

June 2008



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In the June issue of *Now What?*: release from an emotionally abusive marriage (<http://nowwhat.cog7.org>)

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On Relations — Human and Divine



For me, late spring and summer is a
 terrific time of year. Family birthdays,
 anniversaries, and reunions accent this busy and beautiful season.

God's calendar holds many good days for those who turn from
 speaking evil to seeking peace; read it in 1 Peter 3:8-11. To prepare
 for good times ahead, why not drain cranky and selfish stuff from our
 souls today and refill with family, friends, forgiveness, fun, and faith.

Good and bad times are mostly written in relationships, it seems,
 and relations are mostly learned at home. That's why marriage bonds,
 parent-child ties, and sibling links are so vital. You can endure tough
 times abroad or face them ahead and go on smiling — if you are happy
 at home. More than motel and filling station, home and family are all
 about being firmly connected to those we love most.

In what sense do we relate with God, if at all? Many people give wit-
 ness to a personal link-up with the Lord, which may be understood sim-
 ply as another word for *faith*. To believe in the Divine is to be attached
 to Him in a personal way, though in varying degrees. Likewise, is it not
 obvious that for a Christian to enter personal relationship with another
 human is just another name for *love*?

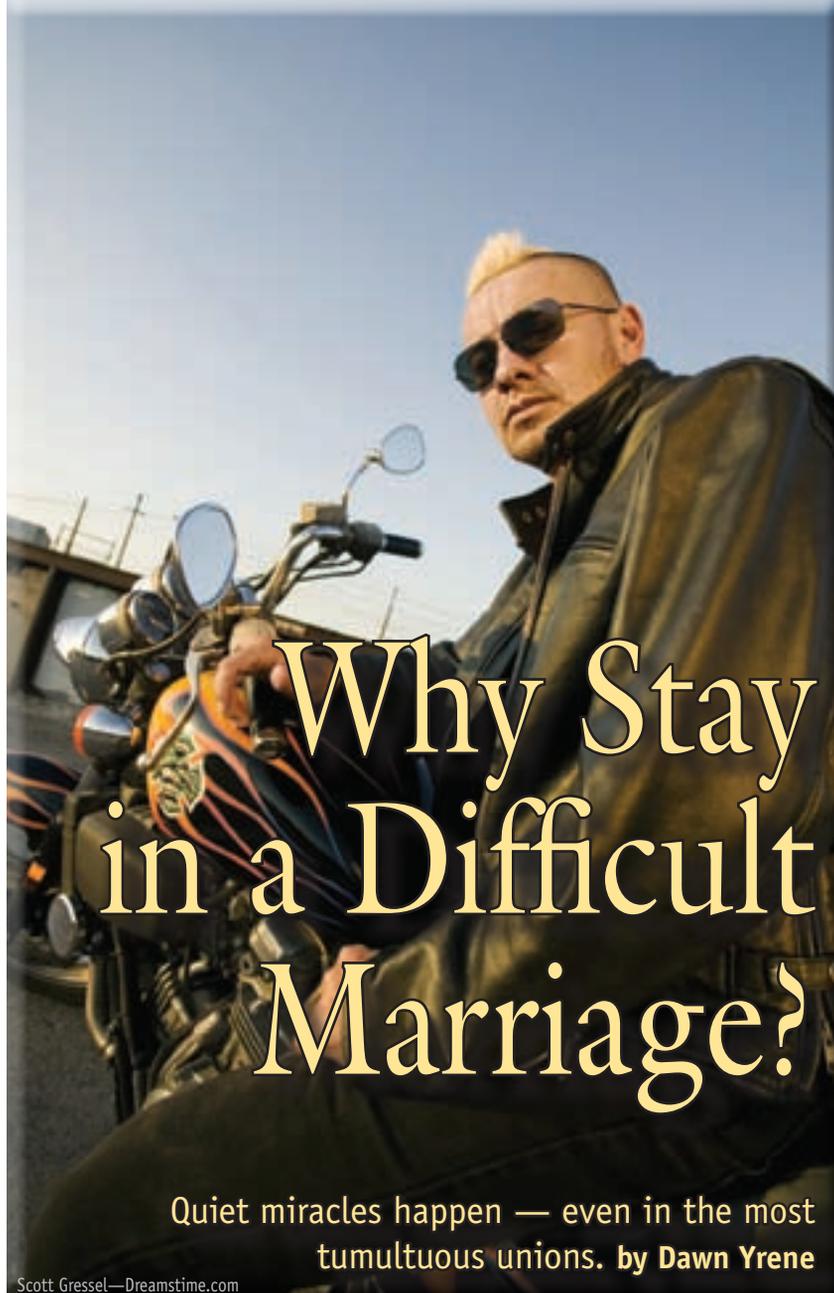
Relational people are made in God's image, so there must be
 something relational about Him. If the eternal, unchangeable God has
 always been love, how could He have been alone before the creation?
 Can true love exist without an object? Does not love require expres-
 sion and an opportunity to be returned?

We've heard it said that God created man because He was lonely
 and needed someone to love, but the thought of an eternally perfect,
 self-sufficient, and loving Creator makes that unlikely. Isn't this fair evi-
 dence for a preexistent Son, ever with His Father in heaven?

Reflections of God's bi-unity also show up in the marriage bond,
 where two persons live as one flesh in common humanity. Unity and
 union: uni-plural words that imply two or more beings, or persons, co-
 existing in essential oneness. Is not this the reality of God and the ideal
 of marriage?

At a wedding this month or an anniversary gala this summer, re-
 member this: A lasting marriage is the union of two good forgivers.
 Then thank God: That's exactly who we have in heaven: two good
 forgivers!

— Calvin Burrell



“Divorce *isn't* the unforgivable sin,” my friend hinted, not so subtly. I had just expressed my deep remorse over marrying a man with whom I had little in common.

Kevin and I had been proof that opposites attract. He was the wild type — a tattooed, leather-clad biker. His first love had been his Harley until he met Christ six months before meeting me. To be honest, Jesus and Harley still vied for first place. His closet was filled with spare parts, and the motorcycle “herself”

rested in the middle of his living room when not in use.

I, on the other hand, was a straight-laced evangelical who listened to Christian music, worked a Christian job, and spoke Christianese. I had my own idols, though; and at age twenty-six, marriage was becoming one of them.

We met at a Christian singles' retreat. When it was over, I had found a new friend in Kevin, but “that's all,” I assured myself. We were too different ever to be more. When Kevin asked for my

phone number, I was surprised. Our next outing was a rainy Fourth of July fishing trip. We returned soaked but with a pleasant memory. What little Kevin said was often about the Bible. As a baby Christian, he had a refreshing realness about him and brought fresh perspectives to life — especially my spiritual life. We began attending Bible study and praying together.

After a few months, he proposed. Despite the good memories we were making, we were also starting to disagree often. Illogically, I assured myself that marriage would make us “one” on children, spending, and many other significant differences between us.

Till trials do us part?

Marriage only magnified our differences. Kevin began to take his eyes off Jesus, and my response to his changes did the same to me. We were looking to each other to fill the empty places only Christ can fill — a form of idolatry. We fought regularly. Though Kevin could say sweet things, he also knew how to make me feel low — even abused. I was surprised to see myself, the “good little Christian,” becoming hateful and vengeful. I began pondering my friend's advice. *What if I married the wrong person? Why stay married if it's all about fighting? Why be unhappy when a simple divorce means freedom? After all, Christians aren't perfect.*

Amid this, a still, small voice kept reminding me of what I had prayed shortly before meeting Kevin. “Lord, instead of looking for a man who fits my list of wants, give me to a man who

needs me as his helper, as Adam needed Eve.” Despite our differences, Kevin needed a helper, and the helper God had selected was me. And I needed Kevin — to balance me, challenge me, and cause me to trust God. Through the painful trials of marriage, God was purifying me, teaching me to obey even when it wasn’t comfortable, and rewarding me in quiet ways only I could see.

Good reasons

Fifteen years and five children later, my difficult marriage has brought happiness I never imagined and pain I never knew I could endure. Kevin has a growing relationship with Christ, as do I. Idolatry has been replaced by awe over God’s forgiveness. Brokenness and thankfulness have replaced abusive language and behavior. Answered prayer has turned a marriage that was an embarrassment to God’s kingdom into a testimony of His power.

Kevin and I are still more like black and white than gray. We need Christ to hold us together. But our roller coaster ride has shown me that, contrary to worldly opinion, there are good reasons for staying in a difficult marriage. Here are some.

Learning to rejoice. Many situations make us feel trapped: nagging temptations, a tormented past, sickness, poverty, loneliness — or a troublesome marriage. The apostle Paul showed us what to do when there’s no way out: While in prison, he worshipped God (Acts 16:25). Being bound to an incompatible spouse needn’t stop us from thanking God, experiencing peace, and receiving His gifts daily. Divorc-

ing my husband would have exchanged one prison for another: the trap of bitterness and unforgiveness. Could I, like Paul, rejoice in my prison cell?

Better people. Without suffering, who would we be? David lived a life of warfare, moving from one battle to the next. Yet David worshipped so joyfully that he ignited a revival throughout Israel. His son Solomon, in contrast, received from his father a productive and peaceful kingdom. He enjoyed wealth, wisdom, and whatever he wanted. Yet Ecclesiastes suggests that Solomon’s easy life led him to depression, cynicism, and weak faith.

Strengthened prayer life. God wants people to stay married, yet He hasn’t made that road particularly easy. It’s only by crying out to God in our inadequacy that difficult marriages can change and grow. Isaiah 64:4, 5 says:

No eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways.

With this incentive, I’ve learned to pray for everything from simple blessings at home to complicated requests, such as how to communicate so Kevin will understand. I’ve even learned to pray things I don’t really want

to pray, such as for me to recognize my sin and for God to change me into the wife Kevin needs. My marriage is undeniably better when I pray for my spouse.

Lessons in forgiveness. If there’s one thing marriage has taught me, it’s how to seek and grant forgiveness. Kevin, who had suffered through two divorces as an unbeliever, recently told me how freeing it is to ask forgiveness and receive it. In his previous marriages, the word *forgiveness* was never mentioned.

In our marriage, the times forgiveness has been hardest have also been the times I have seen God’s rewards in the most amazing ways. When I truly forgive Kevin for hurts he regrets causing, his love for me grows. In the same way, I love him more when he sets me free from the debts I owe him.

Often it comes down to a simple choice: Will I hold on to bitterness, or will I love Jesus enough to put another person’s needs before my own — even if that person has wounded me to the core? Will I be kind to a spouse who doesn’t return my kindness, because the Lover of my soul asks me to, or will I bale out? If he is a gift from God — a *part* of my walk with Christ, someone who can test my love

The times forgiveness has been hardest have also been the times I have seen God’s rewards in the most amazing ways.

for God regularly — I will be able to forgive even when he seriously disappoints me.

Death to self. A difficult marriage can seem like a mistake, but it may not be. A spouse may be the best person to teach us to die to self (Mark 8:35). Males and females have different needs and wants when it comes to sex, communication — even TV preferences! In marriages where the list goes much further, including preferences in food (health vs. junk), holiday traditions, denominational affiliations, and cultural backgrounds, divorce may at times seem to be the right choice. But Proverbs 14:12 says that what seems right can lead to death. If we trust God, we can believe that divorce, while it may seem logical at times, would only destroy the good results God wants to produce in us.

God's restoration. Some couples divorce, saying it's impossible to love each other. But Jesus said, "All things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). Both Kevin and I have reached low points where it seemed we could never love each other again. Miraculously, our union has become such a team, such a friendship, and such a wonderful romance that we feel unworthy and amazed at God's ability to restore. Utter hatred can become

passionate love when we submit those feelings to God and when obedience overrides the desire of the moment.

Seeing the good. Every situation and person has good and bad aspects we can choose to focus on. When I wanted our yard fenced, Kevin felt we couldn't afford it. I wanted protection for our kids. Finally, he put up a six-foot chain link fence — *after* I told him I didn't like chain link. Years later, looking at that fence, I can feel angry at my husband's choice, or I can thank God that Kevin sacrificed time, sweat, and money to keep our children safe. I can also remember that we often *think* we've communicated clearly, when our spouse heard a completely different message. Maybe Kevin didn't realize that chain link was that big a deal to me. Maybe it was on sale. Maybe he tuned out during that part of the conversation. When marriage is tough, there's still an opportunity to find my spouse's good qualities and thank God for them, despite the imperfections.

Marriage by the Book

In an age when counselors tell us to get out of "poisonous relationships" and well-meaning friends say divorce is OK, I remember the words of an old, yet living Book. It's not really

about marriage to a man but to the Bridegroom. If I love *Him*, I'll obey by loving my spouse. In doing that, I find — strangely — that my difficult marriage can become a delight. And while God doesn't promise that, He does ask if I am willing to die so I can find real life in losing mine. I admit such obedience doesn't come easily.

Thankfully, Kevin's Harley no longer resides in the living room. He sold it a year after we married to pay bills from our daughter's birth. Now we have a cat and five rowdy children in its place. Lately Kevin has been browsing the Internet for another motorcycle. I don't know what I'd do if he brought it into our living room. But with God's help, we've made it over enough hurdles that I hope we wouldn't let a little thing like that get in the way of a happy marriage. With all our differences, we make too good a team for that.

In fact, I've come to believe that differences and difficulties are a recipe for truly great marriages. Differences may make marital harmony more difficult to achieve. But when two people with varying strengths come together, wanting to obey God and allowing Him to be strong where they are weak, the marriage that results becomes a powerful force for good in this world and a great reason for unbelievers to believe.

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Dawn Yrene writes from Tijeras, NM. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

Divorce, while it may seem logical at times, would only destroy the good results God wants to produce in us.

Questions & Answers

Q Does the Church believe in speaking in tongues?

A The gift of tongues — i.e., speaking in unlearned languages — was a super-normal work of the Spirit in the New Testament church. Though mysterious, the gift served a dual purpose for early Christians. On one hand, tongues in the book of Acts were primarily evangelistic, needed no interpretation, and resulted in conversions. On the other hand, tongues discussed in 1 Corinthians were devotional in nature, needed interpretation, and often resulted in confusion, not conversion.

In Acts 2:1ff we find the first purpose of tongues. Here the apostles preached to the diverse group assembled for Pentecost. No translator was needed that day in Jerusalem. Either the apostles received miraculous help to speak languages they never learned, or their native speech was transformed by the Spirit between their mouths and the hearers' ears: All present received the words in their own language. This amazed the crowd and confirmed the apostles' witness about Jesus to the Jewish festival-goers, who spoke many languages. Many were converted and baptized that day, due considerably to the miracle of tongues. Other examples of tongues in Acts (10:46; 19:6) also contributed to the church's evangelistic enterprise.

In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul's essay on spiritual gifts — prophecy and tongues in particular — presents tongues-speaking of a whole different sort. Here the unlearned language refers to unintelligible utterances from worshippers who, momentarily overcome by devotional fervor, were compelled to speak uncertain sounds. Such displays, called "ecstatic speech," have been recorded across a broad range of religious traditions.

Regarding such tongues as were practiced in Corinth, Paul pens the fourteenth chapter to teach the value of plain, edifying speech (i.e., gift of

prophecy) above that of excited speech that inspires one and leaves others wanting clarity (i.e., gift of tongues). He places serious limits on this gift of "unknown tongues" in public worship and requires the presence of an interpreter for its exercise.

The possibility of speaking real but unlearned languages by the Spirit's power (as in Acts 2) still exists and is reported occasionally on mission fields. It is an axiom that such divine powers among Christian peoples are more often manifested in the earlier stages of their development than in their maturity.

However, the sort of tongues-speaking that arises from intimate communion and personal delight with God (as in 1 Cor. 12–14) is a more complex and controversial issue. The Christian community is divided as to its advisability. Pentecostals and other charismatics see tongues as the norm (within the limitations of 1 Cor. 14:27, 28) or even as a requirement for baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Other Jesus-followers stress the distinction between the tongues reported in Acts and those discussed in 1 Corinthians, and follow Paul in de-emphasizing the latter (1 Cor. 14:2ff). They know from chapter 12, verses 28-31 especially, that all Christians are not obligated to speak in tongues, that this gift is not to be sought above others, and that abuses often attend its practice. To avoid the confusion that Corinthian-style tongues introduce into the body (14:6-11, 23), they discourage its practice in the church's public worship. With this approach, the Church of God (Seventh Day) largely agrees.

We acknowledge, however, the apostolic counsel that tongues-speaking must not be forbidden (14:39b). Any member has a right to practice ecstatic speech or "prayer language" as part of his/her personal devotion.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



The Money Factor

Keeping red ink from the marital bottom line.
by Kathryn Lay

We began our marriage as many couples do: long on love and short on cash. Our first financial problem began before we'd said our vows. Richard had two years left of college. We had spent all our savings on the wedding, honeymoon, and apartment set-up.

I got my first job close to home. We struggled, but survived. We learned to stretch our money, to live frugally, to search for bargains, and to buy-it-used.

Then it happened. Richard graduated and got his first teaching job. I worked part-time for a while. Suddenly, we were courted by credit card companies, and we accepted their invitations. We

bought a mobile home and furnishings to fill it.

We stopped living on a careful budget. If we saw it, we bought it. If we needed or desired it and didn't have the ready cash, we charged it.

When Richard lost his job, we were suddenly deep in debt and scared. That began a nearly twenty-year struggle with our finances. Yet through it all, our marriage stayed strong. We cried, yelled, got depressed. But rarely did we allow it to affect our relationship. If we hadn't toughed it out together and with God's strength, I wonder if we would have recently celebrated our twenty-second anniversary.

During our struggle, we watched a financial battle destroy the marriage of our close friends. More than being in debt, I feared losing Richard. In premarital counseling we'd learned how to discuss many issues. It was time to do some serious talking about this one.

We learned that one of the toughest stresses in a marriage is finances. And we followed five steps to surmount the financial challenges on our own.

Pray

First, we followed the instruction in James 5:13a: "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray."

We made a list of our debts and began to pray every day over them. We prayed for our fears, for ways to communicate with the debtors, for insights into how to solve our immediate problems and learn from our mistakes.

As we began paying off our debts, we crossed them off the list. Each one was a cause to celebrate.

Recognize problem areas

Our financial difficulties didn't come on suddenly. They were the result of a series of mistakes, emergencies, and bad decisions. We realized that we couldn't blame just one person; we both had made mistakes.

The worst thing I've watched in family and friends when financial troubles have struck is the blaming: "If she hadn't bought . . ." "If he made more money. . ."

Deborah McNaughton, founder of Professional Credit Counselors and author of *Financially*

Secure: An Easy-to-Follow Money Program for Women, suggests keeping a journal of where you spend your money. Understand your differences and plan around them. Take equal responsibility for managing your finances. Perhaps one of you is better organized and should pay the bills and balance the checkbook. The other may be better at finding ways to save money and staying strictly (but not obsessively) to the budget.

Pay attention to patterns. What issues repeatedly crop up? What attitudes and emotions are creating the behavior? How were your parents' money situations handled? Perhaps you reflect those uses, misuses, obsessions, or spendthrift ideas. Do you often spend out of revenge, depression, anger, or boredom?

Once you recognize them, you can learn to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Honest talk

James 5:16a says, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

When we let our spending get out of control, we found it difficult to talk about. We avoided the issue for a long time — not the problem, but how we got there. Once we sat down to talk and not blame, we admitted that we'd made mistakes that led to the bill collectors calling, the loss of our credit, the inability to meet our needs.

"I'm afraid," I finally admitted to Richard. I was surprised at the relief on his face when he admitted, "Me too."

Suddenly we weren't suffering alone. We began talking about the dreams we shared. We wanted to adopt a child, buy a home, save for the future, and pay cash for a car.

Soon after we solved the worst of our financial troubles, we discovered the importance of a day away from home and an activity so we could plan and talk. We spent our first planning day sitting at a picnic table at the lake. Now every few months we have a planning day — at a hotel, a park, or a restaurant. We go with a notebook and talk over the last few months and the future.

By discussing our plans, problems, solutions, and successes, we not only see the financial area of our marriage growing but also find that it brings us closer. We're honest; we listen to one another's ideas. Though we sometimes disagree, overall we leave the session happy with what we've accomplished, because we've worked at being like-minded (Philippians 2:2).

Seeking help

If financial problems are too great and the solutions seem impossible, or if you can't agree on what to do, it may be time to seek professional help. Whether a financial counselor or someone on church staff, a third party's help is nothing to be ashamed of.

Numerous books and workbooks show how to set up budgets, get out of debt, and grow together in the financial area of your marriage. The important thing is to keep your marriage intact as you sort through financial problems.

Most couples avoid talking about money. But the problems and conflicts don't go away just because you ignore them. It's never too late to begin, whether you are engaged, are newlyweds, or have been married for twenty years.

Getting better

After twenty-two years, Richard and I have had our ups and downs with finances. We've learned from some mistakes and created others. The ways we've handled our finances haven't always been the best, but we've learned to communicate about them.

We've now begun communicating with our daughter.

"Mom, why should I save money?"

"Couldn't you just charge that and let me pay you back?"

"It's not fair! I want to buy it now!"

It's a cycle that changes and challenges us, an area of our marriage that has bent but not broken us. We continue to pray, to talk, and to learn, knowing that God will reward our efforts.

■ ■

Kathryn Lay writes from Arlington, TX. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.





Depression: Unveiling the Myths

Helping the body of Christ care for the emotional needs of its own. by **David Listul**

“I just can’t seem to get it together,” Karen lamented to her best friend, Lori. “I have a great husband, love my kids, and go to church every week. Yet I still feel miserable! What am I doing wrong?”

George lost his job after seventeen years with the company. In shock, feeling useless and hopeless, he asked, “Is life worth it anymore?”

Both Karen and George suffered from depression, often called the “common cold” of mental illness. The National Institute of Mental Health says about 21 million Americans suffer from it every year.

Depression isn’t simply a modern-day ailment that targets the faithless; it invades

the hearts and minds of God’s people too. From Cain’s envious attack on his brother to Elijah’s plea for God to take his life, the Bible tells of people who struggled with depressive thoughts and feelings. Some managed the symptoms and found renewed strength through their faith, while others (Saul, Judas) gave in to defeat, despair, and premature death.

As a career counselor, I’ve seen many wounded souls seek relief from the pain of depression. My role is to assist in the healing process. Every other Christian can also provide soul care to the depressed by encouraging and pointing them toward hope in Christ.

First we need accurate information. Many of society’s false

assumptions regarding depression are strikingly familiar in the church, hindering our role in helping people recover. Let’s dispel some of those myths.

Myth #1

Depressions are all the same. “He’s been gone two years; she should be over it by now. Mary didn’t struggle like this.”

“This is Jeff’s third time in the hospital. Why can’t he pull himself together and throw those pills away?”

One of the most common misconceptions about depression is that one size fits all. The truth is, everyone’s experience is different. What upsets one person may not impact another at all.

Depression has varying degrees of duration and severity. We all become discouraged and feel “blue” at times, but not everyone gets clinically depressed. Some depressive symptoms arise due to real or perceived losses (known as *reactive depression*), whereas more serious symptoms may appear or reoccur for no apparent reason (*endogenous* or *internal depression*). The more serious types of clinical depression usually require professional counsel.

Only a few Christians may competently differentiate between normal grieving processes and clinical depression, but the thoughts and opinions of every believer about “causes” of depression can be a critical issue within the church.

Myth #2

All forms of depression are “bad” and are caused by sin.

Kent expected his wife to pick him up that day at 5:00 p.m., but she never showed. Instead, a phone call informed him of her fatal car accident.

Fast-forward a month to her birthday: Kent struggled again with anger and grief over his departed wife — the normal process after the death of a close relative. With support of family and church, he recovered without suffering clinical depression. Still, he misses her and wrestles with forgiving the offender.

Kent’s experience was a natural, healthy response in which he was allowed to mourn the loss of his wife. Even Jesus wept openly with the family at Lazarus’ death.

Kent worked through his grief and now helps others deal with their losses.

Sue wasn’t as fortunate. “If you’re still depressed, it must be sin you haven’t repented of” was the word she received from a ministry hotline. “True Christians don’t get depressed” was what she heard — not much comfort for a young woman dealing with an abusive family history. Most of us wouldn’t make that claim about people’s diabetes or cancer, yet people who don’t understand depression often find it easier to blame people for it than to understand and support them. Neither Kent nor Sue brought on depression through sin.

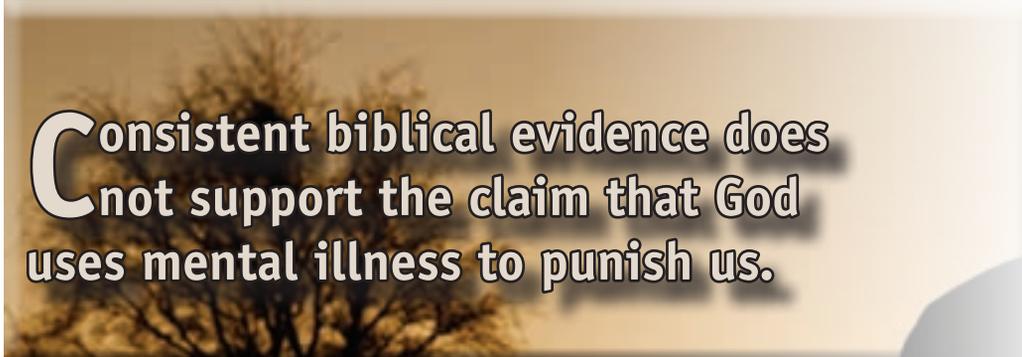
While not all depression is caused by sin, some of us may in fact suffer depressive episodes after sinful lifestyle choices, because we refused God’s will. He doesn’t always rescue us from our pain, but His sustaining presence guides us through the trial and refines us (1 Peter 1:6, 7). The Adversary often takes advantage of our errors and tempts us to question our faith in God, or he makes us feel unworthy of God’s love. Spiritual discernment is always critical when assessing depression. Numerous

cases have nothing to do with unrepentant sin or a spiritual attack from Satan.

Myth #3

Depression results from a lack faith. Clinical depression comes in many forms. It often results from a complex mixture of genetic, biochemical, and situational factors that place a person at risk when he’s faced with significant life stressors. You may have a family history of depression. You may struggle with illnesses, be subject to chemical imbalance, or experience personal tragedies that radically disrupt your life. All these may be relevant to your spiritual life but not call your trust in Christ into question.

It doesn’t help to tell others that their depression is a “punishment from God due to lack of faith” or that their emotional difficulties will go away if they simply trust Him more. Consistent biblical evidence does not support the claim that God uses mental illness to punish us. Satan, not God, seeks to destroy our hearts and minds. We may go through spiritual droughts and feel discouraged for a time, yet such episodes do not often result in a severe clinical depression or arise solely from lack of faith. Several



Consistent biblical evidence does not support the claim that God uses mental illness to punish us.

Bible personalities struggled to manage depressive episodes, yet remained committed in their faith and trust in God.

Myth #4

Only God can heal depression; any other support will fail. “Forget about those counselors, stop taking those pills, and just pray more and read the Bible!”

Good advice for Joe to pray and seek God’s will, but not so good to tell him to stop his medications. Joe followed his

pastor’s advice over the doctor’s — and committed suicide two months later.

A true spiritual battle is often present as people struggle with whose advice they should follow. “Should I listen to the doctor and keep taking those pills, or simply trust God to heal me?” The church needs to support and encourage people with the truth and power to heal, found in God’s Word, without engaging in a God-versus-modern-medicine conflict that can prove potentially lethal for some. Medication

and therapy often help people manage clinical depression; some use this combination the rest of their lives. The church has its part by encouraging commitment to Christ and trust in Him as the true “healer” of body and soul.

For many people, healing from depression can come in various ways: through a pastor, doctor, friend, or counselor; by giving up negative lifestyle choices; or even over time by working through a loss or trial. Let’s place our trust in God, knowing that He will make a way for us by whatever means suits His purpose.

Tips for a Caring Church

Comforting depressed souls requires patience, wisdom, and careful application of God’s Word (1 Thessalonians 3:1-3). Some guidelines:

Listen. Often you don’t have to say much. People mainly want to be heard, not just have you feel sorry or tell them what to do. So allow others to express their hurts, and avoid the urge to fill in all the silence.

Learn about depression’s nature and course and the unique situation your friend is struggling with. Don’t avoid him; you can’t “catch” depression. Don’t over-simplify and make everything a spiritual issue. Healing happens in the body, mind, and soul.

Love. Acknowledge peoples’ hurts and allow them to lean on you when their own strength may fail. Be patient and allow them to mourn in personal ways. Avoid setting time frames to “get over it” that can prolong and complicate others’ grief.

Lead. Once you listen, learn, and love, you may gain trust and lead them to the truths of God’s Word. Seek God’s timing in this: Depressed persons may not be ready to receive the direct counsel of Romans 8:28 or accept the consequences given in Galatians 6:7-9. Don’t forget Colossians 4:6: “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” In this way, you assist them in building faith and avoid enabling their poor choices.

The key battleground with depression among Christians is the mind and negative self-talk. Encourage them to avoid becoming slaves to unreliable feelings and strongholds of self-doubt by focusing the spirit and mind on the positive promises of God. They can learn to believe the truth of His Word even when they don’t feel it or it doesn’t make sense, thus remaining firm.

— David Listul

Spiritual responsibility

A healthy, vibrant twenty-first century church must be informed about physical and emotional issues. The Word that says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” also instructs us to “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Philippians 4:13; Galatians 6:2). Thus the church body has a spiritual responsibility to provide timely and prudent soul care, to comfort those who are hurting, and point them toward the eternal hope in Christ. **14**

David Listul is a professional counselor in Jamestown, ND, and attends church in Alfred. Visit www.cog7.org/BA for resources on depression and <http://churchofgodalfred.com/> for a full version of this article. 



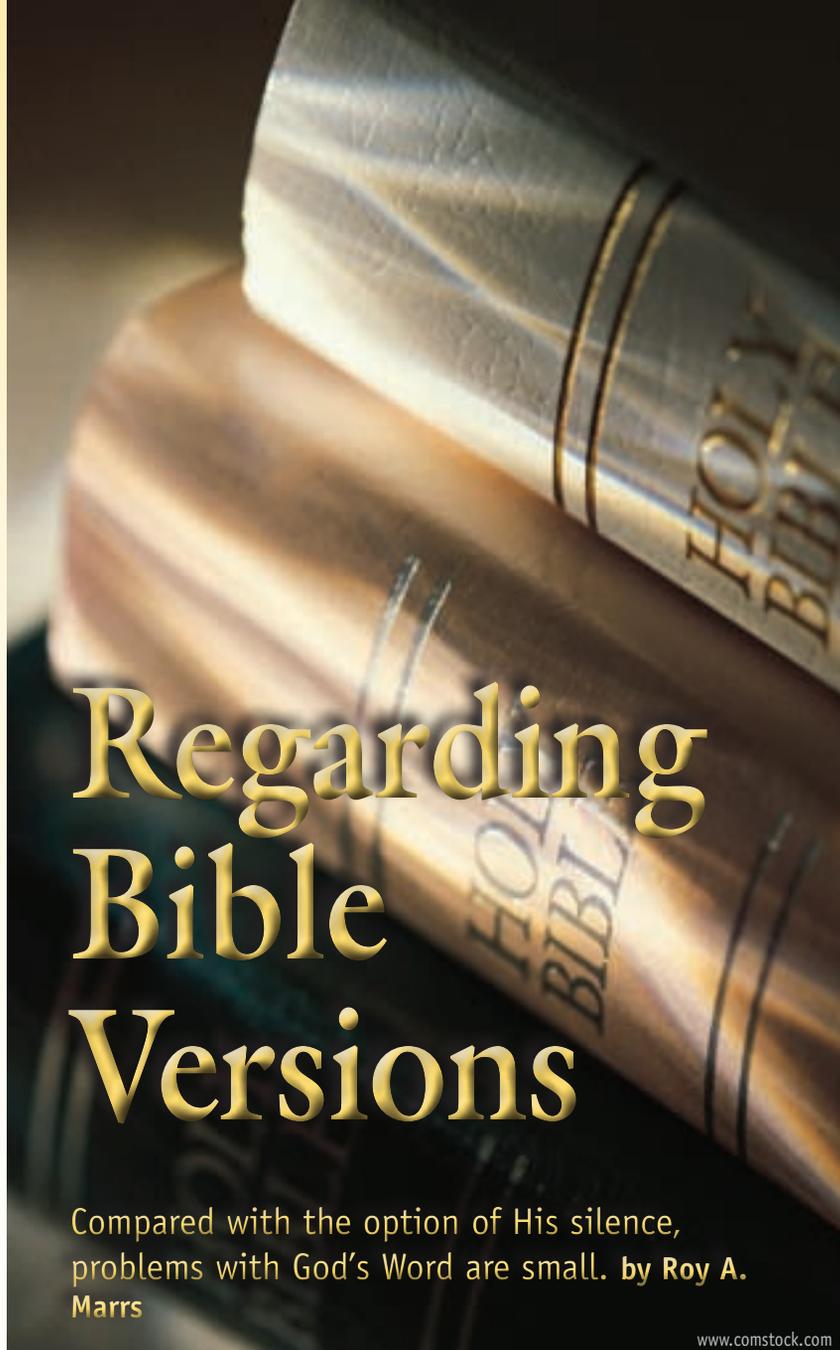
It is no longer a secret, if it ever was, that the many Bible versions Christians carry today are not total benefit to the church. One problem is having a variety of them in a single study group. We older people may hardly recognize a verse from a newer version and have to “translate” it back to the familiar King James English – and still not feel comfortable with the newer reading. This makes it hard for us to justify all the “version-eering.”

What about the difficulty younger people have with archaic wordings of the KJV, you ask? Isn't that justification enough for new versions? And what about all those words and phrases we just read over without understanding, like *ouches of gold*, *ephod*, *carbuncle*, *to wit*, *jot*, *tittle*, *concupiscence*, *farthing*, *cubit*, *uttermost*, *go to now*, *wot not*, *habergeon*, *mitre*, *propitiation*?

How did we handle those terms in the KJV? Easy! We just got used to hearing them and gave them no further thought. Hmm. Maybe there is a reason to give the Bible a voice that most people can comprehend. Of course, we can still read over unfamiliar words in newer Bible versions too, as we do in secular studies, without bothering to find out what they mean.

Were the translators inspired?

Should we consider, as some do, that the KJV translation is just as inspired as the original texts when first written? If ministers were to consider that question, I believe we would get unanimous agreement that the King James



Regarding Bible Versions

Compared with the option of His silence, problems with God's Word are small. by Roy A. Marrs

www.comstock.com

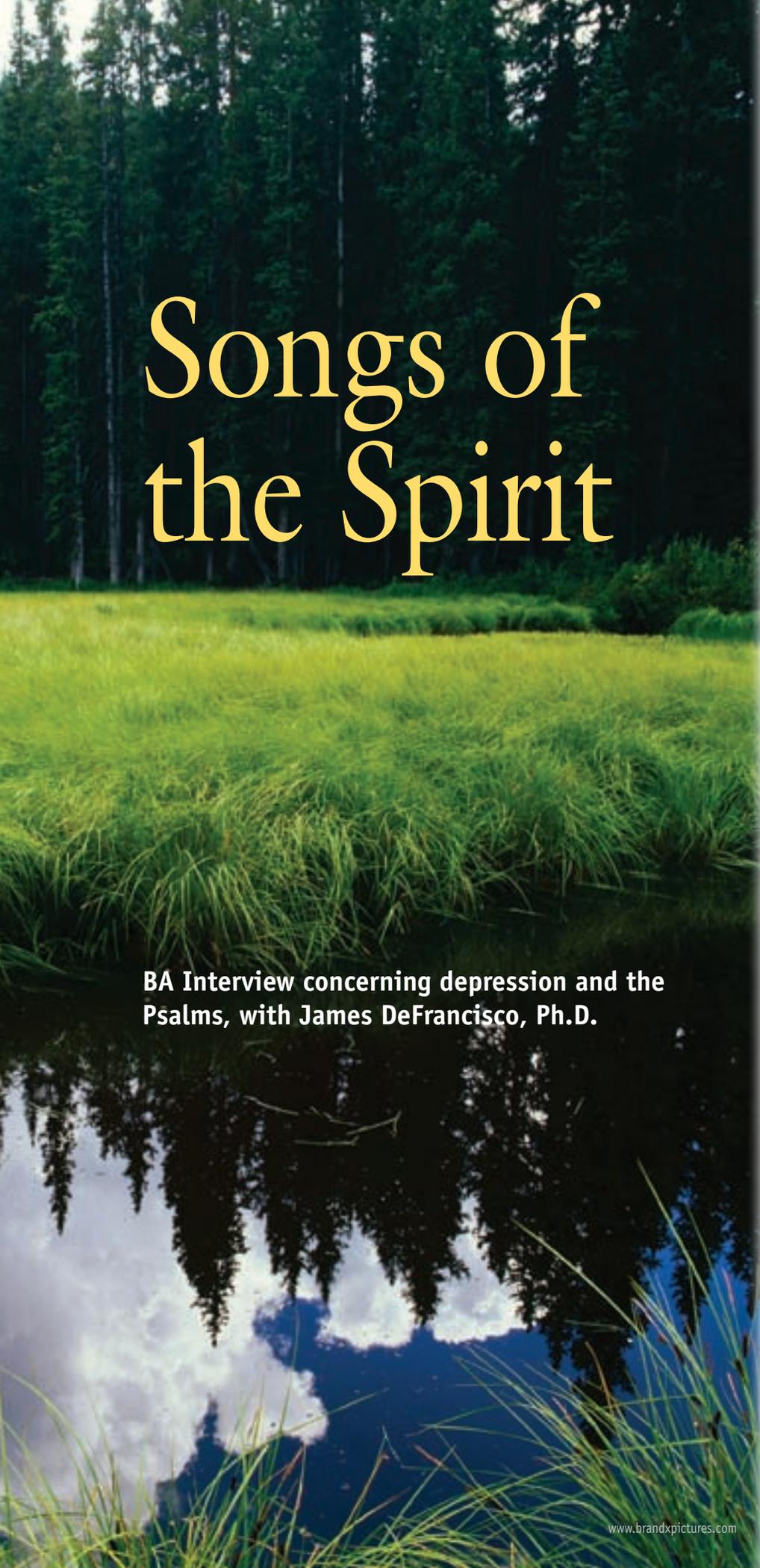
Version itself is flawed and that a more reliable and easily understood version should be produced. I also believe many would agree that such has never yet been done.

Should ministers, teachers, and writers, then, have freedom to use whichever version they believe appropriate for a particular point being made? I believe the answer is yes – if the version they choose expresses the intent of the Hebrew and Greek texts more clearly and

accurately. Making such a choice without that improvement is reckless and more likely to be based on what we'd prefer a passage say than on the original intent of the passage.

When we compare versions and find significant differences, serious students ought to seek answers from Greek and Hebrew texts and from the context. Sometimes this upholds the KJV and sometimes other versions.

continued on page 24



Songs of the Spirit

BA Interview concerning depression and the Psalms, with James DeFrancisco, Ph.D.

Why are Psalms a potent source of healing for depression?

The Psalms were written primarily to lift the spirit and focus it on relationship with God. This takes our minds off trouble and acts as a bridge to joy. Psalms produce health and harmony amid life's problems. Recited in their entirety from a pure heart, they are of great value in overcoming depression.

How may Psalms be used to bring health and harmony out of discord and loss?

The reader should invest great intention – meditating on or reciting a psalm, focusing on God and on relationship with Him. It may help to read or recite the psalm aloud, or even sing it for greater effect.

Psalm 16:11 declares that in God's presence is fullness of joy. Your cup of joy can run over there. But to be aware of His presence, the Psalms must be read. If you feel that God is more absent than present, an act of your will may restore the feeling, the awareness, that He is always near His people.

How much joy is reasonable to expect? The psalmists were often down.

Some in our culture emphasize thinking positive all the time, but this is unrealistic. Considering the real world, it may be healthier to have a balance of, say, two-thirds positive and one-third negative thoughts and feelings.

It is not logical or healthy to deny feelings of guilt, remorse, grief, or other pain. The psalmists were realistic: As much as a third of their writings carry strong themes that are not considered

“positive thinking” — like vengeance.

Anyone who’s read many psalms knows that some of them sound as though their authors were downright depressed (42, 43, 142, 143, for example). At the same time, Psalms 42 and 43 are beautiful poems that not only state depression’s problem but also offer its cure. They have brought healing balm to many hurting souls.

Psalms 77 and 90 help us during those dark, sleepless nights of the soul and when we’ve been long oppressed. They remind us of deliverance and victory when our situation seems hopeless and God seems far away. A Hebrew prayer called *Arvit* is often said in the evening because it focuses on the power of God to watch over us. This prayer includes recitations of Psalms 90:17; 46:12; 84:13; and 20:10, all of which increase our trust in God.

Give an example of life-trouble that can lead to depression and a psalm that helps escape it.

Let’s consider guilt. David committed a horrible sin with Bathsheba. He felt shame for adultery and betrayal of Uriah. He primarily sinned against God, damaging their fellowship. Consequently David formulated and sang Psalm 51 to reestablish his relationship with God, connect with the Holy Spirit, and find cleansing for his soul. The same words David used to recover from the depression of his guilt can work for us too — if we’ll use them.

Can the Bible be used to replace other medical or

psychological treatments for depression?

Humans are a complex combination of spirit, soul, and body. Each component may need its own healing. In some cases the problem may be primarily due to physiological conditions or chemical imbalance, calling for a medical doctor. Other cases may be due to thoughts, conscious or unconscious, and require a psychologist. Many depression types involve spiritual conditions that require healing, repentance, or deliverance. The Bible is not intended as a substitute for other appropriate treatment.

As an essential part in Christian counseling and healing, the Bible can enhance any other therapy. But it doesn’t work optimally in a vacuum. Prayer, rest, nutritional and behavioral changes, medication, counseling, and other therapies all may be necessary to relieve depression and heal the soul. Anyone with serious depression should consult a physician or clinical counselor.

You say that evening, just before sleep, is the best time for meditation in the Psalms. Why?

From Jewish rabbis I learned the great value of prayer and meditation on Scripture before sleep — even asking God and His holy angels to speak to us in our dreams. (In the *Siddur* [prayer

book] there is an “amelioration of a dream” prayer to use after a disturbing dream. It is based, in part, on Psalms 12:3-8; 16:11; 29:11; 55:19; and 121:1, 2.)

Many Bible passages were revealed in visions and dreams. If our sleep is uncontrolled by the Spirit and becomes Satan’s playground, as much as a third of our life may be polluted in this way.

Last December 25 I spent the morning with prisoners at the county jail. Many of them were repeat offenders with the burden of deep emotional and spiritual problems. I asked about their dreams and what they did before going to sleep. Many said they were tormented during sleep — a prime time for Satan to preach to the subconscious. One cure for this malady is to focus on God’s thoughts by reading Psalms before sleep — a spiritual counterpart to locking our doors every night before we retire. **HA**

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Anyone who’s read many psalms knows that some of them sound as though their authors were downright depressed.

CoG7's Middle Years:

The year 1914 was pivotal for the Church of God (Seventh Day). With new leadership, the next twenty years were characterized both by energetic vision and severe testing, leading to our darkest hour.

Prior to 1914, General Conference activity was limited mostly to publishing the *Bible Advocate* and other literature, issuing ministerial credentials (licenses came from state conferences), plus the business at general campmeetings — usually in Missouri or an adjacent state.

In those years, local churches and state conferences had a great deal of autonomy. Other than a shared name and common beliefs, no general plan existed for ministry. Tithe was often given directly to the pastor or evangelist, with little or no provision for a united work or missions. Most laborers in the gospel were bi-vocational, performing itinerant ministry only as their labor (usually farming) permitted.

The *Bible Advocate* magazine was published then as a forum for doctrinal issues. The debate in its pages occasionally became so intense that the editor would call for a moratorium on the current topic. Jacob Brinkerhoff's policy as editor (1874) reflected the *laissez faire* attitude of the Church: "... we feel that the paper belongs to the brotherhood ... it depends upon you each

and everyone to make [it] interesting and what you would like to see." The editor often raised much of the funds needed to publish the magazine and provide his own living.

By 1914 Jacob Brinkerhoff retired as BA editor and was replaced by Andrew N. Dugger, also selected as General Conference president. Dugger was a Nebraska farmer and schoolteacher whose father, A. F. Dugger, Sr., had been one of the founders of the General Conference thirty years before.

The young Dugger was visionary, keen-minded, and assertive. He was a strong debater in an era when debating was an accepted way to air opposing views. Dugger soon put these traits and gifts into action to pursue a stronger, more effective church. His innovative leadership and organizational reforms became the object of both praise and criticism for a half-century of churchmen.

One of the first changes implemented under Dugger's guidance was the editorial policy of the *Bible Advocate*. The open forum policy was changed to limit publication of articles to those who supported the Church's teaching. To clarify this, Editor Dugger published an article in 1917 entitled "What the Church of God Believes, and Why." It contained forty "irrefutable" statements covering about

a dozen distinct teachings, with a Bible reason for each. These soon became the accepted doctrinal statements of the Church and remained so in the Stanberry group until 1949.

Another innovation was Church-wide financial reform. President Dugger urged members to send tithe to the Conference office or state treasuries, rather than hand it to an individual. This brought a significant increase of funds, resulting in growth for the Church through evangelistic and other united efforts. On the other hand, it angered some ministers who were accustomed to receiving tithe directly from the membership.

To distinguish the Church from other Churches of God, Elder Dugger promoted adoption of the words *Seventh Day* in the official Church name. Accordingly, the Conference became the Church of God (Seventh Day) in 1923.

Energized by greater funding and his own zeal, Dugger was the first president of the Conference to travel extensively among the Conference's congregations and members. This enabled him to build a broad base of support for his programs, as well as serve with other itinerant evangelists and pastors who were contributing to the Church's growth.

Thus the 1920's became a time of impressive increase. One thousand new members report-

1914 - 1950



Elder A. N. Dugger

edly were added to the Church in a twelve-month period (1921). A partial list of affiliated churches published in a 1925 *Advocate* contained seventy-nine congregations in seventeen states. Many CoG7 ministers received assistance from the General Conference or a state conference. The subscriber list of the *Bible Advocate* expanded considerably and into foreign fields, as did the distribution of literature produced at the Stanberry, Missouri, publishing house.

By 1925 the Church had undergone a fairly significant makeover. It had an energetic and popular president, a workable financial policy, an enlarged doctrinal statement, and a distinctive name. About this time the Church published its first *Bible Home Instructor*, a book-length study guide to the Church's teachings. Several colporteurs were recruited to sell this book from door to door, further stimulating the Church's growth.

In spite of these good things, growing tensions within the Conference became evident in the late 1920's:

- sharp differences over how much authority the Conference should wield over its state conferences and congregations
- doctrinal issues, some longstanding and others advocated for the first time by the influx of new members
- development of new leaders

who began to challenge some reforms and proposals of Elder Dugger and others.

These tensions were exacerbated to some degree by actions of the 1927 and '29 conferences in session, as they called for more conformity in doctrine and practice. Unhappily, these attempts to solve the Church's problems were not truly effective. The discontent would soon erupt into full-blown division.

To fulfill a personal dream, Elder Dugger and his family traveled to Palestine (with support of the Conference) in 1931, hoping to establish CoG7 world headquarters there. When he returned a year later, another divisive item – that of Church structure with twelve apostles, seven deacons, and seventy elders – was co-sponsored by him and added to the Conference's agenda.

In 1933 the fault lines of doctrine, authority, and structure came gaping open at the Church's conference and camp-meeting in Stanberry. The divide showed itself most plainly in election of Conference officers when men backed by Elder Dugger and his supporters lost by a single tie-breaking vote – not once but twice.

The disappointment of this narrow defeat prompted the Dugger party to circulate letters calling for formation of a new conference pat-

terned after the "Bible numbers" of twelve, seven, and seventy. Such an organization was born in Salem, West Virginia, on November 4, 1933, effectively dividing the Church of God (Seventh Day) into nearly equal halves. (For a fuller account of the 1933 events in Stanberry and Salem, including Elder Dugger's seven doctrinal concerns, go to www.cog7.org/BA).

This division introduced sixteen years of stagnation in the Church. It would not be repaired until the merger of 1949 and relocation of central offices to Denver, Colorado, in 1950 – events that will be covered in the next issue. Meanwhile, Elder A. N. Dugger, who helped design the Church's modern structures and develop its doctrines and who was the Church's most influential leader prior to 1950, completed his ministry in Jerusalem, Israel, and died there in 1975. His name will always be closely linked to the Church's progress and growth after 1914, as well as to the controversies that surrounded and followed 1933.

[.org](http://www.cog7.org/BA)

– BA

A Few Good Friends

by Steven M. Zuraff

In the late 1970's I lived in Hawaii while serving in the U.S. Army, but couldn't seem to make friends at Schofield Barracks. Every evening after work I went home to an empty apartment in a nearby town.

On weekends I drove around the island of Oahu sightseeing and taking pictures, wishing I had someone to share the time with. People were everywhere, but I was alone in my own world. My only interaction with anyone was in the course of my duties with the military.

For nearly the first year I just wanted to get off Oahu and go home. I was in "paradise" but hated every minute of it. An attitude developed in me, and my duty performance began to suffer. I was headed for trouble.

In loneliness and desperation, I turned to the Lord and rededicated my life to Him. He gave me an instant family by bringing me into fellowship with a nearby Christian congregation. I became a member of the Church and of its singles group. This proved to be a complete turnaround for me.

Intimate friendships

We became a close group of friends, calling each other during the week. If work permitted, we connected with one another. We never missed a Sabbath service or a church function together. A few of us usually met on Friday evenings at a local restaurant to visit over a cup of coffee. On Sabbath we gathered for dinner and usually finished off the day at someone's home that evening. These times were marked with long discussions about personal struggles, our falling in sin, and our victory over it in Christ. It seemed our focus was always on the Word of God and how it applied to our lives.

Before heading home, I usually dropped off one

of my dear single brothers at his home early on Sunday mornings. We knew each other's weaknesses and strengths, faults and hang-ups, pain and sorrow, triumphs and victories. We knew what made each other cry – and laugh. I can still feel the warmth of those relationships.

Church division

After my release from the Army, I tried to make Hawaii my home. But life became more difficult after my discharge, even with close friends from church. I was unemployed for the first year, so money was tight. Then it was minimum wage jobs, then temporary work at Pearl Harbor. My health suffered from lack of good nutrition, and I developed shingles. After two-and-a-half years of this, I believed that the Lord wanted me to move on.

A few months before I left the islands, our church there suffered a division in which two-thirds of us transferred our memberships to the Church of God (Seventh Day). My friends in the singles group were left behind with that division, and my fellowship with them ended. To them, I had "left the church," which also meant I had left the Lord. Of all the brethren I'd known in Hawaii, only one family was at the airport to see me off the night I left; not one from the singles group came. The memory of that division still hurts me today.

To make things worse, a relationship ended with a girl I'd hoped to marry. It seemed to me that the Lord had made clear that I should go. The job at Pearl Harbor paid enough to ship my car to the mainland and buy a plane ticket to Los Angeles. Before I left Hawaii, a brother told me he was planning to attend the CoG7 General Conference meeting in Glorieta, New Mexico, that summer, and he encouraged me to attend. He thought it would give us a better idea what that Church was all about.

Looking back, I'm glad I went. I not only learned about the new fellowship the Lord had brought



Nikhil Gangavane—Dreamstime.com

me into but also met the young lady who would become my wife. We married in 1982 and lived in Texas the first seventeen years of our marriage.

Déjà vu

In 1999 we moved to Oklahoma with our three sons. Little did I know that our adjustment to a new place would present circumstances similar to what I experienced in Hawaii.

Home from our first Sabbath service in the new location, my wife and I sat on our front porch and cried for the brethren, family, and friends we had left behind in San Antonio. But we were stuck: A non-optional job transfer brought us here. Still, we trusted that the Lord had been in our move to Oklahoma and that He had plans for us here just as He did in sending me to Hawaii.

As we settled into regular fellowship and came to know our new brethren, those feelings of sadness and displacement changed big time! Nearly nine years later, many Oklahomans are friends and important parts of my life, as well as others as far away as India and Australia.

It is no insult to the larger group when I say that those I consider close friends, I can count on one hand. They are the ones I share with the most and who share much with me. For me, this closeness isn't just small talk or doing stuff together; it's about getting to know each other beneath the surface as we experience the pleasures and pains of life as I did with my friends in Hawaii.

My family and I have been fellowshiping at the Shawnee CoG7 for six years now. Some of those brethren have become close friends, ranging in age from early thirties to late seventies. My wider circle of friends is expanding through e-mail.

As in Hawaii, it has been a complete turnaround for us. Now I call Oklahoma "God's country." We consider this our permanent home.

Ultimate Friend

The most important thing I have learned through these experiences is that Jesus is my ultimate Friend. *Why, Lord, do You want to have anything to do with me?* As Lord, He has authority over me. As Savior, He died for me. But as Friend, He shares a relationship with me.

I want the most intimate relationship with Jesus I can have. There is no other friend like Jesus who will be there for us. To put any earthly friend in His place would be idolatry. On the other hand, we do experience His love and friendship through other believers because He works through each one of us. Through His Spirit, we can have a close relationship with the friends He brings.

The Lord has given me fantastic memories. Now I have different friends, and we are making memories and drawing closer together in Oklahoma and through cyberspace. He has chosen us and given us to each other. I love each one of them deeply.

Do you have need of a friend? Seek first the Lord and watch Him draw people to you and you to others. Perhaps He will draw you and me together!

Steven Zuraff lives in central Oklahoma and attends church in Shawnee. He is shown here with his wife and a few friends in the Shawnee church.



Get Saved, Get Married!



Understanding the connection between earthly and eternal unions. by **Martin Bledsoe**

PhotoDisc

The church, Christ's bride, is not a denomination nor a building nor the sum total of everyone who claims Christianity. The true church includes all who have received Jesus as Lord and Savior and are born of the Holy Spirit.

Salvation and eternal life come by knowing God and His Son and by being one with them in personal, intimate relationship (John 17:3). Salvation is not merely a job or a status; it is like marriage — a lifelong walk and talk with a most important Person.

Paul told those he evangelized that he had betrothed them to Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). The comparison between matrimony and redemption is developed further in Ephesians 5:22-33. When we make a faith commitment to Christ, He enters our hearts and lives. In much the same way as husband and wife become one in marriage, we who trust and obey Jesus Christ become one with His body, the church — through the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13a; John 17:21-23). We are united with the Lord and our brethren in a permanent bond, just as Adam and Eve became one and never parted.

Taking vows

Salvation, then, is a promised union between Christ Jesus and us. He is a real person and truly present with those who trust and love Him. The Savior and the saved one have made their vows to each other. In a spiritual sense, they are married for life and for eternity. When two are married, they promise to love and hold to one another under all circumstances, until death. What are the

vows of Jesus Christ toward His people, the church?

“As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you and given Myself for you. I want to come in and make My abode with you. We will be one, as My Father and I are one. I promise that I will never leave nor forsake you. I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world” (taken from John 14:23; 15:9, 13; 17:23; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20).

Will Christ uphold His commitment to us? Yes, for He cannot lie. The divine plan is for Christ and His people to be united forever.

Keeping vows?

On the day they get saved, most people say, “I love Jesus. I will forever serve Him. I’d die for Him.”

But a few months or years later, the commitment doesn’t seem so strong:

“Dear Jesus, I love You, as long as You make me happy. I will follow You anywhere as long as the road is easy. I’ll carry Your cross as long as it doesn’t become too heavy. I want to be with You forever, but I’m not going to burn the bridges of my past, just in case things don’t work between us. Lord, I’ll profess You before the world as long as I’m not persecuted for it.”

Of course, people don’t really say these things. They promise to go all the way with Christ and, like Simon Peter, say, “I’ll die with You before I deny You.” But Peter proved unfaithful. When the trial came, he denied Jesus Christ three times.

If both parties in a marriage are not fully committed to each

other, a marriage will not stand. Too many folks who profess to receive Christ as Lord do not remain committed to that relationship. According to the Bible, those who profess to be Christians but mess around with the world and practice its sin are adulterers. They are unfaithful to God and Christ.

Grounds for divorce

Can you imagine Christ divorcing His bride? Probably not. What about us, as members of the church, divorcing Christ? It’s possible. But what would the grounds for the divorce be?

Imagine the judge saying, “I see you have filed for divorce. So let me ask: Was He [Jesus] unfaithful to you?” No, He was always faithful to me.

“Was He abusive?” No, He was always courteous and kind, even when He corrected me.

“Did He provide well for your needs?” He gave me everything I ever needed.

“Did He show you love?” He met me every morning and reassured me of His love. He walked with me and picked me up when I stumbled and fell.

“Did He give you anything?” He gave me a new heart of love, joy, peace, and the gift of His Word and Spirit for all life’s demands. He has built us a mansion in a city where we will live

together forever.

“He sounds like the perfect husband. Why would you want to divorce Him?” Well, judge, honestly . . . I found someone else — a friend I dated before I met Jesus.

Promising future

How critical it is that the church be permanently united with Christ. Some say, “You don’t know how hard I’ve had it as a Christian!” Maybe not, but you’ll have it a lot harder without Christ. Satan is a terrible husband.

Have you made the commitment to an eternal marriage with Jesus Christ, the Lord? If not, He has a proposal for you today.

Maybe you were once united to Christ, but you’ve been unfaithful. Why not renew your vows now, confessing your sins. He will forgive and receive you unto His bosom again. 

Martin Bledsoe

lives in Evarts, KY, with his wife Angela and daughter Stacy. He pastors Riverridge Church of God and is founder of Babylon Forsaken Ministries (www.babylonforsaken.com).



Will Christ uphold His commitment to us? Yes, for He cannot lie. The divine plan is for Christ and His people to be united forever.



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Stay on Course!

by Brian Franks

Have you seen an old-fashioned carriage pulled by horses, like in a Western movie? Ever notice those black discs up by the horse's eyes? They're called blinders, and horses wear them so they won't be spooked by what's behind or beside them. Also, blinders keep the horses' attention straight ahead so they won't drift off course when something else catches their attention. For similar reasons, racehorses have a variation of blinders on their racing hoods.

We humans may need spiritual blinders for many of the same reasons horses do. We can easily be distracted by what's happening all around, causing us to veer off track or even forget the godly path we've started on.

We also need blinders when we look at others and wish we could be doing what they're doing. These may be fellow Christians doing exciting things for God or non-Christians doing the "fun" stuff we think we're missing out on.

We may need spiritual blinders to learn and practice our unique design and purpose. God didn't make any duplicates (Psalm 139:14). If we're always focused on others and comparing ourselves to them, we'll never give God the chance to show who He made us to be. As we focus on God, He will reveal our purposes to us. They may not be what we think or hoped for, but they'll definitely be what God designed.

For us, like for some horses, life is a race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). But we're not competing against others, and there will be many winners of eternal life at the end. This race is a marathon, so we need to keep in top spiritual condition and use blinders to follow the course God has laid out to the finish.

Brian Franks is a Central District Youth officer and lives in Colorado Springs, CO.

Blinders!

Stay away from these:

- TV, movies, video games with violence, murder, sex, etc.
- Using your phone to text the quiz answers to your friends
- Talking about your “friends” behind their backs
- Thinking up ways to pull mean jokes on others
- Pornography, lust, premarital sexual encounter (all types)
- Making school, sports, or friends more important than God
- Comparing yourself to others

Focus!

Stay on track with these:

- Study God’s Word regularly
- Seek God’s will in every decision
- Be active in your local church
- Attend a youth camp or retreat
- Volunteer your time and talents
- When in doubt, throw it out
- Find a verse dealing with your problem and memorize it
- Compare yourself to God’s standard
- Study the Bible until it comes alive for you

H.A.B.I.T.S.

Doug Fields, youth pastor of Saddleback Church in California, says that to stay spiritually fit, we need to develop spiritual habits. To grow intellectually requires study habits. To grow emotionally, we develop processing skills. To grow physically, we exercise routinely and practice good nutrition. Spiritual life is like that, too. We “work out” with skills and routines that keep us close to God and growing as believers.

Here are some HABITS that Doug suggests in order to grow spiritually:

- H – Hang time with God (prayer, meditation)
- A – Accountability (mentor relation from others)
- B – Bible memorization (God’s Word in our hearts)
- I – Involvement (active in church)
- T – Tithing (giving of money and time)
- S – Studying Scripture (getting more from the Word)

13 Ways to Know You Are in the Church of God (Seventh Day)

1. If you’ve ever given your parents the excuse of Sabbath being the day of rest so that you could sleep overtime.
2. If your Sunday routines include the letters MTS and NFL.
3. If your prayer requests include blessings on your local NBA or NFL team.
4. If you were the only kid in school who picked the pepperoni out of the pizza.
5. If you were the only kid who was disappointed when the main character ends up eating the green eggs and ham at the end of the book.
6. If you give out Bible Advocates to “trick or treaters” on Halloween.
7. If you feel awkward when someone wishes you a “Merry Christmas” but you love the vacation.
8. If you grew up wishing they showed Saturday morning cartoons on Sunday.
9. If the only Spanish sentence you can say is “Paz a vos.”
10. If you have ever lived or wanted to live in Owosso, Michigan.
11. If you meet a nice girl (or boy) at conference and your first task is to find out if you’re related.
12. If you have ever ordered a bacon cheeseburger . . . without the bacon.
13. If you are related to your pastor and three church board members.

— Dan Melgoza

If you regularly practice these HABITS, you will grow and become a mature believer!

You can find “Developing HABITS That Will Change Your Life” on Doug’s Web site at www.simplyyouthministry.com. Or borrow a copy of the curriculum from us by sending your request to nfyc@cog7.org.

— Kurt Lang
NFYC Director

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

Regarding Bible Versions

continued from page 13

Is *any* change of wording permissible?

Jesus declared, “Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18, NASB). Taken hyper-literally, these words imply that no translation of Hebrew Scripture is permitted.

Consider, however, that the Old Testament had been translated to Greek more than two hundred fifty years before Jesus said this, apparently without His rebuke. Further, this view of Christ’s words would mean that to study the Bible, one would have to learn the language it was first written in (as some Muslims contend for the Koran). Not translating to other languages would really complicate spreading the gospel!

It would appear, then, that Jesus’ words were spoken to protect the tiniest piece of the original *intent* of the Word – i.e., the whole “spirit” of the law, not its letter.

What about supplying words?

To achieve clarity and completeness, the King James Version translators frequently supplied words in italics where no exact word is found in the ancient manuscripts. This is an accepted and necessary practice in translating any writing into another language, if a readable and meaningful version of the original is to be achieved.

In spite of this, some who support use of the KJV only claim it to be a word-for-word translation. Neither the preface to the KJV Bible nor its seventeenth century translators make such a claim. (If such a translation existed, it would not be very readable.) To the contrary, the men who did the KJV translating acknowledged that they compared their work not only with ancient language Bible sources but also with other translations then existing.

If that does not make the KJV blasphemous, neither does it make the other versions blasphemous for doing the same. However, each instance of adding words needed for clear and complete thoughts has the potential of being tainted by the biases of the translator.

In some instances, other

versions do not retain the meaning of the original languages as diligently as the KJV. Therefore, for some purposes the KJV is more accurate and more reliable than some others. And the reverse can be illustrated as well in the KJV’s use of the word *Easter*, a blatant mistranslation in Acts 12:4.

So what about the matter?

I understand that there is scriptural justification for both making and reading up-to-date translations that faithfully represent the intent of the Bible with words we can understand in modern languages. The Great Commission demands it, even for younger generations in America.

To make such a translation is a monumental task in any language. Many have undertaken it, and some confuse the issue by taking too many liberties, even changing the intent of the scriptural message. The King James Version had the same problem when it originated. It was previously revised to update the wording, and the problem of keeping it updated will continue.

My prediction is that nobody will ever be completely satisfied with any version produced. We will have to deal with translation problems until there is only one language when the Lord returns!

□♦

There is scriptural justification for both making and reading up-to-date translations that faithfully represent the intent of the Bible.

Elder Roy Marrs, a former editor of the BA and long-time servant of the Church, resides in Lodi, CA.



*As time slowly slips away
midnight's blackness faces into dawn.*

*A new day has begun
but the storm clouds of life
overshadow the sun.*

*Haunting memories of hours gone
hidden secrets that linger;
therein this question lies:*

*Will a rainbow ever again
grace these darkened skies?*

*When in despair and depths so low
facing without hope tomorrow,
whether be strong or weak
peace will reign over troubled waters
when God we seek.*

*An everlasting assurance echoes
over on heaven's shore,
wherein the Master replies,
Yes, a rainbow will again
grace these darkened skies.*

Tracy L. Gray



General Conference
Church of God (Seventh Day)



Did you know . . .

- CoG7 in Indian Territory began soon after a free land rush into the Cherokee Strip in 1893, before that area became the state of Oklahoma?
- one Church member entered the territory to claim his farm on Sunday rather than on Sabbath, the day of the rush? Those who sneaked in ahead were called Sooners. The guy who came "later" got his farm anyway!
- churches in the Dakotas were formed by German and Russian settlers, before and after 1900? (See p. 28.)
- West Coast churches, planted in the 1920's, grew from the "Okies," Dakotans, and other plainsmen who moved west during Dust Bowl and Depression years?
- the Mexican Church began in the city of Saltillo, Coahuila, about 1920?

Ministries Training System

Calvin Burrell, Director

"Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers . . ." (Matthew 9:38).

At home and at church, please intercede for the MTS Summer Session in Denver, June 2-12. We expect 50 or more of the Church's lay pastors and top prospects for vocational ministry to attend. As we teach and counsel, join us in asking God to do in and through them what only He can. And when they return home, encourage them to continue their preparation for service. Thank you.

MTS will soon complete six years of assisting ministers-in-training. Does this system work? The statistics show:

- Students who've enrolled in one or more MTS course (regional classroom, summer or intensive session, online) number 2,052.
- Over 150 men are identified as prospects for vocational ministry. We will work with these until all pastoral vacancies are filled.
- Over 25 men have completed half the 42 credits required for the diploma of pastoral ministries, en route to the ministerial license.
- Seventeen men have received the ministerial license after completing studies with MTS. One wrote:

"MTS played an important role in my pursuit of the license. Through the local classroom [Dallas] and intensive sessions, the school has increased my knowledge of the Bible and the world itself – preparing me to be a well-rounded leader."

– Raul Romo
The Colony, TX

As these men step out to preach Christ and teach the Word for all of us, let's stand up in Christian loyalty and support for all of them!





Seekers

A Bible-based program for ages 9 -12 and a must for every church. Seekers can be utilized for children’s church, midweek services, neighborhood outreach, and home schools. Program information, badges, patches, etc. will soon be available

to view and order online. For now, contact Dorothy Keim, 845 Elm Dr., Eugene, OR 97404; 541-688-1707 or dotkeim@hotmail.com.

Celebrate the Church

How will you applaud the Church of God (Seventh Day)’s 150th year? Have you thought of celebrating with a major contribution in 2008? The Church has shared the gospel and nurtured believers these many years because Christians like you have faithfully shared their material blessings from the Lord.

Contributions can be in cash or other forms. Giving stocks or property can help you avoid any capital gains tax that might be due.

To explore your gift options, contact the Office of Planned Giving, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; plannedgiving@cog7.org.

More camps for youth

Southeast District Youth Camp

June 29 - July 6, Camp Crabtree, Raleigh, NC
Sandy Jones - summer.youthcamp@yahoo.com

Rio Grande Valley Youth Camp

July 31 - August 3, Edinburg, TX (near McAllen)
Daniel Flores - 956-424-2778, castorescon@yahoo.com



Music for Missions

Admirers of CoG7’s singing evangelists John and Katherine Kiesz will be happy to know that their music is now available on CD. Brother and Sister Kiesz, who died in the 1990’s, served together for over sixty years.

Their daughters, Martha and Pearl, initiated the CD project, suggesting that the Church duplicate and ship them in return for a missions offering. To obtain one or both CD’s of the Kiesz’ playing and singing, write to Missions Ministries, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233, or call 303-452-7973 with credit card handy. (Suggested donation: \$20 for one CD, \$35 for both.)



Pastor Gustavo Salcido is shown here (L to R) with Jose Acosta, Claudia Reyes, Iliana Jimenez, and Adelina Salcido, whom he baptized on April 13. These four people accepted Christ, and many more heard the message, when the Arlington, TX, church took the gospel to a public park.



New NED Superintendent

On April 1 Bruce Noble of Owosso, Michigan, began service as superintendent of the Northeastern District. Bruce Chesney of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, served the district on an interim basis

after Richard Wiedenheft’s death in March 2007.

Diamond Anniversary in Dakota

The venerable Alfred church will celebrate 75 years on location, Sabbath, June 28.

This tiny North Dakota town, 34 miles southwest of Jamestown and 100 miles from the state capital in Bismarck, once boasted several stores, three churches, two grain elevators, and a fuel distribution center. Today empty hulks of store and elevator, about ten homes, and a CoG7 are all that remain.

The church in Alfred, and across the Dakotas, began in the late 1880's when a group of 12-14 families around Kulm, North Dakota, began keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. About the same time, people from the same German/Russian heritage found the same Bible teachings not far away in Eureka, South Dakota. By 1898 that church had also established itself under the Church of God name.

Henry Schlenker, Sr. and his family came from Germany to North Dakota in 1896. They stayed first with Gotfried Muntz, a church family near Kulm. Using a donated team and wagon, Henry soon moved his family to a farm near Jud, ten miles from Alfred, and turned the wagon upside down to find protection from the first night's hard rain. A sod house was built to prepare for the coming winter.

Each Friday the Schlenkers packed up and drove team and buggy back to Kulm for Sabbath meetings. Excited about the Bible, Henry usually carried the "Good Book" with him. If a neighbor happened by when he was plowing, Henry would stop to talk, often turning it into a Bible study. Occasionally the men would get so involved that the horses wandered off.

Johonnas and Christina Gohner immigrated from Romania in 1910, settling first on a homestead south of Kulm, then later near Alfred. They heard about the seventh-day Sabbath from their neighbors, Henry and Karolina Schlenker. Eventually these families joined the Kalmbachs, Reichs, and others for services in their homes. Services were all in the German language until the 1940's.

Just 75 years ago, in 1933, a store building in Alfred was purchased by the group to serve as a church home. The building cost is unknown, but Frieda Schlenker's record of expenses (gas, oil, phone, meals) to settle the purchase came to \$4.33. Christ Kiesz from Eureka, South Dakota, served as

pastor for the next ten years. In 1942 he held a seven-week revival in which there were 38 conversions, with baptisms in a pond near the railroad tracks east of Gackle.

Ivan Harlan became Alfred's first resident pastor in 1943. He received \$50 per month for services, plus eggs, meat, milk, and other foodstuffs from members. In return, he helped with the farm work, especially during busy seasons. He also held meetings in surrounding towns, often singing and preaching on street corners on Saturday nights. Young people went along to help sing and distribute literature.



Other pastors who would serve in Alfred were John Kiesz, Harvey Otto, Clifford Tuttle, Noah Camero, Melvin Sweet, George Tolbert, Daniel Camero, Larry Hadden, Luke Moldenhauer, Ray Youngs, Harris Kinzler, Jerry Morgan, Wayne Hrenyk, and Stephen J. Kyner.

Today the Alfred church — about all that's left of the once thriving town — is strong. It draws from surrounding farms and villages for over 50 miles. Children and grandchildren of the Dakota pioneers to the fifth generation remain faithful to Christ and the Bible truths cherished by their ancestors. With the large numbers of young families now attending, the future for Alfred church still looks bright!

For more on Alfred and other Dakota churches, read a full version of this article at www.cog7.org.

[.org](http://www.cog7.org)

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Autumn in Michigan

Ministerial Council convenes at lovely Gull Lake Conference Center, Hickory Corners, Michigan, October 6-11. Lay pastors and local leaders are invited to attend this biennial ministers' meeting in the same region our church began in 1858. For information or reservations, call Eddie Villalba at 303-452-7973.



'08 Medical Missions

by Bev Brenneise

The 2008 Medical and Dental Mission to Nicaragua began with a series of mishaps and challenges. Two members lost cameras or cell phones en route, and luggage for about half the team went to Florida. When the luggage (with vital supplies) did arrive in Nicaragua, regulations prohibited its release until after we opened clinics. Three dentists and one doctor were detained in Mexico City due to passport problems.

It seemed a poor start, but the Lord sustained the mission. Other team members shared clothing, and a quick visit to a marketplace filled other gaps. Through prayer and a humble request to the Nicaragua customs office, our luggage was released. The mission could begin on time!

We learned anew that material things are only that — material. In the capital city (Managua) were streets badly worn and needing repair. Roadsides, walkways, and canals were littered with trash, bagged and scattered.

Many houses were of simple construction with dirt floors. Yet people of means lived in nicely landscaped homes and villas protected by heavy walls and gates lined with coils of razor wire.

The Managua CoG7 church was our base for three days. Our Nicaraguan brethren offered help in even the most menial tasks. When the missing members arrived from Mexico City, our team was complete.

As we were closing the clinic in Managua, an elderly man took a team member's hand and spoke softly with tears: "I wondered who these Americans are, that they would come all the way down here to

care for us. Gracias, gracias, gracias."

Our second three-day clinic was in Puerto Sandino, a smaller town where the CoG7 Garden of Eden Project provided care for children. Here doctors and medical assistants worked on the dirt floor of the main church building, while dentists set up nearby in a smaller, more sanitary space for their tools. We triaged patients, diagnosing and helping some; others required treatments we couldn't provide. After our departure, we arranged for six patients to receive follow-up surgery and treatment.

The final day at the Garden of Eden, two team members donned clown costumes to entertain a crowd, while others gave out food and gifts. The children's expressions of appreciation — high-fives, high fists, gleeful grins, and excited comments — touched us.

During six days of clinics in Nicaragua, we saw 3,016 patients, including 650 treated by the dentists. We were physically fatigued but emotionally exhilarated.

In addition to the daytime clinics, evangelistic services were held every evening. It was estimated that over 2,000 people attended the meetings. Pastors and other leaders circulated in the crowds, praying and taking information for follow-up.

The mission seemed to end as it began: precipitously. As we boarded planes for home, ten members whose tickets weren't listed in airport computers appeared to be stranded in Nicaragua — until a few passengers already on the plane volunteered for later flights. Returning through Houston, we discovered our two missing cameras on the airport lost and found list!

Read the full version of this article at www.cog7.org/BA. [.org](http://www.cog7.org/BA)





International Tour

Mizoram

India and China are the most populated nations on earth. The Indian state of Mizoram sits at the heart of this Asian region, amid Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma), and China.

No report of the Church in Mizoram would be complete without mentioning the missionary zeal of George L. Hnamte. Elder Hnamte and his family of six set to work in 1967, using the distinctive Christian literature from our Stanberry, Missouri, publishing house, mailed by LeRoy Dais. George accepted the positions taught by the Church, including the Godhead, annual Lord's Supper observance, the exalted Christ and His second coming, Ten Commandments, and non-participation in ecumenical movements. After four years in a house church, a thatched-roof hut for worship was constructed at Lunglei in southern Mizoram.

In 1972 the Hnamte family moved to Aizawl to pursue George's vision of bringing together various Sabbath-observing groups scattered in Mizoram. A first general conference was soon held, and Elder Hnamte began to write, publish, and distribute literature with his own funds. Truth-seekers were fascinated with his tracts, and thus the gospel was gradually spread. A multi-faceted publishing work continues today,

including *Zion Herald*, a monthly newsletter-magazine printed by offset press with George Hnamte as editor.

The Church is well governed with its own constitution, by-laws, and manual. Its national offices have been upgraded with computers and other items since 2000. Isaac Hnamte, who provided details for this report, writes: "We uphold the originally inspired Scriptures available for our spiritual growth toward maturity. Yeshua the Messiah is the absolute Head of the church. And Salvation is a gift of God's grace, and comes to us solely through Faith we obtained as a gift. . . . A stronger process of refinement into a Christo-centric doctrine has been undertaken since 1994."

The Mizoram Conference is part of the Association of the Churches of God (Seventh Day) in India, a charter member of the International Ministerial Congress, which Elder Hnamte attended in 1982 and 2007. The

conference has its own missions in Myanmar and Bangladesh, as well as in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya, and Manipur within India.

The conference reports these statistics as evidence of God's blessings: They have constructed thirty-five buildings in Mizoram, two in Bangladesh, two in Myanmar, and five in Assam, with combined membership in excess of four thousand.

Please pray for your brethren in Mizoram, India. Their current needs include funding for musical instruments, a public address system, and other projects for youth, as well as support for gospel workers. Special thanks to National FYC ministry this year for the focus on Mizoram and to all who faithfully support our conferences and missions around the world.

— William C. Hicks
Executive Director
International Ministerial Congress



Reconciliation

We live in a broken world. Three words succinctly summarize this brokenness: *rebellion*, *racism*, and *religion*. Each points to a broken relationship.

We were made for relationship. Communion between God and man was Eden's trademark. But that soon ended because of sin — man's **rebellion**.

Sin's effects extend beyond our relationship with God to our relationships with others. People form ideas and feelings about each other based on negative stereotypes. This results in prejudice ("pre-judging") based on **race**, among other things, and leads to discrimination and injustice.

Religion, defined here as man's attempt to reach God, often substitutes religious conduct for real relationship. It is "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5, NIV). Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus in John 3 is a sobering reminder that one can be religious but lost.

Key to fixing our broken world is another R word at the heart of the gospel, one that should be the heartbeat of the church's ministry and message: *reconciliation*. Paul asserts:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-20, NIV).

Reconciliation is the answer to our rebellion, the antidote to racism, and the best option to "getting religion." As Christians, we believe the only solution to the sin problem is the blood of Christ; that racism, whether overt or skillfully disguised, is a discredit to Christ and the church; and that a personal relationship with God through Christ is what people need — not religion.

Reconciliation is a message for the church, as much as for the world. The most effective way to communicate it is to model it, showing what living and serving together in authentic Christian community really look like. The church's best shot at impacting today's post-Christian world is more in our unity — how we get along, how we forgive each other — than in how we confront the culture. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35, NIV).

Our church's 150th year is a good time to think about relationships, unity, and reconciliation. Looking back, we see the faith and foibles of our fathers and are reminded that disunity not only weakens Christ's body but also dilutes our witness and is a poor testimony to the younger generation. On the other hand, unity strengthens the body of Christ, gives credibility to our witness, and makes those coming behind us more eager to embrace our faith and carry the torch when we're gone.

The phrase "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17) is derived from *ethnos* in the original text. Thus Paul asserts that those who are in Christ form a "new race" or "new ethnicity" composed of all nations, languages, and colors. It is one holy race, having one common denominator: reconciliation through Christ.

The three R's — *rebellion*, *racism*, and *religion* — are breaking the world, and one R can fix it: *reconciliation*. The latter is made possible through the Cross, configured when the relationships are restored between God and man (vertical) and man and man (horizontal). Compelled by Christ's love, may we truly be the generation of reconciliation and peace.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President



**“Remember
now your Creator in
the days of your
youth . . .”
(Ecclesiastes 12:1).**



Let My People Go! 2008

Summer camps, retreats, and other ventures for every age are slated in Arkansas, California, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and other states. See youth camp details at <http://nfyc.cog7.org> – then GO!

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