts. This morning I was telling God how utterly ignorant I feel, even after all these decades as a Christian. Sometimes I wonder if I know anything at all about God, His ways, and His will. Knowing the Bible is one thing, but knowing God may be quite another.

My wonderful wife suffers from chronic migraines for which we’ve prayed more than fifteen years and tried every treatment. Nothing has helped. I have often wondered why our prayers seem to be blocked, but we’re still waiting for one of those surprises you talked about. “Where else can we go, Lord?”

B. K.
Monrovia, CA

Your protest struck a chord with me, no stranger to death. I too have struggled with the way the Lord chooses to do things. When I lost an infant son in 1986, many questions came to mind, but, following Job’s example, I tried not to charge God foolishly, though it was hard!

When my husband was very ill those last years, some of our teenagers ran amuck, and I felt the weight of the world on me. My son’s suicide just six months before his father’s death was overwhelming. I would take walks and really sort of get in God’s face about it all, trying to make sense of my losses, reconciling it with “God is good.”

Eventually, the Holy Spirit brought Noah’s ark to mind. . . . It occurred to me that Christians are in God’s ark of safety. No matter how much it stinks in the ark, I will stay because nothing but death is outside.

It was never given to Satan to take us, only to weary and discourage and confuse us so that we give up our birthright. May Jesus keep you always and give you His peace.

J. C.
Shelton, WA

Yes, our Lord is good and our blessings are abundant, but times are rough and our questions are many. We find ourselves bouncing between thanks and praise to “Why, Lord, why?” I’m perplexed by Daniel 12:7 and encouraged by Romans 8:18. The more I study, the more questions I have, yet we all press forward in faith.

L. and M. L.
Loveland, CO

Editor’s note: Your responses to my faith struggle, including many more not printed here, mean much to me. I am encouraged, still hoping and trusting that our God, the God of surprises, will yet have something in the experiential column for those of us who think, or protest, too much. On the other hand, contemplate the experience of Mother Teresa:

“Mother Teresa was afflicted with feelings of abandonment by God from the very start of her work among the homeless children and dying people in Calcutta’s slums. From all available evidence, this experience persisted until her death five decades later, except for a brief interlude in 1958.

“According to another article . . . she wrote: ‘My smile is a great cloak that hides a multitude of pains. I am told that God lives in me — and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul. I want God with all the power of my soul — and yet between us there is terrible separation. Heaven from every side is closed. I feel just that terrible pain of loss, of God not wanting me, of God not being God, of God not really existing’” (Rachel Davies, “Spirituality and the Dark Night of the Soul,” Spectrum, p. 24, Spring 2007).

*I've come without my glasses, Lord,
and cannot read Your words.*

*Barely can I see to write
my own words here.*

*I'm glad I took some from the Book
and stored them in my heart.*

*I fear before I join You there
I'll be old with memories fading.*

*Glasses won't help me
see words on a page,
even if I could find them.*

*I trust You'll not let them all leak out
of the strong box where I've locked them.*

*When I'm feeble and fragile,
unable to rise,*

*depending on others
to keep me alive,*

*I trust that this house
that I've built on Your rock
will stand not just floods, but decay.*

*Luke 2 will still glow
like a jewel in my mind,
and Your words from that hill far away
will still cut the fog
and illumine the path
going up from the narrow gate.*

Penny Henderson

What's new with . . .

NAWM

- National Hispanic Women's Retreat
August 31 -
September 3, El Paso, TX

LITES

- Fall term begins
September 10; lites@cog7.org

National FYC

- Fall Challenge scheduled for October 20; nfyc@cog7.org

MTS

- Online courses in Christian Walk and Foundations of Ministry begin soon; amber@cog7.org



G. C. Ministries

Eddie Villalba, Director of Administration



I would like to thank our Lord for the blessing of serving through your G. C. Ministries. Without the support of Church members and friends, we could not have served in this capacity for many years. So we thank you for your faithful tithes, offerings, and prayers. We also thank the ministry directors below for their dedicated, hard work in serving the Church and our Savior, Jesus. Please keep us in mind as you pray and send your offerings in support of these fine ministries.

- Women's Ministry (NAWM) - Mary Ling
- Young Adult Ministry (SWORD) - Christy Lang
- Youth Ministry (NFYC) - Kurt and Kristy Lang
- Missions Ministries/Missions Abroad - Bill Hicks
- Publications Ministry (BAP) - Keith Michalak
- Ministries Training System (MTS) - Calvin Burrell

In addition, we recommend and support these parachurch ministries:

- Spring Vale Academy - Owosso, Michigan
- LITES - Stanberry, Missouri

Please visit our Web site (www.cog7.org) and browse through the ministries pages to learn how each works. Your suggestions on how we can improve our serve are welcome. May the Lord bless you and yours.





G. C. Convention in Overland Park

While some of Kansas had overmuch rain, only showers of blessing came to the CoG7 convention site in Overland Park, July 2-7. Church members, families, and friends met and mingled in fine facilities and enjoyed six days of first-class fellowship.

Sabbath, 7-7-07, symbolized perfect rest. The church nearby celebrated its journey with the church abroad, as delegates from twenty-five nations marched on-stage, 1,391 persons sang and prayed in unity, and all heard the spoken word from International Ministerial Congress President Ramon Ruiz.

That last great day fixed a wonderful wrap on a wholesome week as children sang, teens tingled to Ken Davis' "I Love You" talk, young couples and families soaked up the amenities of the city and its convention center, seniors recalled blessed moments of CoG7's recent past, and all ages strolled through the hotel and auditorium lobbies or sat chatting contentedly.

This conference was inspired by public prayers and preaching.

- Richard Cress:
"Jesus left definite footprints to walk in while on earth. Following them will end for us



at His *Bema* – the tribunal judgment seat.”

- Tim Endecott: “If you want to help preserve this nation, you must first preserve the church by following principles of virtue, honor, truth, and faith.”

- Kenneth Lawson: “There is nothing like a great story: our journey to the eternal city of God. Tip for the trip: Stay on the right pathway.”

- Whaid Rose: “Does your past seem better than today? Have you, like Israel, been sidetracked in the desert? Take the path that leads to life and rest: Jesus.”

- Ramon Ruíz: “To finish your journey victoriously, do this: Leave sins behind, look to Christ, bring others to Jesus, and willingly sacrifice as He did.”

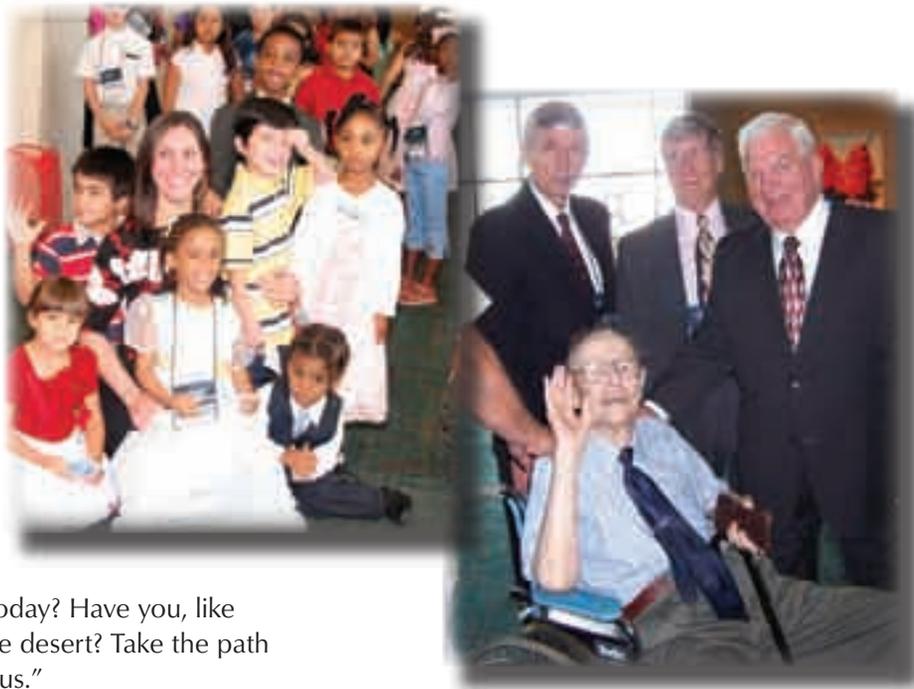
- Robert Coulter: “The Church has maintained truths embraced by its founders for 150 years now and has recently strengthened its understanding of Jesus Christ.”

Program Committee: Eddie and Socorro Villalba, Raul and Maria Romo, Harold and Vona Ogren, Wanda Taylor, Ken and Elizabeth Keim, Dennis and Kathy O’Banion

Fraternal Guests

Dr. C. Wayne Cole, formerly Worldwide Church of God

Dr. Clarence Duff, Church of God Sabbathkeeping



Dr. Joe Samuels, Seventh-day Baptist Church
 Earnest Ijames, Church of God Body of Christ
 Gilford Monroe, Mt. Zion Church of God
 Kenneth Ryland, Bible Sabbath Association

Honorees: Harv and Barb Fischer received the G. C. Churchmanship Award. Elders Robert Coulter and Bill Hicks received the IMC Shepherd Staff Award.

Other Highlights

- Chalk-audio lessons from Stanberry LITES team
- Intro to “Sabbath Experience,” by President Rose
- Wake-up call for youth and others, by Ken Davis
- 150 years of CoG7 history, by Calvin Burrell
- John Tivald elected to the G. C. board
- Next convention site: to be announced





World Church Grows in Kansas

Eight new national members have raised membership in the Church's International Ministerial Congress (IMC) to thirty-nine countries. Welcomed to CoG7 fellowship by the latest congress in Overland Park, Kansas, July 7-11, were churches from Cameroon, Congo, Malawi, Rwanda, Sierra Leon, Zambia, Poland, and the Bahamas.

Several other nations had planned to attend and apply for membership, but were prevented by either travel restrictions or economic hardship.

Travel issues in many countries, along with economic disparity, render it difficult to obtain an equitable representation of delegates for quadrennial sessions of the IMC. To address this problem, the '07 congress approved changes to its structure and procedures. It called for each member nation to be represented by one voting delegate, although others may attend as observers. In addition to the thirty-nine voting delegates (one per nation), an executive committee of nine (five officers plus four executive delegates representing charter members) will serve to guide the congress and assure its stability.

In addition to adoption of bylaw amendments summarized here, this congress called for the creation of a prayer chain that will periodically share requests of the international church with each

member country, for circulation and prayers in congregations around the world.

The primary Bible study of this congress took the title of "Other Days." It asked the delegates, in light of God's Word and the Gospel of Christ, to reflect on the varied practices within the Church in observing days and times other than the seventh-day Sabbath. (Read the editor's perspective of this study on page 3.)

The North American Church agreed to host this congress in Kansas after earlier plans to meet in Brazil, then in Mexico, were unsuccessful. Delegates from Central and South America, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia came to Kansas for the recent meeting, in addition to the larger delegations from Mexico and the United States.

The congress theme, "Witnesses of His Glory," was accented in several worship experiences, and John 3:16 was recited by delegates in twenty languages and dialects. Although a small and scattered church by some standards — about a quarter million members in a quarter of the world's nations — delegates were assured and challenged by the congress in Kansas that "We are not alone; God loves us all; so, let brotherly love continue."



Elders Bill Hicks (left) and Robert Coulter receive the IMC Shepherd's Staff Award.

IMC Officers for 2007-2010

President: Ramon Ruíz Garza, Mexico
 First vice president: Calvin Burrell, U.S.
 Second vice president: Henry Harley, Jamaica
 Secretary: Jacobo Gonzalez, Mexico
 Treasurer: Carlos Ceron, Mexico

National Delegates in Overland Park

Argentina: Jorge Gillig
 Australia: Phil Kordahi
 Bahamas: Daniel Thompson
 Brazil: Sergio Vieira Correa, Otoniel Alves de Oliveira, Leo Floyd, Jr.
 Cameroon: Kum Linus Che
 Costa Rica: Gerardo Perez
 Ecuador: Jose Leonardo Pastuna
 El Salvador: Alfredo Castellón
 Germany: Andreas Chodura
 Guatemala: Josafat Santa Cruz, Rogelio Madrid Herrera, Ismael Esteban Gonzalez, Oscar Leonel Mata Sosa, Israel David Armando Villanueva Ruíz
 Guyana: Terry Slowe
 India: George Hnamte
 Italy: Roberto Torre
 Jamaica: Henry Harley
 Kenya: John Njogu
 Malawi: Nehemiah Tembo
 Mexico: Auscencio Arroyo, Lebi Bautista, Fermin Castillo, Hector Cortes, Jacobo Gonzalez, Teodulo Hernandez, Julian Herrera, Pedro Martinez, Isaias Molina, Juan de Jesus Sanchez, Neftali Ventura, Antonio Villarreal
 Nicaragua: Danilo Aguirre
 Philippines: Mike Dizon
 Portugal: Paulo Coelho
 Trinidad-Tobago: Samuel Piggott
 United Kingdom: Robert Crawford, Lipton Smith, Devon Williams
 Uruguay: Antonio Stoletni
 United States-Canada: Robert Coulter, William Hicks, Chip Hinds, Ken Knoll, John Lemley, Raul Lopez, Carl Palmer, Whaid Rose, Loren Stacy, Melvin Sweet, Antonio Vega, Heber Vega
 Zambia: George Ntambo

Also, 2002-07 IMC officers: Ramon Ruíz, Calvin Burrell, Uilson do Nascimento, and Carlos Ceron

IMC Delegates from . . .





In June Mary and Margy Ling of Amherst, Ohio, visited Manchester and Birmingham, England church women on behalf of North American Women's Ministries. Mary (left) is shown here with the ladies from Manchester.

Twenty families compose a church recently opened in Medchal, South India, according to Elder Jacob Rao, shown holding a Bible in the local dialect of Telugu. The gospel is being shared in nearby villages with non-Christians who show interest in learning about Jesus.

Condolences . . .

To the family of Elder W. T. McMickin, who passed away in Mesa, Arizona, July 15 at the age of 95. This long-time minister of the Church is survived by his wife, Winnie; three daughters (Fayrene White, Gwen Franks, Willigene Lang); several grandchildren; and many friends and brethren who follow his example as an obedient disciple of Jesus Christ. Read Brother Mac's full obituary online. [.org](#)



Congratulations . . .

To Dan and Betty Wiley of Chattanooga, Tennessee, who celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on July 19.



Conference President Whaid Rose addresses the crowd at Dover Family Camp near Kingfisher, OK, June 10-16. Approximately 300 persons attended Sabbath services, including State Senator Pat Anderson, who recognized the 50th year of campmeeting at Dover, coinciding with Oklahoma's 100th year of statehood.

Sacred Rhythm

God is a Sabbath-keeper. On the seventh day of Creation week, He rested from His labors (Genesis 2:2, 3).

God did not rest because He was tired. The work of creation caused Him little sweat; He simply spoke, and it was done. Rather, God kept Sabbath to highlight the weekly rhythm of work and rest. Looking down through history, He saw a restless twenty-first century culture in desperate need of pause at the end of a busy week, so He rested as our example.

But more than just for physical benefits, God set the seventh day apart as a memorial of creation. The Sabbath says no to evolution and atheism. It reminds us that everything began with God and that out of love, not necessity, He created us. The Sabbath provides a weekly twenty-four hour time completely set aside to focus on our Creator.

Finally, God rested on the Sabbath to foreshadow the rest of redemption that would come through Christ. As the weekly Sabbath gives physical rest from our labors, so redemption — our spiritual Sabbath — provides rest from our sin. The intimidating work of trying to please God now ends; we rest in the finished work of Christ. “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9, 10, NIV).

This explains why among the most beloved verses in the New Testament are these:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30, NIV).

This invitation was given to a people burdened by the yoke of Moses’ law. Jesus offered His yoke in exchange and suggested that in it, they would

find rest. No to-do list or self-help program; just rest, plain and simple. There is something of great intrinsic value in rest for those who embrace it.

We see, then, that rest is central to who God is and to the relationship He desires to have with us. Hebrews 4:3 suggests that God has rested from creation labor since that first Sabbath and that He beckons us to join Him in that rest.

Sabbath is referred to as “a sanctuary in time” and “the sacred rhythm of rest and delight.” The busyness of modern culture robs many of that sacred rhythm, one that sustains all of life. After waking for a time, the body requires sleep. Our lungs rest between breaths, as does the heart between beats. Day is followed by night in the same way that the aliveness of spring and summer eventually gives way to the dormancy of fall and winter. This is the rhythm of life — the way things work.

Sadly, however, many in our culture are more at ease working than resting. They suppose that doing something is better than doing nothing. Misguided by the belief that the blessings of this life come only through self-effort and determination, they view rest primarily as a future experience, evidenced by speaking of people being at rest when they depart this life.

Thankfully, others have always understood and appreciated the gift of Sabbath. Many in our culture are awaking to the essential quality and value of rest. Serving a church with strong Sabbath traditions, I am excited about new vision to point our tired world to God’s gift of rest in the Sabbath and to their spiritual rest in Christ, to whom the Sabbath points. Details will follow in the next issue.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*

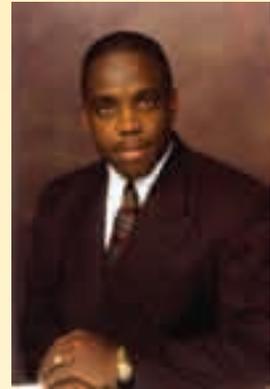




Photo: John Klassek

*Delegates to the International Ministerial Congress in Overland Park, Kansas, July 7-11.
Brethren around the world, take heart: You are not alone! (More on pp. 3, 28-29.)*

Cristo Viene

Church of God (Seventh Day) began as a movement to restore the Bible truth of Christ's second advent. Now in its 150th year, CoG7 embraces membership in 39 nations and reaches to over 100, sharing the good news of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and return. Christ is coming!

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