

October - November 2007

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE

Into All the World

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Hope for the Hollywood tribe (p. 10)

Fresh reasons for thanksgiving (p. 16)



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Giving, Forgiving, Thanksgiving



The three words above are closely related, as seen by the six letters they share. Each word states a core value of our faith that will be accented this season.

October 8 and November 22 are Thanksgiving days in Canada and the U.S., respectively, and October 27 is promoted by some as a national Forgiveness Day. The likely season of Christ's birth (autumn) is traditionally celebrated by gift-giving.

Here's another connection among our three *giving* words: Each has a close equivalent that goes right to the heart of the Christian gospel. Can you guess the three synonyms? Hint: Each has either four or five letters.

The first synonym provides a good motive for all our giving. *Love* is the first and greatest of these, as the gospel's golden text confirms: God loved the world so much that He gave His Best. Our love, anemic by comparison, should reflect God's generous love — the desire and will to always act in the best interest of others. Our true affection will be shown by where we give our time, talent, and treasure. Motivated by love, giving our best is the greatest thing we can do. Look for the needs in others, and give until it helps. To give more is to love more. All we will someday hold in our dying hands is what we have given away.

In our giving to others, let us include the precious gift of forgiveness, for which *mercy* is a synonym. Mercy is the gift of withholding the judgment others may deserve. In forgiving sinners at the cross, the merciful Christ did the greatest love-giving of all: He took the death we deserved. A remarkable example of mercy was seen one year ago in the Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. Folks forgave the man who massacred their children and showed it by giving to the needs of his wife and family.

The synonym for *thanksgiving* shares the first letters of *gratitude* and echoes the common *gracias* in Spanish: *grace*. One meaning of biblical grace is "gift," leading us to say that all we are and all we have is of grace and deserves our *gracias*. Those who receive heaven's best gifts can scarcely restrain their "Thank You, Lord!"

Let us practice giving, forgiving, and thanksgiving — in other words, love, mercy, and grace!

— Calvin Burrell

When I Am Weak



Two young girls illustrate an upside-down Bible truth.
by Jason Overman

My friend Scott has Parkinson's disease. He is only in his fifties, but the tremors are getting bad. Recently, Scott went to New York City to explore alternative treatments. When he returned, we visited — mainly about his strange encounter at New York's LaGuardia airport.

As Scott made his way to the United Airlines terminal, his thoughts were heavy. He was surrounded by people but never felt more alone. His fears and doubts about his condition enveloped him: *Where is God?* But just then, his thoughts were interrupted. One stranger among many touched him.

It was a little girl. The toddler wobbled over to him and gurgled something indecipherable. Scott smiled politely, dismissing her with a pat, and returned to his musings. But she continued rattling away enthusiastically. Finally, the little girl's mother apologized for her daughter's disturbance. But as they began to leave, the child started tugging earnestly on her mother's dress. Pulling her down to her level, she whispered in her mom's ear.

The mother turned back to Scott, smiling. "She wants you to know that Jesus loves you — that He loves *you!*" And then they were gone.

How like God that is! According to Paul's letters to the Corinthians, God's presence is revealed in ways we do not anticipate. Contrary to expectation, God's redemptive power is found not in strength, but in weakness. The Corinthians couldn't miss Paul's emphasis; the theme serves as a double bookend for his correspondence with them.

The foolishness of God is

wiser than men . . . But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty (1 Corinthians 1:25, 27, 28).

I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (2:3-5).

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you (13:4).

Paul realized that power in weakness is counter-intuitive and paradoxical (1 Corinthians 1:18). But for him, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ prove that our conventional notions of power are gravely mistaken. The gospel, therefore, cannot help but challenge the status quo. It shatters our presumption and pride; it turns our hearts and habits upside-down so that "no flesh should glory in His presence" (v. 29).

The persistent message of Corinthians is that the gospel story subverts our self-sufficiency. The power of God is revealed only in lives of modest humility. The

body "sown in weakness . . . is raised in power" so that "the excellence of the power [is] of God and not of us" (1 Corinthians 15:43; 2 Corinthians 4:7). Like our Christ, we do not reach for power; we bow for it.

Becoming children

Jesus' view of discipleship involved this very principle. His followers, like us, understood the politics of power according to the conventional wisdom: Power is the measure of status and wealth; it is the luxury and domain of the strong. But against the traditional view, the politics of Jesus points the other way. "The kingdom and the power" that He embodied and bid us enter, and for whose fullness we pray, is the habitation of little children (Matthew 18:1-4).

The desire to be greatest is a temptation common to pride, but Jesus did not say that disciples must forgo all thought of authority. Rather, He challenged the nature of that power. Typically, the heathen kings exercised power by dominating their subjects, but King Jesus inverted that policy. He was committed to the counter-cultural idea that the greatest in His kingdom is the younger that serves (Luke 22:24-27). Powerlessness reveals God's true power.

The New Testament emphasis

on power in weakness should not surprise anyone nursed on the stories of Israel. The accounts of Moses and Pharaoh, Joshua and Jericho, Gideon's three hundred, David and Goliath, Daniel and the lions den, the fiery furnace — and so many more — give weight to the prophetic maxim "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Of all the stories, one, I think, tells the tale better than the rest: the healing of Naaman. It is also the story of another little girl.

Opposites

Her story is in 2 Kings 5. We would not have known Naaman but for her.

The tale begins with a description of just how powerful Naaman was: the "commander of the army of the king of Syria . . . a great and honorable man . . . a mighty man of valor" (v. 1). By human standards, he was impressive indeed. But all this build-up is undercut by the fact that Naaman was a leper. Ultimately, his strength was illusory. There was a chink in his armor: For all his achievements, he was utterly powerless in the face of his own disease.

At this point entered a character, apparently the complete opposite of Naaman — a young female captive from Israel who

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ prove that our conventional notions of power are gravely mistaken.

waited on Naaman's wife (v. 2). The contrasts are compelling. Naaman is named; she is not. He was male; she was female. He was commander; she was captive. He was honorable; she was servant. He was adult; she was child. He was mighty; she was weak. In terms of power relations, he was in every way superior.

As it turns out, this little girl was a repository of God's power. Positions were subtly reversed when she took the initiative and gently spoke a word of authority that both instructed and directed her captor and master: "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria, for he would heal him of his leprosy" (v. 3). These words gather even greater weight when we consider that they were spoken on behalf of an enemy.

Thus, a little girl set a general running to his king.

Humble healing

So the king of Syria contacted the king of Israel, but Israel's king suspected the intentions.

"Am I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he seeks a quarrel with me" (v. 7).

Elisha mercifully stepped in before the whole encounter

escalated to war. He invited Naaman to come to him so "he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (v. 8).

The picture painted is the inversion of typical power politics. It is the kind act of a child that elicits true benevolence and power, while proud kings are left looking inept and self-serving. The story deftly deconstructs human power, but the story was just beginning for Naaman.

As he arrived with fanfare to be healed, he was met, not by Israel's great prophet, but by a lowly servant. "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times . . . and you shall be clean" (v. 10).

Naaman fumed. How humiliating to be dismissed in such a demeaning manner! He expected a show of strength — hands waving and the like — not a dirty stream. The Jordan was a puddle compared to the fair rivers of Syria. Naaman left in a rage (vv. 11, 12).

Now, for the third time, servants confronted his pride: "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it?" (v. 13). Finally, with his will broken, Naaman experienced the power of God through baptism into a new kind of power. Rising from the water, "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (v. 14). In humil-

ity, Naaman came full circle. He became like the little child that had sent him on his journey in the first place.

A people of power

What stubborn Naaman and my hurting friend Scott graciously encountered is how the power of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ moves unexpectedly beyond and beneath all human accounts of strength. In weakness and apparent insignificance, these two little girls were free to discern and reveal what pride and pretension cannot bear to contemplate — that God's works are known in us only as we relinquish self-willed coercion and control.

Christians today are often tempted to seize the reins of power to steer their history and others. We must recover that upside-down view of power provided by the gospel so that we may resist a world drunken on a might born of domination. For it is not strength or status or position or wealth that rightly reveals true power, but humble service that locates greatness in the costly gift of Christ crucified.

Let us confess with the apostle Paul, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. . . ." It is the "exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe" (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:19). Amen. ■■

Jason Overman serves the congregation in Jasper, AR.



These two little girls were free to discern and reveal what pride and pretension cannot bear to contemplate.

Questions & Answers

What do you know about the *emerging* or *emergent church* movement that seems to be growing? Is it the same as the contemporary worship and music we hear about?

A No, they are not the same, but closely related. *Contemporary* refers to the latest trends in worship and music. Contemporary worship is popular among churches that hope to impact youth and young adults, and is often opposite of *traditional*, or *classical* – terms that refer to the best and most enduring music and worship forms of the past. Organ music is traditional, while guitars and drums often signify contemporary.

Among the contemporary church trends in this decade is the *emerging* or *emergent* movement. It goes far beyond the type of music in worship and appraises the entire church experience: liturgy, mission, methodology, and even theology. Most of the resulting reformation of faith has been driven by the desire to respond to the new thought forms of culture known as *postmodernism*. The core agenda of the emerging church is to do church and mission effectively in a post-modern world.

Common characteristics among emerging churches are

- preference for interaction over sermon
- use of narratives, not propositions, in teaching
- aversion to structure in liturgy and organization
- resistance to absolutes in human conduct
- love for and use of new technologies
- choice of lifestyle evangelism over proclamation
- emphasis on community, in and out of the church

For some, this has led to significant compromise of the historic Christian faith. For others, it simply means a diligent effort to minister in a postmodern culture, without sacrificing orthodox teaching about Christ, salvation, and other truths.

– Elder Calvin Burrell

Are humans really born in sin?

Q The Bible teaches that we were born with the tendency toward evil – the sin nature. This nature shows itself by wrong thoughts, words, and deeds in every single human who ever lived (1 Kings 8:46; Psa. 130:3; Isa. 53:6; 64:6; Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8) – except the perfect man, Jesus.

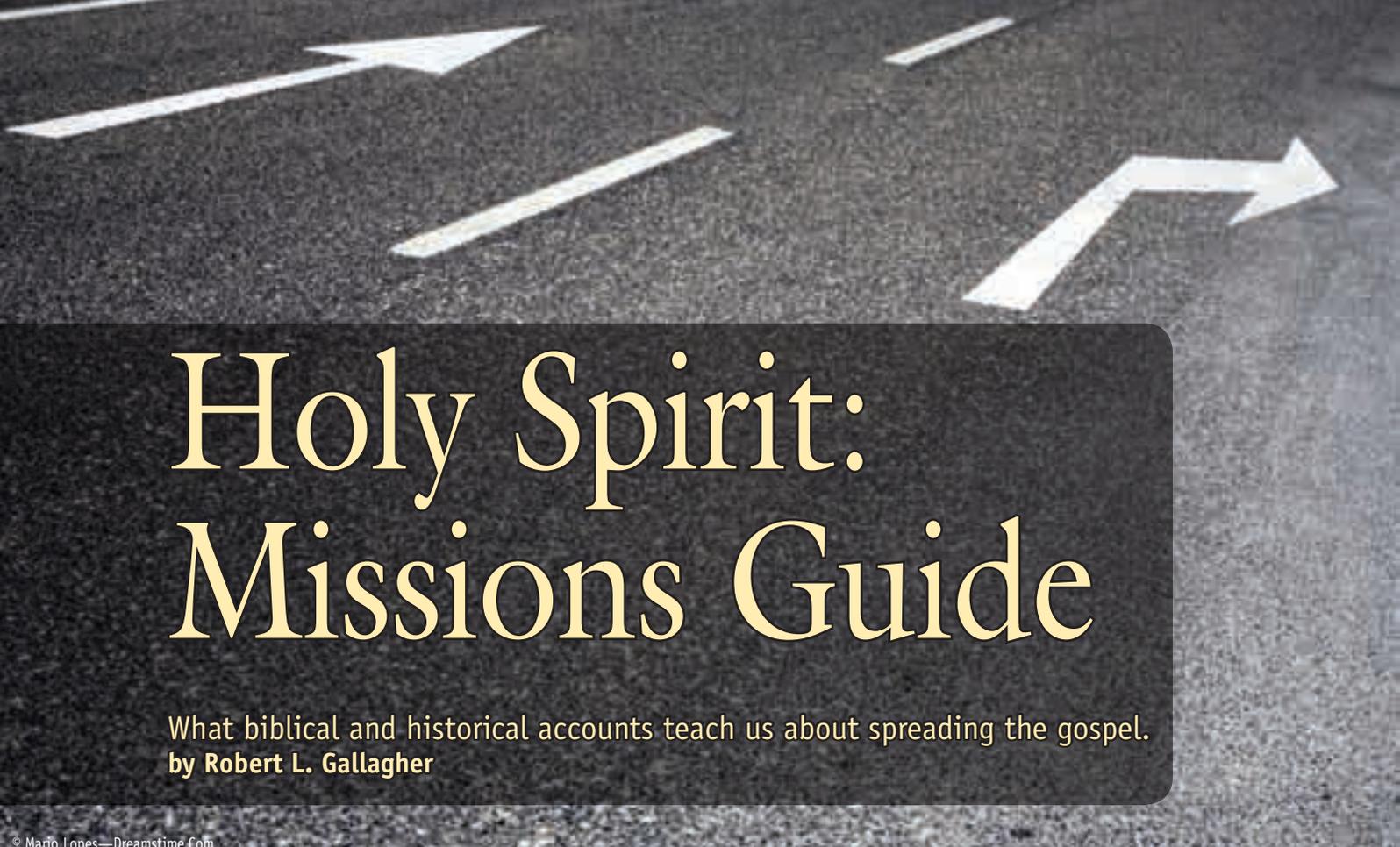
Sinful attitudes and actions spring from deep within: selfishness, pride, greed, lust, and others. These traits are innate: We don't have to learn them; they come naturally. What we call human nature is the same as sin nature, or "flesh," in the Bible (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:19-21). Everyone has this nature, in different shapes and sizes. All of us commit sins of various sorts because we are, at the core, sinners.

Where did we get human nature? We were born with it. The Bible teaches that our common ancestors started it and passed it on (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21). Since Adam and Eve, every human being struggles against the downward pull of sin. (Jesus Christ is excepted here, too. Although of Eve's seed, His paternity was from God, so He was not born in sin.)

Now hear the good news: Just as our sinful nature and the death to which it leads are directly tied to our ancestors, the same organic connection exists in salvation. *Just as we do wrong and suffer death because we were born wrong (i.e., of Adam) and are born of the flesh (i.e., human nature), so we do right and have eternal life because we are born right – reborn of the Spirit (i.e., divine nature) and children of God by faith in Christ* (Rom. 8:8-17; 1 John 5:4).

That's why Jesus told Nicodemus, who was born in sin, "You must be born again" (John 3:3-8). As with sin, so with salvation: It's all in the genes!

– Elder Calvin Burrell



Holy Spirit: Missions Guide

What biblical and historical accounts teach us about spreading the gospel.
by **Robert L. Gallagher**

To the disciples, it looked like the end. They had watched their Lord be physically beaten, verbally abused, and brutally crucified. Even after He rose from the dead, they were perplexed, afraid, and hopeless — not yet knowing that through all this, Jesus was making good on His promise to send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-14). What they saw as the end, He turned to a new beginning that would take the message of His death and resurrection to the ends of the earth.

But Christ's followers couldn't do it by themselves. After the Resurrection, they stayed in Jerusalem and prayed for the Holy Spirit to empower and embolden them for the work Jesus had begun. They needed God's Spirit to take the gospel from the center of Judaism to the capital of the Roman Empire. The Spirit came

upon the early church in Acts 2 and never left. The believers began spreading the good news at home and ended up taking it around the world.

The book of Acts is an account of what the Holy Spirit did for the gospel, working in and through the apostles. What kind of help did the Helper lend in their missions work? What has He done in church history and in missions today?

The Spirit in Acts

The Spirit often led Jesus' followers to speak about what God had done through the Messiah. During the Samaritan revival (Acts 8), Philip left the city, guided by an angel to an empty desert road. The Holy Spirit then directed him to a chariot, where an Ethiopian eunuch was reading Isaiah 53:7, 8.

In Acts 10 the Spirit of God pointed Peter to the Gentiles, Cornelius, and friends. While praying, Peter saw a vision indicating that Gentiles were being included in God's kingdom, and the apostle overcame his misgivings to make a successful mission to the Gentiles.

The Spirit also led in the selection of mission workers. While Antioch's leadership team was worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit impressed them to "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (13:2). They prayed, fasted, and laid hands on them, and the Holy Spirit sent them out into fruitful cross-cultural outreach.

The believers' travels didn't always go according to plan. In Paul's second missionary trip (Acts 16) the Holy Spirit warned Silas, Timothy, and him not to

go to Asia Minor (v. 6). Blocked in his westward journey, Paul then set out to go east, but the Spirit of Jesus again prevented them from continuing. Unable to proceed either left or right, they went forward to Troas on the coast. There Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (v. 9).

In Acts 19:21 and 20:22 Paul sensed the Holy Spirit's compulsion to go to Jerusalem and then to missions in Rome. Then in 20:23, 24 and 21:4 Paul received the Spirit's warnings of future imprisonment and hardships. Through the Spirit, Agabus also warned Paul that he would suffer under the Roman oppressors at Jerusalem (21:10-14; 11:27-30). Jesus had foretold all this divine help (John 16:13).

Acts tell us that in evangelistic labors, Jesus' disciples did not act on their own. God's Spirit worked through them to do the Father's will, orchestrating every major expansion.

The Spirit in church history

Similarly, many examples of Christians' dependence on the Spirit dot the history of the church. In his *Confession*, Patrick, a fifth century English missionary to Ireland, attributed his motivation to share Jesus to the Holy Spirit working in him. Patrick made clear that the Holy Spirit inspired his missionary activities and protected him from the hostile Irish tribes (*Confession* 25, 27, 33, and 35).

In the eighteenth century, the Lutheran Pietist, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, likewise desired the Holy Spirit's leading in everything he did. Under his

leadership, the Moravian community in Saxony relied on the Holy Spirit for direction and power in global missions. The Moravians gathered for a week of prayer and fasting in 1727 and experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

With greater unity, this group was impregnated with the presence of the Spirit of Jesus moving among His people. It was as if the Spirit himself immersed them into one love. After this incident, the Moravians traveled to other churches and small groups, bringing needed renewal throughout Protestant Europe.

The Spirit today

Sometimes there seems to be disconnect from the record of church history to our contemporary experience. How does the Holy Spirit help us today in our evangelistic and missions efforts? Perhaps the first place to start is to recognize the reality of the Holy Spirit (along with the Father and the Son) and to recognize His vital importance in the expansion of the kingdom of God on earth.

There is no mission of God without the Spirit, who should be directing our churches, denominations, and missions agencies in all their evangelistic endeavors. It is not by might, nor by power, nor by the committee, but by the Spirit that evangelism and missions are accomplished. We may think and act as if our committees are responsible for shepherding the mission of God, but that role has been designated by God to the Spirit of Jesus.

Do we rely on our own message, method, and motivation when proposing any new

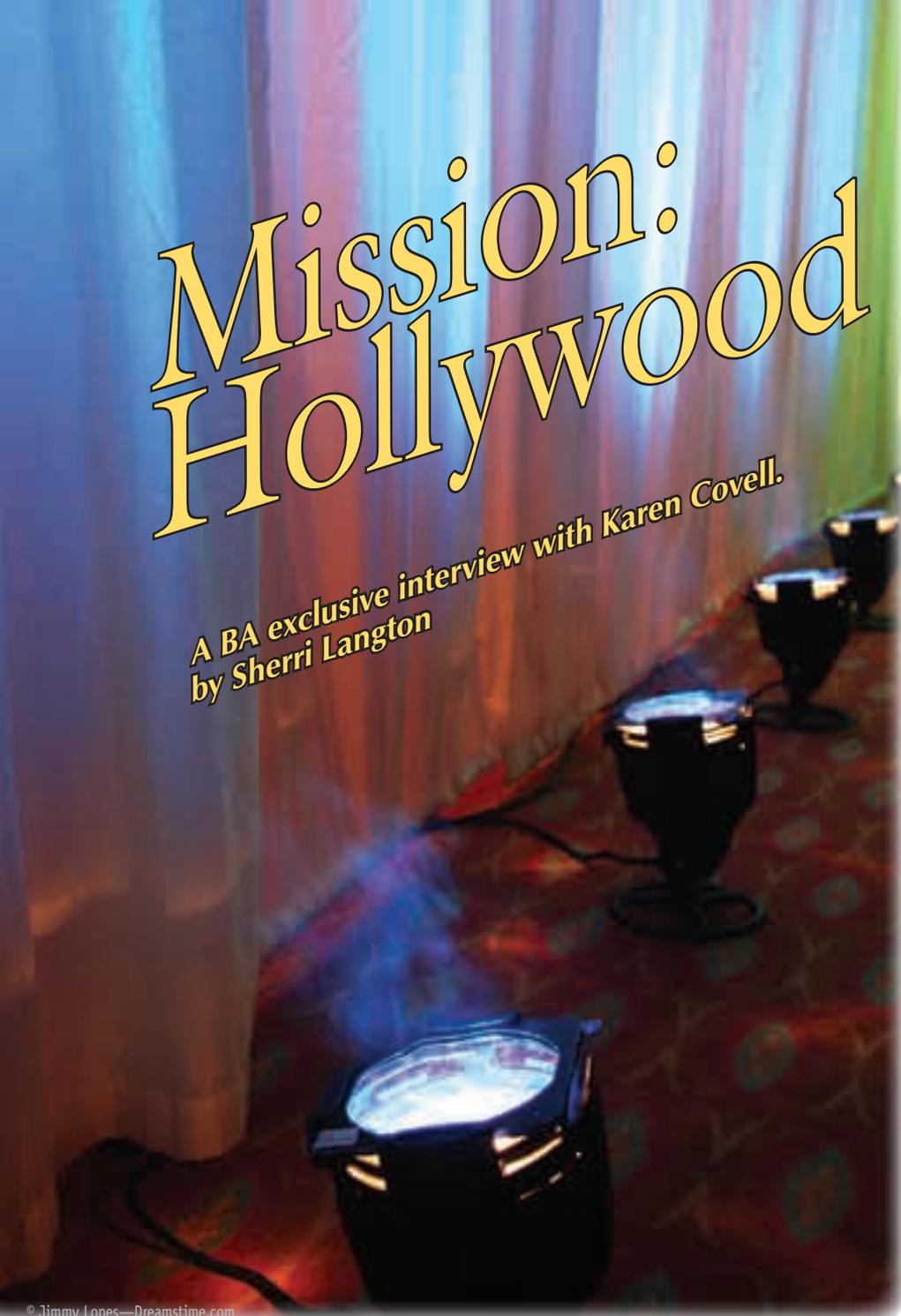
mission? Or do we first stop and pray, seeking assistance from the One who knows all things, including the missional mind of God? As we wait on the Spirit for His purpose, we might receive a surprising new direction for our ministry.

Throughout her schooling, my daughter desired to be a missionary in Spain. She studied Spanish language and culture for years and lived in Spain for months to prepare for her calling. Finishing graduate studies, she prayed again for clarity and was totally surprised by God's answer. Into her mind came thoughts and yearnings for a people group around the world from Spain: the Melanesian nation of Papua New Guinea. In a series of incidents only God could have orchestrated, this redirection was confirmed many times over. My daughter eventually served in New Guinea for several years and is now studying to return to Oceania as a cross-cultural missions teacher.

The Spirit didn't just start missions back in the early church; He is still at it today. He works through you and me bringing conviction of sin to this world and drawing men, women, boys, and girls to Jesus Christ. ■■■

Robert L. Gallagher is an associate professor of Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College Graduate School in Wheaton, IL. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.





Mission: Hollywood

A BA exclusive interview with Karen Covell.
by Sherri Langton

If your son or daughter returned from youth group burning to be a foreign missionary, how would you respond? You'd probably wipe away a tear and whisper thanks to God that your child will be spreading the gospel to a people who desperately need Him.

But what if your son or daughter burned to be a missionary

closer to home — say, in Hollywood? Would you still shed tears and whisper thanks? You should, if you see Hollywood as a mission field that desperately needs Christ.

Karen Covell, a passionate Christian, has worked in Hollywood since the 1980's. She produces TV specials and documentaries, and her husband, Jim,

is a composer. In 2001 Karen started the Hollywood Prayer Network (HPN) out of the conviction that believers working there need prayer support from outside the community. Rather than stage boycotts and write hate letters, Karen believes that Christians must pray. Hollywood isn't Sodom and Gomorrah that must be shunned, she feels; it's Nineveh that must be reached.

You've said that Washington D.C. is the seat of power, but Hollywood is the seat of influence. What influence does Hollywood have in other countries?

When missionaries come back from the mission field, they tell us how they fight against the American media because so much of it has impacted the culture they're ministering in. Often it's a detriment to their work. Everywhere we go, we find that the only city in the world that has really infiltrated the hearts and minds of people around the world is Hollywood.

When you came to Hollywood, did you feel you didn't have enough prayer support as a Christian?

I never have enough prayers! Many of our friends came out here against the wishes of their pastors or families, and they knew people weren't praying for them. They didn't even want them here. It's such a *hard* place with subtle temptations. It's like any foreign mission field, where you go into a culture and you start learning the lay of the land and trying to fit into that society. Prayer is so crucial! Christians come to Hollywood and don't have that prayer support. Many go home discouraged. Other be-

lievers stay but compromise their faith and morals in order to get work. We watch Christians fall a lot, and we see the ones who are praying and being prayed for have the strongest foundation to continue.

Your DVD, *The Hollywood Tribe*, says that Christians in Hollywood can't tell their peers about their problems, but they can tell a prayer partner about them. Why can't they tell their peers in the industry? Is it perceived as weakness?

It is! There's a tremendous front that people have here of being successful, of being strong, because it's so competitive. It's really a survival of the fittest. You can't go into a job looking desperate for work. You can't go into a business setting and look like you're sick or discouraged. Even women who are pregnant cover up that they're pregnant, because they're afraid they won't get another job. People are defined here only by their last project. Everybody's trying to appear to be better and stronger and more beautiful and smarter than they are. One of the fears of artists in Hollywood is "What if I'm found out for who I really am?"

Why doesn't the church view Hollywood as a people group to be reached through prayer and compassion?

Because it's a spiritual battle. Christians are either lusting after Hollywood and feeling guilty about following TV shows or celebrities, or they live out the joy of the big glitz and glamour when they know they shouldn't. Or they're afraid of Hollywood

and hate it because it's a threat to them. It's a compromise morally, and they don't know how to handle that. Instead of facing the giants with prayer and knowing that the giants are not that big, they back off. They get rid of their television set. They want nothing to do with it because they've been told to flee from evil, which is true. But flee from evil in their own lives, not the evil of some place else. It's unbiblical to not pray for people who don't know the Lord and to not pray for the impact to be turned to good.

It's a lot easier for Christians to stage boycotts.

That's so destructive here. I wish Christians could see how that breaks relationships between God and people because people who don't know the Lord here only know Christians as representing the Lord. When Christians write hate letters and boycott and picket, that's how they

view God — as being judgmental and angry and against them. The people in Hollywood are so vulnerable and insecure, and they want so badly to feel important. When someone points a finger and tells them their work is no good, they feel like they're no good. So all they get from the church is "You're no good," and so they get angry back. We're to love them, not hate them!

How would you connect the Hollywood Prayer Network with the book of Acts?

We are going out to all the places of the world, spreading the good news. We know Jesus has sent us out to speak to the Greeks and the Jews and that our job is to reach the parts of the world that haven't heard the good news. We see ourselves as missionaries here, as tentmakers. My husband and I have a class in our home called "How to Talk About Jesus Without Freaking Out." It's based on a book we wrote of how to share your faith and be culturally relevant in this mission field. For sixteen years we've been training Christians how to be bold in sharing their faith, how to be like Paul in living as a tentmaker, using the gifts God has given them to be the best they can be in their craft and then building relationships and sharing their faith along the way.

What do you think Paul's approach would be if he were in Hollywood today?

I think he'd do the same thing. I think he'd set up camp, he'd move in with somebody, he would make his tents, and he would meet with people and share the gospel along the



Karen Covell

Calling All Prayer Warriors

The Hollywood Prayer Network offers a number of ways you can make a difference in praying for Hollywood:

- “I” to “I” Prayer Partnerships - matches industry professionals in Hollywood with intercessors outside to pray regularly for them
- Incognito Prayer Team - allows intercessors to pray for Christian and non-Christian celebrities and decision-makers
- local chapters of HPN - gathers prayer warriors and supports local industry professionals working outside Hollywood
- other prayer events, such as the National Day of Prayer evening at CBS Television and the National Media Prayer Breakfast in November
- studio prayer walks every Friday
- HPN KIDS Prayer Calendar – urges prayer for children who are industry professionals as they work and grow in the industry; see the calendar at www.hollywoodprayernetwork.org/prayer/hpnKids.php.

Visit www.hollywoodprayernetwork.org for more information.

— Sherri Langton

way. He would love the people around him, and he would build up other Christians to do the same thing.

How do you change the mindset of Christians toward Hollywood?

I think we have to first compare Hollywood with foreign missions. You send people out, you pray for them, you support them financially, they come back and they give you the updates of what’s going on. You’re *involved* in their lives as missionaries. That’s what we’re challenging you to do to missionaries in Hollywood – to pray for them, to send them out as missionaries, to support them, and then to hear the updates, to know that in order to have an impact, you can’t send letters in from the outside. You can’t drop in every once in

a while and try to get someone to act like a Christian. You have to tell him how to *become* a Christian by building one-on-one personal relationships.

We lay out to people in churches how Hollywood is similar to a foreign mission field and that we approach our life as Christians here as we would if we were sent to Africa or to India or China. We move into the culture; we respect the people and their culture. And as we get to know them and understand them and start speaking their language and acknowledge their traditions and their lifestyle – not that we agree with it, but we respect it. Then we gain the opportunity to tell them what we know and watch people transform.

What successes have you had?

We have so many success

stories. My husband and I met a young couple who are a producing and directing team. They were producing what we call “totally unnecessary films” – kind of R-rated exploitation films. As we built a relationship with them, they naturally thought that Jim would like to do music for one of their films. They offered him the job, and he turned them down. He said, “I don’t want this to be judging you. I don’t want this to have a negative impact on our friendship, but this is just something I feel like I can’t do. It’s not right for me. Some day as I stand before God, I really want to know that I chose the projects that were best for who He created me to be.” They were *shocked*. They had never experienced anybody else turning down work, because everybody in Hollywood is desperate for work. On a Monday the lady called back and she said, “Karen, I spent all weekend questioning, *Am I a moral person?*” It started her spiritual journey, and in the next couple of years, she became a Christian. We see this happening all the time.

You’re saying that as Christians, we’re too focused on the product and not on the people.

Absolutely! As a church, we want people to stop making product that offends us, and we don’t take it a step further to say, “If I care about the people making that product and I reach them with the love of Jesus, then their hearts will change. And if their hearts change, they won’t be able to make that bad product anymore.”  [.org](http://www.bibleadvocate.org)



When Our Missions Fail

Christians can learn from earlier efforts, both guided and misguided.
by Robert Crawford with Sherri Langton

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Genesis 11 isn't where we first think of reading to learn about missions. In truth, however, the building of the tower of Babel in that chapter was a mission — an error-filled and doomed one. When we compare it to gospel missions work in the book of Acts, it's no surprise that the populace of Babel failed and why, many centuries later, the people of Christ succeeded. Let's look at the similarities and differences between these two missions.

Unity

You remember the story. The citizens of Babel made up their minds to build a name and a city for themselves — even a tower with its top in the heavens. But they knew the work couldn't be done by two or three persons, or even by a committee. It would take all of them, united in their minds and effort: "one language . . . one speech" (Genesis 11:1). They said:

"Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (v. 4).

Even the Lord was impressed with their resolution and sameness of purpose. Implying the almost unlimited potential of humans who set their minds to a task, He said:

"Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them" (v. 6)

Just speaking the same language with resolve was enough to render the people virtually unstoppable.

The early Christian believers in the New Testament were also united, but not by language. On the Day of Pentecost, in fact, people of many different languages gathered, the Holy Spirit came and filled them all, and

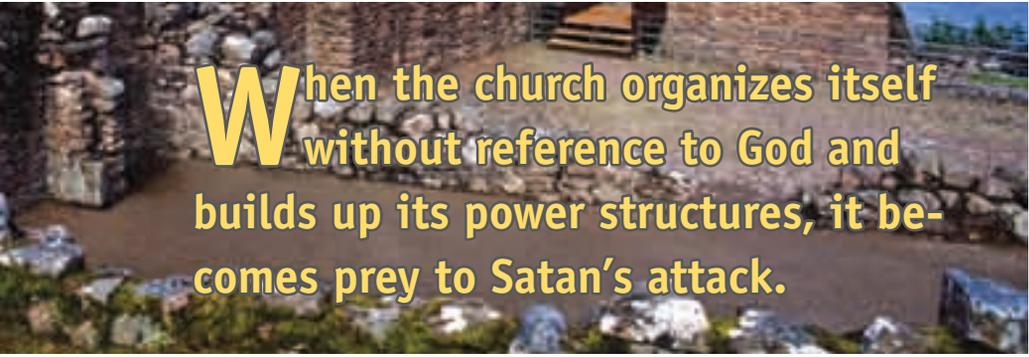
they spoke in different tongues (Acts 2:3, 4). When those present heard the message in their own language (v. 6), they fell under conviction of sins, repented, and were baptized in water (vv. 37-41). Belief in the risen Christ and baptism in the Holy Spirit unified them: "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common" (v. 44).

From that point on, the book of Acts presents a record that suggests — to borrow wording from Genesis 11 — that nothing those united Christians proposed to do under the Spirit's guidance would be withheld from them.

Motive

The citizens of Babylon succeeded in their mission of building a tower, but it didn't last. Why not? Because their real motive was to make a name for themselves, not for God. And to do this, they relied on human achievement:

Then they said to one



When the church organizes itself without reference to God and builds up its power structures, it becomes prey to Satan's attack.

another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:3, 4).

The work of making a name for people belongs to God, not to people. And heaven is His place, not ours. As the people of Babel grasped at what was not theirs and tried desperately to guarantee their own security, they crossed the unseen boundary of human limitations. Though they built much, it was still so far from heaven that God had to come down to see it.

He didn't scoff at their work; He took it seriously — so much so that He confused their language. God knew that if He removed the people's ability to communicate and cooperate, their work couldn't continue and the workers would be scattered.

How different from the believers in Acts! The first Christians' motive for doing missions was to spread the gospel in obedience to Christ's commission, not to promote themselves. And this motive was energized by a radical change of heart once the Holy Spirit came. "We cannot

but speak the things which we have seen and heard," Peter and John told the religious leaders (4:20).

The believers were motivated by the Spirit's love and joy, not by the desire to exalt self (v. 31). They gave up wealth and shared their possessions — not for a city that would eventually decay and die, but for one that would last forever, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). So great was the boldness of these believers in proclaiming the truths about Jesus Christ that persecution broke out against them, scattering them from Jerusalem identity (Acts 7:54–8:4). Unlike the scattering experience at ancient Babel, this scattering didn't stop the work of the gospel but spread it to Judea, Samaria, and around the earth (1:8).

Avoiding mistakes

As with all the Old Testament, Genesis 11 was written for our learning that we might have hope and avoid repeating the mistakes of others (Romans 15:4).

First, we must realize and hope for what can be accomplished when we work together with one purpose — even as the ancient Babylonians did, although for an evil purpose. The Christian church today is too often fragmented, individualistic,

and self-centered, weakening the corporate potential for evangelism — a righteous purpose. The flame of evangelism for the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be rekindled in the church without scriptural unity. Let us work hard to break down barriers in the church and never lose sight of our calling to be of the same mind.

Second, the church must not seek merely to make a name for itself, as did the ancient city of Babel. Ministries should not revolve around people or places. In recent years we've seen the destruction of church organizations that were based on self-glorification. When the church organizes itself without reference to God and builds up its power structures, it becomes prey to Satan's attack.

The account of Babel's ill-fated "mission" tower spans nine verses in Genesis. That disgraced project is never heard from again in the Bible.

The church's mission story, on the other hand, spans the book of Acts and 1,900 years beyond, and continues its progress by speaking the gospel's language in every human tongue. Empowered by the Spirit, it is destined to end in heaven's eternal kingdom. Which missions model will we follow? 

Jamaican pastor **Robert Crawford** now resides in the UK where he serves as co-pastor in the Gloucester church and as missionary to Africa with Missions Abroad.



Viewpoint

Meaningful Worship

by Michael Flores

What feeling does a church building in the middle of an urban, commercialized neighborhood evoke? Why are we impressed at the sight of fifty people all bowing in reverence?

The feeling is awe and amazement that people still live for more than jobs and pleasure, and that some of our neighbors find meaning in what has become meaningless for most: worship.

Reminding a profane society of God's existence is the nature and purpose of a church. Christ said it best: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. . . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16).

The apostle Paul associates worship with community through the analogy of Christ's body (Romans 12:4-6). To Paul, corporate worship requires humility that recognizes the importance of fellow believers. This way of living and serving together, for him, is true worship.

Our worshipful lifestyle wraps up in the weekly church service, or liturgy. This Sabbath experience becomes the corporate body's expression of its daily, personal obedience in real life. How a church comes together for its rituals shows the world its belief. If a church's worship is consistent with its faith, hope, and love, then its worship causes people to praise God.

When guests visit church, the congregational liturgy is among the first impressions they have. Ecclesiastical practice also reflects church theology, and good theology is manifested best in the life of Jesus. Thus, a church ought to imitate Christ in its corporate life and in its liturgy. Does this happen?

Surveys show that church attendance is decreasing in this culture. The generation born between 1984 and 2002 is the least committed to church, the least certain of faith, and the most likely to leave

church. Even in the mid-life generation and beyond, many people claim negative experiences with church and are avoiding Christian communities. This reality motivates a Paul-like reflection to examine whether current liturgical practices, especially music and teaching, inhibit or enhance community.

The way we do church reveals not just church theology but also its ideology. Commonly, someone stands up and speaks for a half hour or so, while the congregation watches and listens from their seats. This style limits group discussion and peer learning. It stresses the knowledge of one individual — the teacher — and reinforces individualism.

Then there's music, which has become the dominant worship expression, often to the exclusion of other worship forms. When I led worship, it never occurred to me that not all Christians enjoy or value music as some do. Music was the way I worshiped artistically, but did the liturgy allow other artists — dramatists, dancers, painters, writers, and the like — to use their gifts? In the same way, by limiting liturgy to mostly music, we may be excluding some people from worship.

The design of most church auditoriums reinforces our ideology. It focuses on the speaker or artist and suggests that people come to witness a spectacle or drama. A liturgy that promotes spectacle reflects the concerts and theater productions of mainstream culture. Is Christian worship like this? While spectacle can enrich a liturgy, being spectacle-driven can restrict the congregation to spectators. Instead of attending church to commune, people come mainly to watch, to be entertained. This suggests that church is a product to feed our consumer society.

On the contrary, the church is intended to be Christ's body. Christ calls for the sacrifice of self and for service to others in true community. Acts 2:42-47 shows the church living this way. Proper corporate worship should encourage and reflect the church body described in this passage. The result of such worship integrity is a culture where every

continued on page 26

We are So Blessed

Spreading His love

I was blessed this year by the unique opportunity of volunteering on a medical/dental mission trip to Guatemala, sponsored by Women's Association and Missions Abroad. A team of twenty-seven volunteers helped 1,830 people in just over four days! Some patients walked or traveled up to five hours by bus to receive free care. I taught dental hygiene to children by using Bible story coloring pages. All those who volunteered are thankful for the successful mission, spreading His love to the world and serving the poor, sick, and needy.

– Sharon Norton
Lodi, CA

Divine discipline

Now that my human protector is gone, God seems to be disciplining me by allowing me to go through trials that teach me patience, endurance, and hopefully wisdom. When I'm not feeling overwhelmed, I'm feeling pain. That is how we learn and grow (Hebrews 12:11). Through His Spirit, I praise Him for the trials and pain that force me more often into His presence.

God knows best what He allows in the lives of His children. He is always loving and wise. He always has eternity in mind. He always can be trusted. No matter what happens, I want to be found hanging on through Him and to Him.

– Darlene Wiedenheft
Falls, PA

Journey of surrender

I give God praise for His extended mercy and care by allowing me to recover from colon cancer and then from liver cancer a few months later. My prognosis continues to improve as advanced medical teams (thank God for them too!) watch over my treatment protocol through quarterly MRI and PET scans, looking for further evidence of cancer. It has

been eighteen months since my last surgery and chemotherapy. This journey of surrender started in March 2004 and continues today.

The words Virginia and I exchanged over seven years ago, "in sickness and in health," have taken on new meaning as she's walked with me daily through this whole ordeal. Her courage and single-parent strength have been a blessing beyond measure. Now I feel strong and am making up for lost time when I couldn't fully participate with wrestling, swimming – whatever dads ought to do with and for their children.

I praise Him for the faithfulness of saints who approached the throne of grace on behalf of my family and me these last three years. I am the recipient of God's love channeled from and through the faithfulness of His people. Though extensive, the physical effects are far outweighed by the emotional and spiritual changes in my life. I don't know yet the extent or scope of His direction, but I wasn't spared without purpose or consequence.

– Paul Ling
Savage, MN

Jesus in Israel

We feel happy and blessed to be living in the village of Korazim overlooking the Sea of Galilee. When we came to Israel forty-three years ago, we didn't know of any Messianic congregations, although there were a few believing Jews who kept low profiles. Now there are scores of congregations and home groups believing in Jesus all over the country and openly worshipping together. Praise the Lord!

We've lived here through several wars, and we know more troublesome times are ahead. Islam is out to conquer the world. Without realizing it, Israel's enemies quote Psalm 83:4: "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more." When they demonstrate, they chant "First the Saturday people [meaning Jews], and then the Sunday people

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! (Psalm 106:1).

[meaning Christians].” We are all in this together, and we are not alone: God will have the victory!

– *Adolph and Fern Fauth
Korazim, Israel*

Little red box

Not long ago, Pastor Ken Knoll and his wife gave each church family a little red box, cards with the names of each member, and blank cards for us to add family and friends. I also put a set of Scripture cards in the box and placed it on our mantel at home. Over time I’ve added names to the prayer box, including Pioneer Missionary Training team members and people I met in Mexico.

As part of our morning routine, my husband, Raymond, and I read a Scripture from the box aloud, then pray for the person or family whose name we draw from the box. This gives us the start we need each day at home.

– *Mary Dell Wallace
Eugene, OR*

Childlike faith

An example of God’s special care that I have never forgotten happened when I was playing in a shed at my grandpa’s farm. A swarm of bees gathered around the door, and there was no other way out. I got scared waiting for them to leave and decided to pray. I asked Jesus to please take them away. When I opened my eyes, not a single bee was in sight! This was the first time I had ever asked God for anything specific. Forty years later, my desire is to recapture the same childlike faith for all God’s promises.

– *Sylvia Jerome
Walker, IA*

Twenty-year extension

Sometime in 1980, while we were expecting our sixth child, my husband, Melvin, began having chest pains. He would not go to a doctor. “I have the best Doctor there is!” he would say, meaning God. No

amount of begging changed his mind.

As a stay-at-home mom with no skills to work elsewhere, I felt desperate and begged God to let Melvin live. Remembering Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:1ff), I prayed and fasted for God to extend Melvin’s life twenty more years. *That will be enough for the baby to survive losing his father*, I thought. Melvin’s pains stopped, and the baby came – our sixth boy. Seven years later, God gave us our seventh son.

In the mid-90’s, Melvin’s health began to deteriorate. He asked God to let him die, but it wasn’t his time. On November 24, 2000, he did pass away – twenty years and four months after I had prayed that request! “Let [us] give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men” (Psalm 107:21, NIV).

– *Joy Miller
St. Joseph, MO*

Hope and comfort

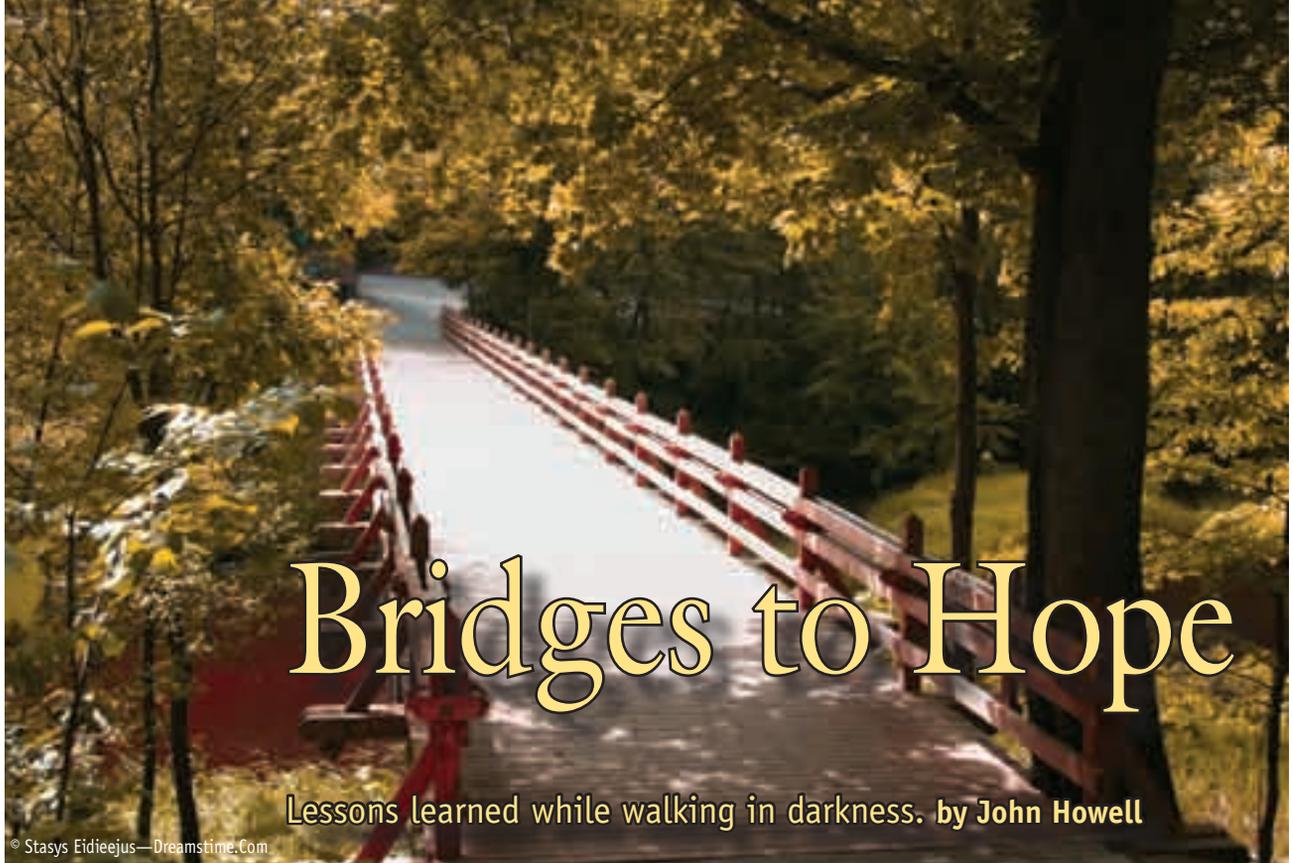
My parents raised me with atheistic, or agnostic, views. I was never exposed to Christianity. Growing up, I thought I was doing everything the proper way until, at age eighteen, I found myself in jail for the first time. I was coming down from a strong dose of LSD and realizing that I was being charged with the murder of my family.

Crushed with guilt, I found no peace. I hated myself; I hated life.

When Larry Marrs came to visit me in prison, I started picking up a Bible again, mostly from curiosity. In it I found a glimmer of hope and comfort. One day I realized that I did believe in God and that Jesus died for me. Confessing my sins, I felt His presence and love wash over me. My spiritual journey has been bumpy and difficult, but I have truly been blest by God and willingly submit myself to whatever plan He has for me today – and tomorrow.

– *Seth Privacky (inmate)
Ionia, MI*

continued on page 26



Bridges to Hope

Lessons learned while walking in darkness. by John Howell

I've gone through different kinds of suffering in my life. In grade school, I felt as though I was suffering when picked last for the baseball team. As an adult, I suffered when my Dad died.

You too have experienced varieties of hurt and loss. Your plans don't always work out. Your hopes are not always realized. Your body tells you something is wrong. Someone you love dies or is injured. Someone or something disappoints you.

Trouble and sorrow are integral parts of being human — and of being alive. Though I have no perfect answers, I've learned some things by walking through the darkness and helping others walk there (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

The word *suffering* is often associated with physical, emotional, or spiritual pain. This pain may come because something isn't right or because of something we said or did that was right. Every person's "take" on suffer-

ing is somewhat subjective, and it changes over time and circumstance. Suffering also varies as to intensity and type.

Yet what affects our lives isn't so much what *causes* suffering as how we choose to *respond* to it. Some people assign God all the blame when things go wrong. What determines our response to suffering?

Meaning

Viktor Frankl, a survivor of the Holocaust, wrote that the search for meaning is the primary motivational force in human beings. If we can figure out a "why" to survive, we will figure out a "how." Suffering without meaning often results in despair; suffering with meaning leads to hope.

Meaning makes us well, but meaninglessness makes us sick. To find meaning in our suffering is part of the healing process. If we find no meaning or purpose for the pain, healing is much more difficult.

Trust

A promising young man is hit by a drunken driver and severely injured. A young mother dies suddenly after contracting a rare disease. A middle-aged pastor who loves Christ and the church is diagnosed with an aggressive cancer. If neither reason nor faith finds rationale for our suffering, then how do we bridge that great divide separating despair from hope? How do we cope when suffering and loss make no sense?

The leap of faith to trust, even when we do not understand, is the bridge to hope.

A friend of mine fell off a ladder onto concrete and pulverized her ankle. She has had many surgeries and rehab. A year later, she articulated three things she learned through sufferings. "I never knew how much I was loved. I learned empathy for others. I've certainly learned more about trusting God." For her, this became the bridge to hope.

This I have learned: God is a very present help in trouble, and He does not forsake us even in the valley of the shadow of death. God makes suffering bearable. In the times of deepest pain, I have felt God the nearest. In *No Wonder They Call Him Savior*, Max Lucado writes:

The next time you are called to suffer, pay attention. It may be the closest you'll ever get to God. . . . It could very well be that the hand that extends itself to lead you out of the fog is a pierced one (p. 133).

Gratitude

When my sister-in-law died unexpectedly at twenty-five, leaving behind a grieving husband and an infant daughter, our whole family was shaken. I found hope and consolation in Pastor John Claypool's book *Tracks of a Fellow Struggler: How to Handle Grief*.

Shortly after Claypool's eight-year-old daughter, Laura Lue, was diagnosed with acute leukemia, he told his congregation that the Cross and the Resurrection form the basis of hope when we face evil. God has already overcome evil and even uses it for good. In Claypool's words:

I am staking my life on the belief that our present calamity will not end in darkness. Laura Lue may suffer, she may even die, but God will bring her through, and us also. And out of whatever happens he will not be overcome but will somehow turn this evil to his purpose and in it all bring light out of darkness (p. 37).

Pastor Claypool moved on in courage. But after she had responded to treatment, Laura

Lue suffered relapse. Again her pastor-dad spoke on the question "Does Faith Make a Difference?" He told his congregation that, by God's grace, he still had his spiritual equilibrium.

All I am doing is walking and not fainting, hanging in there, enduring with patience what I cannot change but have to bear (p. 62).

When his daughter died, Pastor John struggled with how to move on. He cautioned his congregation not to speak to him as an authority on how to conquer grief. He needed believers to help him. And he told them how:

. . . do not counsel me not to question, and do not attempt to give me any total answer. Neither one of those ways works for me. The greatest thing you can do is to remind me that life is [a] gift — every last particle of it, and that the way to handle a gift is to be grateful. . . .

As I see it now, there is only one way out of this darkness — the way of gratitude. Will you join me in trying to learn how to travel that way? (p. 83).

For him, the way to hope was being grateful for what he had been given. He had not earned or deserved the gift of his daughter, and he chose to respond to that gift with gratitude.

Entering darkness

As a chaplain, my mission in life is to bring hope, healing, and encouragement to those I serve. It takes risk to go and sit with someone in his darkness. Usually we want to stand by the mouth of the cave and yell encouragement at the one in the darkness to come out. When we leave, he feels more alone and isolated than ever.

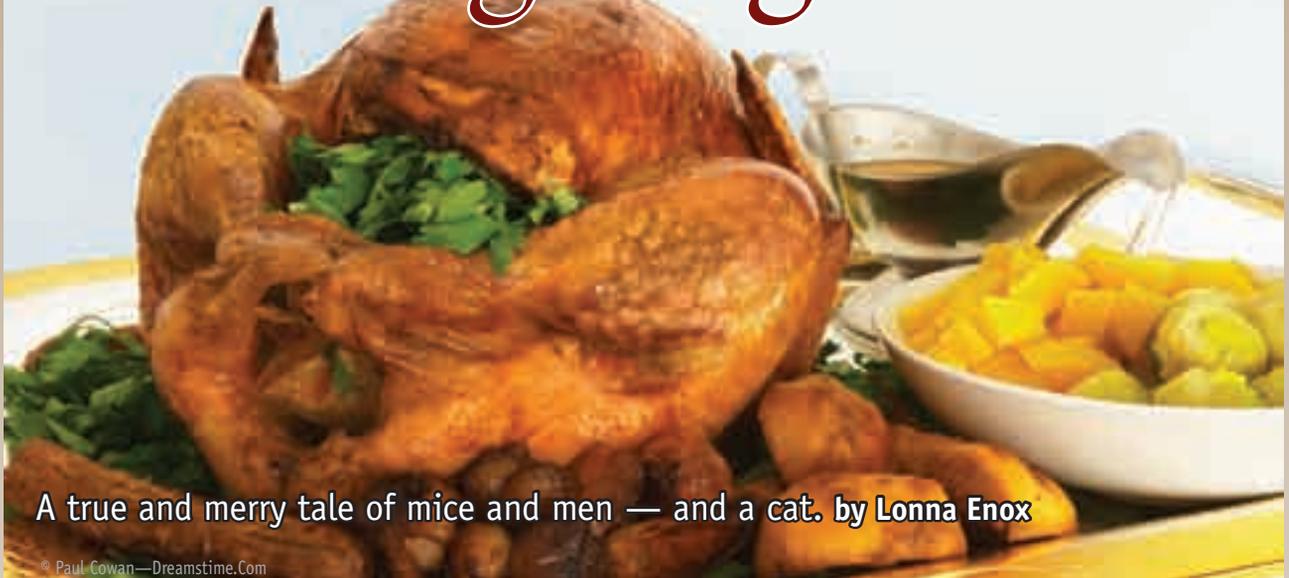
But if we can go into the darkness and be the presence of Christ there, in the dark place, if the grieving person can believe that we have not forsaken him, then maybe he can believe that God has not forsaken him either. And when we do leave, the awareness of Christ's presence will linger with the person, and that will bring him hope, healing, and encouragement — gratitude! — in the midst of his suffering. 

Elder John Howell is certified with the Association of Professional Chaplains and serves as a hospice chaplain in Tacoma, WA.



**Some people assign
God all the blame
when things go wrong.**

Thanksgiving Basket



A true and merry tale of mice and men — and a cat. by **Lonna Enox**

© Paul Cowan—Dreamstime.Com

Garry and I had a perfect plan: We would marry in June, save our money through summer, then return for my last — and his first — semester of college. We had no monthly payments but rent, which would surely be cheap. My on-campus job and his G.I. Bill would pay for our small needs. I would graduate in only five months, get a great job, and he would finish his degree.

Life didn't have to be difficult, we reasoned, if you planned well.

As an English major, I should have remembered the oft-quoted "The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry." As a Christian, I'd also forgotten that our plans might not always be God's. But I was twenty-one and in love.

Glitches

Arriving in our college town, neither of us had considered that apartments in our price range

might be in short supply. We found ourselves turned away day after day. After living in our car and eating with a friend's parents for a week, we found it: the upstairs apartment in the home of an eighty-eight-year-old lady. It was more expensive than we had planned, but by eating less, we could manage. She even agreed, reluctantly, to Buttons, our kitten "wedding gift." One small glitch in our budget wasn't so bad, we thought.

We didn't expect a couple of other "small" glitches: Garry's G.I. Bill check was delayed, and the front of our car was smashed one Saturday. We drew from savings to pay the towing fee, and the car was promised in a week. At least the weather was still warm, we laughed, so we could walk the thirteen blocks to school.

The laughter died in early November, two months later, when our car's manufacturer

was still on strike and the garage could not repair ours. Cold, drizzly fall weather challenged our optimism.

My part-time job in the alumni office and Garry's work-study in the computer center paid the rent, but food was scarce. We bought the weekly specials at the nearby grocery: kidney beans once, sauerkraut the next. Buttons ate whatever we ate until these items appeared. Then he started hunting his own meals: mice that scampered around the old house at night. Soon Buttons became a favorite source of entertainment for both our elderly landlady and us as he played with his "food." The more we laughed, the more he clowned.

Embarrassing visit

The following week, the pastor and deacon from a neighborhood church we had attended dropped by one evening. Opening the door, I was pleased yet



Buttons sped through the door, skidded right over to the minister's feet, and dumped a terrified mouse on his shoe.

horrified at seeing my apartment through their eyes. The yellow paint almost hid the naked lady an art student before us had painted on the wall facing the door. I seated them on the lumpy couch with their backs to it anyway. Both graciously accepted coffee, so I brewed the last scoop, casually mentioning that we were out of cream. "I like mine black," the pastor smiled. "Where are you kids from?"

Conversation flowed easily until the end of their visit. I heard an unwelcome sound.

"What's that?" one of them asked.

"Buttons," I replied quickly, getting up to close the door leading to the kitchen. "He's playful."

I wasn't quick enough. Buttons sped through the door, skidded right over to the minister's feet, and dumped a terrified mouse on his shoe. When the mouse raced up the minister's slacks leg, he jumped up, spilling his coffee

in the deacon's lap. Buttons, confused at our horror (we'd always laughed at his antics until now), attempted to follow the mouse up the minister's leg.

Unbelievably, the two men burst into loud laughter anyway, chased the confused mouse in an effort to reclaim it, and good-naturedly refused our offer of a cleaning bill. I knew then that we had found our church.

Anonymous provision

Thanksgiving arrived and several people invited us to share with them, but we needed to do some day work we'd seen offered in the Laundromat. The evening before Thanksgiving, we discovered a huge basket at our front door filled with all the makings of dinner for us — and several cans of cat food for Buttons.

"This looks wonderful," my young husband said. "But I've never said anything about how

poor we are to the church people. Why would they leave this for us?"

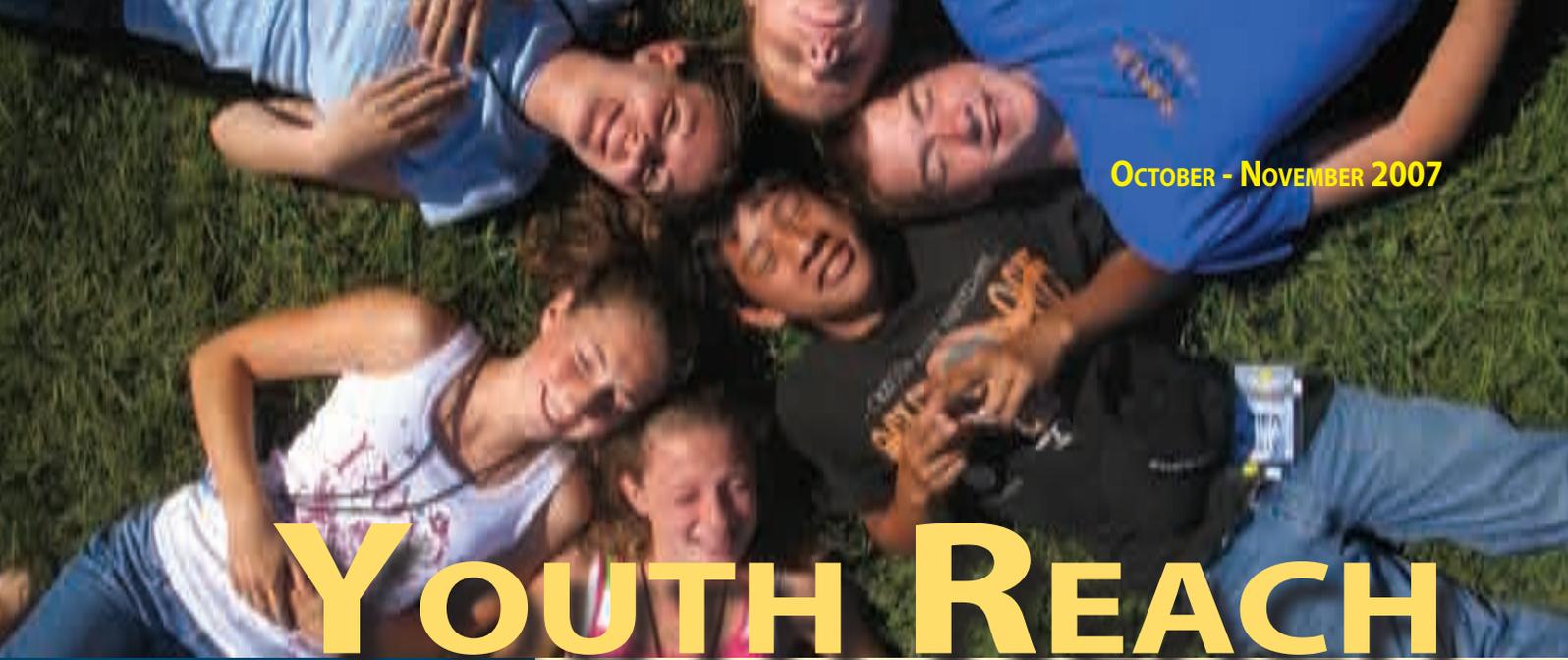
Snuggling a contentedly full cat, I replied, "The note inside said that since His eye is on the sparrow, it surely is also on a resourceful orange cat."

Through the years that followed, Garry and I found great joy in giving Thanksgiving baskets of our own. When I would find a person who needed that small helping hand, we'd head to the store to shop. Garry always stopped by the pet food aisle, thinking there just might be a cat God was watching out for.

BA

Lonna Enox
writes from
Roswell, NM.





OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2007

YOUTH REACH

Don't forget . . .

- Youth Rally in Harrisburg, OR, October 12-14
- National FYC Fall Challenge, October 20; nfyc@cog7.org
- Youth Congress in Pharr, TX, November 17
- Youth Rally in Owosso, MI, November 17
- SWD Winter Youth Retreat in Midlothian, TX, December 27-30

In His Shadow

by Kurt Lang
NFYC Director

"Dad, where's my shadow?" comes the question from my son, Jordan. Sometimes we play shadow tag or other games while we walk.

I look down where his shadow should be, and sure enough — it isn't there! The answer, of course, is that he walks next to me and that my longer shadow totally covers his. He is walking — hiding — in my shadow.

I learn to love God more in moments like these as He uses simple experiences to teach me rich lessons. On this day, my heavenly Father reminds me of His purpose for my life: that I walk close enough to Him so people will see more of Him and less of me.

I want people to see not my shadow but the image of the Father who walks with me, shelters me with His love, and shares His protection.

May our lives so match the character of God that even strangers can see Jesus in us. To bring Him glory: that's our purpose in life. It's a tall shadow to fill; His image will always be the greater and ours the lesser. Any success we may find will be overshadowed by His love and grace.

Your challenge is to daily submit to God's image and plan, knowing what the world tries to offer you apart from God's protecting shadow. Only the stuff from God will last. You can hold tight to that hope and promise as you stay in His shadow.

God chose you to walk with Him, and He daily chooses you. As you step out into today's unknown, you need not walk alone. Walk in the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1), and you will find the peace and meaning you seek.



Sis-Q Meadows Youth Camp

The theme was “Life is a Highway.” We learned that life goes on whether we like it or not and that our decisions affect not only us, but everyone around.

The girls’ teacher, Karen Curran, challenged us to think in a different light. She spoke about all aspects of relationships and let us share opinions.

At fireside one night, a storyteller spoke on warning signs and detours in life. Using red flags, he said people often leave red flags behind to warn of what’s ahead, but we don’t always pay attention to them. Larry Zaragoza taught us that we need to rely on God and let Him be the ruler of our lives.

Fourteen campers were baptized at Sis-Q, and seven more went home for bap^{.org}

New York Family Camp

The Manhattan church hosted this camp at Kittatinny Campgrounds in Barryville, August 3-5. The theme was “Help Me Find My Place.” Among the seminars was a presentation to youth by Kirk Grant entitled “Who Am I?”

One camp tradition is a men’s nature hike in which men climb to what has become known as “Wisdom Rocks.” There the adult men offer counsel to the young men through personal testimonies and lessons learned in living for Christ. The women hiked to the riverbank for Darlene Wiedenheft’s teaching on “The Virtuous Woman.”



Next issue . . .

“Oh, my God!” Just another meaningless slang term popular in our culture? Or did you just take the Lord’s name in vain, for which He will hold you accountable? Read about it in the next issue of **Youth Reach!**



That night, several CoG7 singers and musicians presented a public concert at the campgrounds pavilion, and many other campers nearby were drawn to listen. Some of the visitors stayed and talked with Church members. ^{.org}

— Mark Sullivan

Michigan Youth Camp

Great weather, great staff, and 73 great campers combined for a great week of camp near Middleville, July 15-22. In this photo, Paul Coulson (with Bible) prepares to baptize Richard Keely, assisted by camp director Rex Miller. Jaime Rodriguez waits to be baptized by Bruce Noble.

Mail Bag

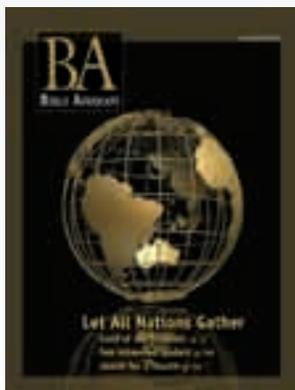
June: plus and minus

When I got the June BA, I was the happiest man on the planet for everything written therein. God is using some good men and women to reach out to many in the world. Thanks for being here for me.

J. C.
Nigeria

I was amazed at your wishy-washy answer to the question of unnatural sex ["Q & A," p. 7]. I've shared the BA with others but would be ashamed to share this with anyone. Until you learn to take a stand as Isaiah 58:1 says, cancel my subscription.

J. A.
Lancaster, PA



Symbol of the cross

Does God accept pagan symbols if we have good intentions [July-August '07, "Q & A," p.7]? He is more interested in our obedience than in our good intentions. God instructed Israel on worship and warns against "every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes" (Deut. 12:8). He told them not to inquire how others worship their gods, then do the same to God Almighty (vv. 30, 31). What makes us think that if we use a pagan symbol (the cross) and just

think of Jesus' sacrifice, it will be OK? Although Aaron dedicated the golden calf to God (Ex. 32:1-6), God was not pleased. Using a pagan symbol with good intentions does not make it less pagan.

L. R.
Houston, TX

The Church is soft on paganism and hard on denominational doctrine. Why should God's people want Babylonian symbols hanging from their necks? Accepting the pagan cross as a Christian symbol could be the snare and the abomination of Deuteronomy 7:25, 26. God remembers Babylon and the beginning of worship to a false god. As for me and my house, we will not call the cross a precious symbol; we call it pagan.

T. and C. B.
Pocahontas, AR

The serpent pole was to teach Israel to obey and point to the saving grace of Jesus. It can't be compared to the pagan cross symbol in any way. What God commands is not prohibited; the second commandment is all about what man dreams up (Ex. 20:4, 5). The church from the second century and on, with their images and symbols, was not the same church that the apostles founded. A pure church must guard against false doctrines.

T. C.
Oshawa, Ontario

Editor's reply: Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Though the everlasting gospel of His cross was hijacked by false religion even before He came and is foolish to many after His resurrection, it is the power of God

to us who are being saved (1 Cor. 1:18). Do we really want to insist that the death instrument of our Lord is essentially a pagan thing? If it once was, then we rejoice that He disarmed His foes when He was nailed to that pagan stake, where He defeated their lies in God's grace and truth (Col. 2:14b, 15). Now it is a Christian cross we boast of, not the erstwhile pagan version (Gal. 6:14).

Those who are convicted that displaying a cross symbol displeases the Lord should not violate their consciences. Others feel no such restraint, though subject to the Word and Spirit, and are at liberty in this matter according to Romans 14:22, 23 and 1 Corinthians 8.

Bearing fruit

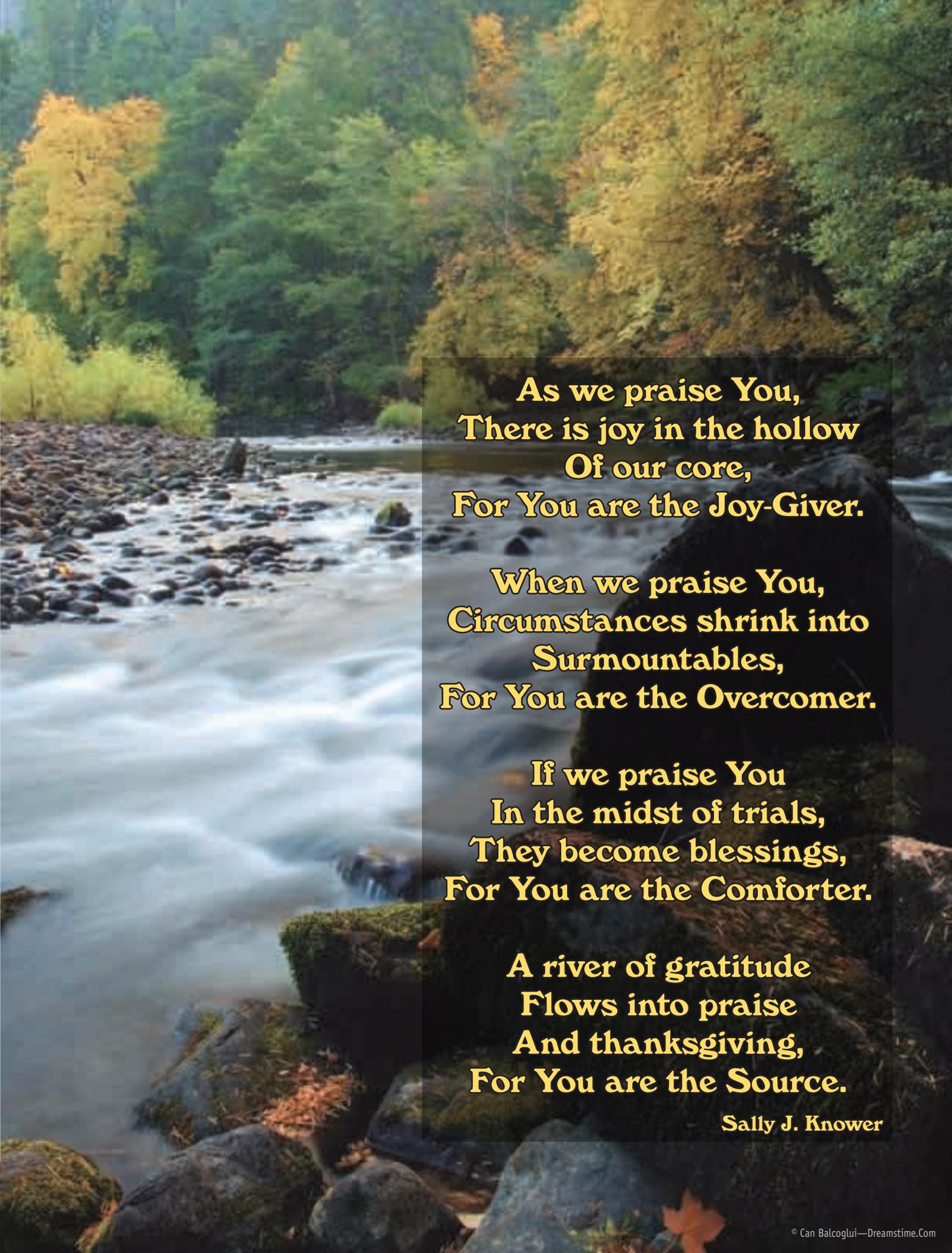
As a teen in the seventies, I received the BA. Loved the poems and still have one in my Bible. Now the Lord has allowed me to rediscover the BA through *The Sabbath Sentinel*, published by Bible Sabbath Association. SDA friends challenged me to search God's Word about the Sabbath. We've been keeping it for three years now and have been so blessed! My early exposure to the BA planted a seed that has now sprouted and born fruit. Thank you for your faithful ministry.

C. K.
Lublin, WI

New heights

We enjoy the BA. We read every issue cover to cover. Every magazine teaches us something new. Through this BA, we are following up our Church activity in the world. We have reached new heights in Christ.

V. M.
Namadzi, Malawi



**As we praise You,
There is joy in the hollow
Of our core,
For You are the Joy-Giver.**

**When we praise You,
Circumstances shrink into
Surmountables,
For You are the Overcomer.**

**If we praise You
In the midst of trials,
They become blessings,
For You are the Comforter.**

**A river of gratitude
Flows into praise
And thanksgiving,
For You are the Source.**

Sally J. Kowner

Viewpoint

continued from page 15

person in the body of Christ will have a home for shelter, food to eat, and optimal healthcare. We call this social justice.

Liturgy is more than music and teaching or preaching. Because Acts and the Epistles stress living as a community, corporate worship should adhere to these principles of social justice, where the community ensures that each individual has what is necessary to exercise his/her social and spiritual functions. If a church lives this way together daily, then its liturgy will reflect a just culture by intentionally incorporating the entire community into its artistic expression and teaching.

Examine your liturgy and reflect on its underlying message. A communal liturgy will ensure that every talent is represented. Music will be one of many artistic expressions, and other artists will be sought and encouraged for their art as well. Let painters paint, writers write, dancers dance, and actors act.

Then look to teaching styles that promote community. Many teachers are discovering that peer learning and group discussions help students grasp content better than lectures do. Jesus used a Hebraic teaching style that employed these methods. If individualistic, consumerist practices are infiltrating the liturgy, the remedy may be as close as turning to one's neighbor during a song, finding joy in diverse worship expressions, or creating an environment of discussion.

More and more believers are rejecting mainstream culture by adopting values that promote authenticity, community, and heritage. Conversely, a spectacle-driven church that presents itself as individualistic, consumerist, and indifferent can push younger generations away. The reality is that emerging generations are avoiding or leaving churches that they regard as stuck in a rut.

People are searching for God. They want to know they are living for something bigger than the profanely mundane. The beauty of Christianity is that we, like the apostles, know where to find God. We find Him in Jesus: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

The early church found Jesus and shared Him through living out His way of life together. Paul reminds us of this when he teaches that the church is

"his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Ephesians 1:23). As the body of Christ, we must be sure that His way fills the church's culture. If we reflect His life in our church culture and express His way through our liturgy, then the church can show that greed, pride, and indifference do not rule this world. By loving each other, living together in humility, and providing for everyone's needs, we can remind this world that God still exists — and reigns!

Michael Flores attends and serves at the Willard St. church in San Antonio, TX. He and his wife, Victoria, are expecting their first baby in January. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.

We are So Blessed

continued from page 17

Help the children

Children in different countries are cold and sad. Some don't have parents, and some don't have a home or many clothes. They are tired and hungry. They need help, love, and patience. I pray for the poor people every night. We are blessed. We have food and water and shelter. We can serve the Lord. We need to tell them about Jesus. People risk their lives to learn about Jesus, and some die. A man in Indonesia has a smile on his face because he is doing God's work in jail. It will touch your heart when you sponsor one of them. It makes them happy. They write and send pictures; you pray for them. We need to sponsor them. Do it now.

— *Makaela Hawkins, age 9*
Jefferson, OR

Leaning on heaven's door

The Sabbath day, which started as a burden of the law for me, has transcended our six days of labor and the institutional church, and has become a true rest in Christ! I have never peered through heaven's door and glimpsed the coming glory, but each Sabbath I pause, lean against that door, and feel the love and warmth of the rest to come.

— *Jon Harvey*
South Amana, IA



What's new with . . .

Publications

- *Bible Wisdom for Daily Living* study begins Sabbath, October 6

MTS

- Online course in Foundations of Ministry: Calling; runs October 14-November 17; register through bfranks@cog7.org

National FYC

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

SWORD

- Retreat in Toppenish, WA, November 9-11; call 509-434-8985

Publications

Keith Michalak, Director

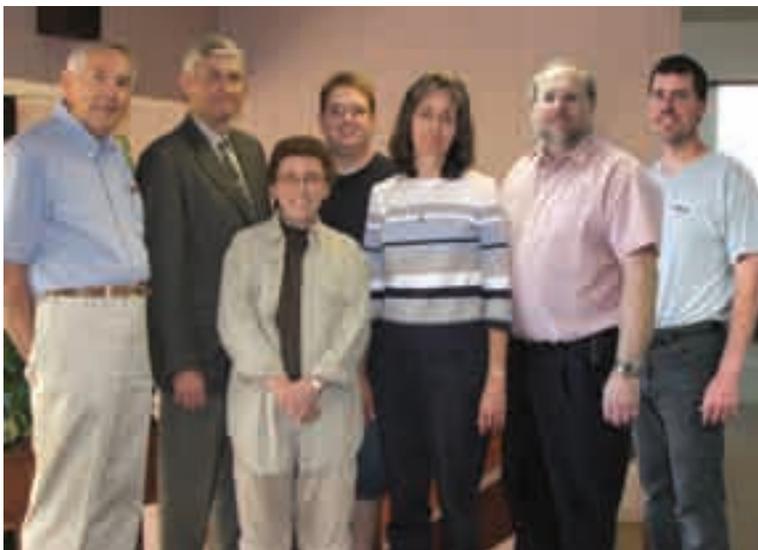
From humble beginnings in 1863, the Publications ministry has taken the teachings of the Bible as set down by the Church's Ministerial Council to publish articles, tracts, and quarterlies for study, teaching, and evangelism.

For the past thirty-seven years, the *Bible Advocate* has been blessed by the generosity of the Church and of its own readers to send the magazine to all who ask for it, without subscription charge. With the help of Missions Ministries, we send nearly 2,500 BA's per issue to more than eighty countries worldwide.

Our free literature program stretches around the globe, providing printed and online materials for personal growth, Bible study, and gospel witnessing.

Behind the word *free*, as you know, are always costs to someone. In this case, that *someone* is the reader like you who faithfully supports our endeavors to print materials that further the word of Jesus.

As a staff, we say thank you again for supporting Publications.



Left to right: LeRoy Dais, Calvin Burrell, Sherri Langton, Kyle Michalak, Linda Michalak, Keith Michalak, and Allan Stroupe.

Missions Ministries

As the year draws to a close,
we want to say

thank you

for faithfully
supporting these
G. C. Missions
Ministries . . .



. . . which include Disaster
Relief Fund, Cristo Viene,
Change for Your World, and
Medical Missions.

Thank You, Pastors!

October is Pastoral Appreciation Month, a good time to "Remember those who . . . have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7).

A year ago, the BA remembered ten CoG7 elders blest with longevity, ranging in age from 96 to 82, by publishing their photos. Now we expand the honor roll by listing names, residences, and birth years of twenty ordained ministers who have attained 76 or more years of life.

Lawrence Christenson - Independence, Missouri, 1910

- Kenneth Walker - Ft. Payne, Alabama, 1911
- Jesus Sandoval - Chicago, Illinois, 1915
- Harold Carlson - Springfield, Missouri, 1918
- Aaron Fauth - Union Gap, Washington, 1921
- Jesse Rodgers - Rudy, Arkansas, 1921
- Hubert Weekes - Inola, Oklahoma, 1922
- Manuel Rodriguez - Houston, Texas, 1922
- Delvin O'Banion - Denver, Colorado, 1924
- Roy A. Marrs - Lodi, California, 1924
- Raul Cervantes - Roseville, California, 1926
- Melvin Reuscher - Lodi, California, 1927
- Paul Heavilin - Muskegon, Michigan, 1927
- Wesley Walker - Ft. Smith, Arkansas, 1927
- Ben Coulson - Pochontas, Arkansas, 1927
- Hugh Butrick - Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1928



Spring Vale Academy welcomed 48 students to the Owosso, MI, campus on August 19, including 22 first-time enrollees. To apply for admission, to update the alumni registry, or to take a virtual tour of the campus, visit the new Web site: www.springvale.us.

Jose Garza - Houston, Texas, 1929
 Robert Coulter - Denver, Colorado, 1930
 Samuel Sanchez - Sacramento, California, 1930
 Joel Hernandez - Chicago, Illinois, 1931
 We appreciate these men, their wives, and their families!



Invitation to join . . .

The Editor's Circle assists in placing the printed gospel into people's hands for their salvation and spiritual growth.

- Has the *Bible Advocate* blessed you?
- Do you ask God to use the magazine to bless others also?
- Will you give \$60 or more per year (\$5 per month) to the BA so others can be blessed?

If you answered yes to these, please join the Editor's Circle. Your support will help us reach new BA readers with the grace and truth of Christ. Return this coupon.

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International Tour

Zambia

Interest in the Church is growing across the continent of Africa. The work in Zambia is an example of the progression from a contact relationship to becoming a member conference in our International Ministerial Congress (IMC).

The Republic of Zambia was formerly known as Northern Rhodesia until 1964. This landlocked country in south-central Africa borders the Congo and Tanzania in the north, Malawi and Mozambique in the east, Zimbabwe and Namibia in the south, and Angola in the west.

The Church in Zambia began in 2001 and established contact with Missions Abroad the next year. Since then, assistance has been sent by Disaster Relief Fund efforts and other small projects facilitated through Missions Abroad representatives John Njogu and Robert Crawford,

whose gospel efforts in east Africa are based in Nakuru, Kenya. Brother Njogu first traveled to Zambia in 2003 to encourage the brethren and ordain ministers there. Robert Crawford joined him at the 2005 Zambian CoG7 Conference meeting in Lusaka, where he taught extensively.

An ongoing project of Missions is to provide the roof for the Mikambo church and a bicycle for the Kamabende church pastor, funded by the '06 U.S./Canadian FYC Hunger Lock-In. Ongoing dialogue and training for leadership in southern and



Gloucester church in England.

The conference in Zambia is based in Kitwe, near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. George Ntambo, who served as representative to the recent IMC in Overland Park, Kansas — where Zambia was accorded full membership — also serves as national overseer. Brother F. Ngwenya holds the post of national secretary.

The Zambian church currently counts twelve congregations, 602 baptized members, five ordained pastors, four lay pastors, and approximately 1,300 church attendees. We pray God's continued blessing to strengthen and encourage the churches in Africa. Anyone wishing to support these efforts may contact Missions Abroad Director Bill Hicks at carlylehix@aol.com or call 423-546-0374.



eastern Africa are sponsored by Missions Abroad and the Cristo Viene Missionary Support Fund, and they receive support from the

The Rest of the Story

Many in today's culture are becoming increasingly aware of the essential value of Sabbath rest. They're discovering that the reason God rested on the seventh day of Creation is not that He was tired but rather that, looking down the annals of history, He saw a tired world desperately in need of rest. By resting, God underscored the sacred rhythm of life: work, followed by rest and delight. By following the example of our Creator, we improve both our quality of life and the meaning of our work.

It is intriguing, therefore, to observe this fresh awakening to the concept of Sabbath. It is quickly becoming a subject of much interest in health journals, in-flight magazines, books, seminars, and conferences. Setting aside a portion of time for rest, reflection, and relationship is a new wave in our culture. The concept is so simple, yet so profound. I like to refer to it as "the rest of the story" – the story about a God who is real, wise, and interested in the details of our lives, including our schedules and our physical and emotional well-being.

This trend provides a unique ministry opportunity, particularly for Christians with a strong Sabbath tradition. In fact, I believe that the Church of God (Seventh Day) has been divinely poised for this moment. God has confirmed this by inspiring us to a new project called the Sabbath Experience. Its focus is twofold. First, it helps Sabbath observers fully embrace the blessings and benefits of Sabbath rest. Second, it points the restless world around us to God's gift of physical rest on the Sabbath and thereby to His gift of spiritual rest in Christ, whom the Sabbath symbolizes.

The Sabbath Experience is designed to help people enter more fully into the rest of God: loving God through time set aside for worship and prayer, uninterrupted by schedules and activities; loving others through service, outreach, and authentic relationships; strengthening marriage and family – connecting with others; loving ourselves by rest-

ing, celebrating the gift of life, and caring for our bodies; pointing people to the God who made them (creation), to the Christ who died for them (redemption), and to the promise of ultimate rest from a world broken by sin (eternity).

The Sabbath Experience toolbox will include materials that explain Sabbath from the perspective of grace. Bible studies, Sabbath school curriculum, sermon notes, DVD's for church use, sample television ads, links to Web pages, and weekly e-mail testimonies from worshippers about their Sabbath Experience will be part of the package.

This opportunity comes with its challenges. First, we will need to intelligently answer objections from without. Despite the culture's awakening to it, some object to Sabbath observance because of supposed legalism and other concerns. Second, we will address issues from within. Celebrating our Sabbath heritage without speaking to the misguided notions that often surround it would be to our detriment. Third, we will develop a clear Sabbath theology, consistent with the new covenant. There is more to Sabbath than rules. Our hope is not in observing a day; it is in Christ.

Finally, we must find creative ways to package and share the gift of the Sabbath with a tired world in need of rest and redemption.

To that end, I commend the Sabbath Experience to you. The General Conference is pleased to present this age-old truth in a new and fresh way. If you've observed the Sabbath for any length of time, I invite you, as in the cornflakes commercial, to "Try it again for the first time." If Sabbath is new to you, I pray you'll discover "the rest of the story."

– *Whaid Guscott Rose*
General Conference President



Reflections



*“The harvest is past, the summer is ended . . . ”
(Jeremiah 8:20). Our camps and conference sites are mostly empty now, and we are full with memories. The seeds of faith, hope, and love planted in many hearts have taken root and are growing. Let us pray for the dozens of youth who were baptized this year, and love them to maturity in Christ.*



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