

July-August 2009

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE®



Damaged Dollar

Faith and finances (p. 4)

The bigger picture (p. 8)

A friend indeed (p. 12)



4



8



14



25

ARTICLES

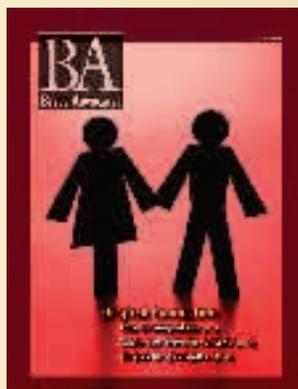
- 4 **Living in God's Economy** — BA interview with Crown Financial Ministries CEO Chuck Bentley
- 8 **What You Don't Know About Job Loss** — by Sherri Langton
- 11 **Work for the Unemployed** — by Ernie Klassek
- 14 **Faith-Plus Forum on Politics** — by Israel Steinmetz, Joseph Howard, Lowell Padgett, and Bob Moyers
- 16 **The King's Nightmare** — by Robert Coulter
- 19 **I Am a Member!** — by Kenneth Lawson

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 **First Word** — Case for a Few Words
- 7 **Questions & Answers**
- 12 **My Journey** — by Ralph Hanahan as told to Sherri Langton
- 20 **HeartSpeak**
- 22 **Viewpoint** — Justice and Generosity for All
- 23 **Mail Bag**
- 30 **International Tour** — Kenya
- 31 **Last Word** — The Body

25 COG7 IN ACTION

Spring Vale, Medical Missions, and more



Miss the last issue on human sexuality? View it and the current issue, plus download the last eight BA's, at www.cog7.org/BA.

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Case for a Few Words

I was puzzled, even annoyed, when I first heard it: “Go everywhere and preach the gospel; use words if necessary.” For a preacher-teacher-writer, after all, words are necessary. How could I spread the Word without using words?

I’ve had time to listen and reflect since that troubling moment, and I’m still enthusiastic about words fitly spoken or written. But I will take a swing here for less speaking, in many cases, and more doing.

The gospel may be shared using too many words, or too few. Why is it that Christians are known more for our negative chatter than for our positive action? America’s churches, airwaves, and cyberspaces are filled with religious talk. But when all is said and done, more is almost always said than done. “He who has knowledge spares his words . . .” (Proverbs 17:27), so “let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). Jesus hints that our good works are more likely to produce God’s glory than our good words (Matthew 5:16).

On the other hand, keeping quiet when speech is called for has little to recommend it either. Silence in some situations may be golden; in others it is plain yellow. Matthew 5:16 is a poor excuse not to speak.

We would accomplish more for God’s kingdom on Earth if we devised and consistently followed a two-phase plan: 1) supportive partnership with the Church and its members and 2) good deeds and few words — charity in action — toward the unchurched.

In our April-May issue, we shared condensed versions (1-25 words) of the Bible message on this page and invited readers to submit their own four-word summaries. Several did.

Manny Molinar III suggested “In God we trust.” Richard Burkard sent “To live is Christ.” Debra Boyles entered the alphabetical “All because Christ died.” Leland and Gwen Bayer contributed “Repent and be saved.” Steven Zuraff said, “Love God and man,” and Bob Moyers, “Go and make disciples.”

Other entries, all from Spring Vale students: “Saved by God’s grace” (Alex Rincker); “Unbroken, unconditional, faithful love” (Cameron Moore); “Surrender, service, love, glory” (James Edwards); “Faith: love with works” (Tabitha Weekes); “Strong, caring, sincere Friend” (Jamie Rodriguez); and “God has a plan” (David Marquez).

Thanks to all who sent entries. Now let’s live generously and speak succinctly!

— Elder Calvin Burrell



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Living in God's Economy

A BA interview with
Crown Financial
Ministries CEO
Chuck Bentley



For 34 years, Crown Financial Ministries has been a leader in providing biblical instruction on acquiring, spending, investing, and giving material resources.

Chuck Bentley resides near Atlanta, Georgia.

BA: Speak to those who, at least on paper, have lost from 10 to 50 percent of their life savings, and perhaps their jobs, this last year. In view of the current economic uncertainty, what long-range plans should people make?

CB: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to your readers.

With soaring unemployment, the Wall Street meltdown, declining home values, record foreclosures, and the erosion of the dollar's global purchasing power, we have reason to be concerned. In view of these events and the resulting uncertainty we face, I recommend that Christians take this simple action: Reset your spiritual and financial values in God's economy, not man's. Man's economy will lead to disappointment, but living in God's economy will never disappoint us (Hebrews 13:5, 6).

Viewing our circumstances in light of the economic plan God has established, we see Christ as our chief treasure; therefore, we can lose money but not true riches. This may seem too simplistic, but the loss of earthly treasures evokes strong and powerful forces of fear and anxiety that lead to stress, depression, and despair. Those who can see that they are not owners but temporary stewards can experience contentment and joy in the midst of this uncertain economy and our personal circumstances.

We also need to reset our financial values to become wise and faithful with what we have, whether much or little, instead of defining our lives by outward success and accumulation of wealth. This will free us to pursue economic goals such as living beneath our means, eliminating

debt, saving for the future, avoiding highly speculative risks, and living generously.

Over the long term, Christians who live in harmony with the forces of God's economy are in a position to serve the needs of those hurt by man's economy. Further, they will be prepared for hearing "Well done, good and faithful servant." This great battle has come into even clearer contrast in the past 18 months as financial empires in man's economy have collapsed before our very eyes.

BA: Some Christians think this recession is part of God's end-time plan leading to world collapse and Armageddon; others think we'll pull out of it. What's your perspective?

CB: A record number of Americans consider the economy to be our greatest problem. Most are not quite sure when this pain will end, where we're headed, or what to do about it. I think this will only grow over the next twelve to eighteen months as problems persist.

Adding to our angst, the U.S. government recently loaned billions of dollars to bail out, or stimulate, the economy. When the federal government becomes the lender of last resort, the taxpayer takes on another financial burden, and stress on the next generation increases. President Obama was quoted as saying, "Our federal debt is unsustainable . . . we are mortgaging our children's future."

A friend of mine says, "When the good credit of the United States government is finally exhausted and the nation defaults to our creditors, Financial Ar-

mageddon will begin." Personally I don't think we are headed there just yet. However, the present shocks and tremors are early warning signs that we must change — now! To prepare for more difficult days ahead, Christians should be living in God's economy.

With political leaders calling for a move from the dollar to a single global currency and with a unified global financial policy that governs the world's largest economies, I believe we are witnessing prophetic signs. The world is rapidly realigning, and we need to be aware of and sensitive to it. But I do not want to overreach and attempt to interpret these signs or assume the role of a prophet.

Paul, however, linked our attitude about money and possessions to the end times:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy . . . (2 Timothy 3:1, 2, NIV).

BA: What do you say to Christian Americans about our materialism and when to say enough is enough?

CB: By financial standards, Americans are wealthy. One half of the world's population lives on less than the equivalent of \$2/day in America; over a billion people live on less than \$1/day. We are the upper class of the world's nations. If we are controlled by the forces of man's economy, we become ensnared by our endless pursuit of comfort and the next big thing.

Our gross domestic product is now fueled by consumer spending, not industrial output. Our spending on leisure, recreation, and entertainment is roughly twice that of our charitable giving. Just 60 years ago, the average household size was about 250 sq. ft. per person; last year, it peaked at about 1,000 sq. ft. per person under the roof of a single-family dwelling. This is a clear indicator of the constant quest for more.

As we Christians reset our spiritual and financial priorities, we can find contentment in what we have, set a standard of living consistent with our purpose to serve others, and live generously.

BA: Some say that Christians in America average giving under three percent of income to charitable causes, including the church. Is this accurate?

**Christ is our chief treasure;
therefore, we can lose money
but not true riches.**

CB: There are conflicting surveys regarding this statistic, but in general this number is accurate. It says that although total giving in this country is enormous — approaching \$300 billion per year — our charitable giving as a percentage of gross annual income is anemic. Based upon 52 weeks of earned income per year, we donate just one week per year. Particularly troubling are surveys indicating roughly one-third of self-identified Christians give no money to their church.

Numerous factors contribute to this issue. Foremost, spiritual immaturity prevents believers from understanding that our Lord is generous to us. David expressed it this way:

“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand” (1 Chronicles 29:14, NIV).

Second, lifestyle bondage prevents us from having the financial margin to give without fear of compromising repayment of debts.

When spiritual maturity and financial freedom are both present in our lives, cheerful, transformational generosity will be the resulting fruit. As good stewards, we should prioritize this objective as the highest and best ex-

pression of our love for God.

God’s love is the most powerful force in His economy, and our generosity is the best expression of His love. We are called to give to perpetuate His church, to serve needs in the body with a special tenderness toward the poor and suffering. These are our privileges and the bases for our future rewards.

BA: What links have you noted between one’s material wealth and the vitality of his/her faith?

CB: I’ve had opportunity to teach truth about God’s economy around the world. In my travels I’ve met faithful Christians who, financially, are among the world’s poorest and the world’s richest. From those living on survival’s edge and trusting Christ for their daily bread to those worth a billion dollars or more, seeking to give away all they own for God’s glory. Spiritual maturity is not related to material wealth, and God’s servants are found throughout every economic stratum. However, God’s Word speaks to your question directly on both ends of the financial spectrum.

James 2:5 teaches us to esteem the poor for their understanding of true riches: “Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor

in the eyes of the world to be *rich in faith* and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?” (NIV). I have found this to be the case. Often those who have very little in the world’s eyes have a deep, abiding faith in Christ because so little competes for their time and affections. Their faith and spiritual fervor have been humbling and inspiring to me.

Also, I have observed the practical truth of these words:

“The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22, NIV).

In man’s economy, material wealth is a powerful competitor for our total affection and dependency upon Christ. It can choke the seeds of God’s Word and prevent His fruit from growing.

BA: What advice do you offer younger readers — in college or ready to enter the work force?

CB: Discover the mysterious yet practical experience of living in God’s economy. This will lead you to seek to fulfill His purposes through your life and keep you from the traps and ensnarement of man’s economy. You will know you have made the transition when you are spiritually renewed, stewarding wisely, and living generously. This is God’s plan, and I can offer no greater encouragement to you in your journey. **BA**

God’s love is the most powerful force in His economy, and our generosity is the best expression of His love.

To contact Crown, visit www.crown.org.

Q How should the Flood story affect our lives?

A The Genesis flood teaches us that God will judge the ungodly at the end of this age, even as He did in Noah's day (2 Peter 3:6, 7). It implies that He will save those who find grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). Our salvation from the fiery judgment ahead comes through being in Christ — our ark of safety — by faith, repentance, and baptism (1 Peter 3:20, 21). Don't "myth" this boat!

Q What's the role of prayer in developing patience?

A Several of Jesus' sayings and stories connect prayer with patience. He exhorted the disciples to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking in order to receive from God. His parables of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-10) and the persistent widow (18:1-8) teach that productive prayer both requires patience and develops more patience.

A modern woman asked her pastor to pray that she would receive patience. When he knelt and prayed, "Lord, send trouble to this woman," she expressed irritation. Citing Romans 5:3 and James 1:2-4, the pastor explained that people learn patience best through trials and tribulation. Asking for problems may never become a popular prayer, but we should recognize that prayer itself is a way of exercising and growing our patience against the storm.

Q The Bible talks of a sin that leads to death and that there's no need to pray for that (1 John 5:16, 17). People in my church say it is adultery. Are they right?

A No, the Bible does not teach that adultery is worse than other sins or that it leads to death while others do not. The text you cite does not identify the sin that leads to death. Rather than trying to identify a specific sin, we should focus on obedience

to God and faith in Christ as Savior. Listen to His words: "I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven . . ." (Mark 3:28, 29). Any believer not living in rebellion against God need not fear that he is guilty of the sin unto death.

Q "A deacon must be the husband of but one wife . . ." (1 Tim. 3:12). Does this refer to remarriage after divorce, to polygamy, or to both?

A Most Bible students understand this text to address and prohibit polygamy among the church's leaders, not to deny one who has been divorced for valid cause and remarried. When a divorce is granted, both in ancient and modern times, the marriage is dissolved and the divorcee is no longer married (Deut. 24:1, 2; 1 Cor. 7:15). One who marries again after divorce, then, has only one wife, not two. The man or woman who is divorced for a valid, biblical reason has a right to remarry.

Q Jesus said, "You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form" (John 5:37). Considering this, whose voice was it that declared, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22)?

A This puzzle may be solved several ways. It is likely that those to whom Jesus spoke in John 5:37 were not among the crowd that heard "This is My beloved Son" at His baptism. Not being present at that time, they had never heard God's voice.

Another option is that Jesus uses the word *heard* in the sense of "to hear with belief and assent." The Greek verb for *to hear* can have that meaning. They had "listened" with their ears, but not truly listened with heart and life.

— *Answers by Elder Calvin Burrell*

What You Don't Know About Job Loss



Here's what job
fairs and career
counselors forget
to tell you.
by Sherri Langton

December 1988: my last full month of employment at a large downtown Denver bank. A layoff wiped scores of employees' names off the bank's payroll, and mine was one of them. But I had a plan: Update my résumé, land some interviews, and find a job I *really* wanted. Prepared to hit the streets and find work, I hummed the tune "I'm living by faith and feel no alarm."

But in time I *did* feel alarm — and other things besides, like discouragement, loneliness, and depression. No wonder: Severance pay and unemployment checks covered my bills but weren't replenished by a paycheck. Businesses ready to hire turned me away or didn't return my calls.

I berated myself. Faith alone should get me through this job famine, right? I should be stronger, sure of God's goodness to deliver. But some days I wondered if He cared or even knew what was going on.

That was twenty years ago. Today from my desk at the Bible Advocate Press, I look back on that time and thank God for His deliverance to this place of "rich fulfillment" (Psalm 66:12). And my heart goes out to the millions of unemployed in the fire and water of deep recession.

So does Gary Hansen's. Last December Gary started Inspired Calling, a career coaching organization that helps people in job transition. Based on his personal and professional experience, Gary teaches what those in layoff have learned but aren't hearing: that a job loss is more than tightening the budget and churning out résumés; it means dealing with emotional, spiritual, and relational complexities as well.

Emotional workout

First, the discouragement, loneliness, and depression I felt are just a few of many negative reactions to a layoff. None of them signal an absence of faith; rather, they reflect what it means to be human, to be “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Many people spend significant time cycling through shock, denial, anger, and blame after a layoff. This is because losing a job is an immense change. It ranks third on the grief scale, behind the death of a family member and divorce.

Gary learned this firsthand. This time last year he served as human resources director and chief of staff at a large Christian ministry. A change in leadership handed Gary his own pink slip last September. Fourteen years of fulfilling work abruptly ended, and Gary found himself spinning in a whirlpool of unfamiliar emotions. “For a few days, I was in shock and denial. *Is this really happening to me?* Once I realized that, yeah, the decision’s been made and everyone’s moving on, then blame and anger set in. *Did I do something wrong? Did somebody else?*”

Fear and insecurity also rank as major emotions in job loss. They start us on the treadmill of “What ifs?” Every day we run through an exhausting routine: “What if we lose the car or house? What if we have to cash in our IRA? What if we spend all our savings?”

The longer the time without work, the harder the emotional workout. And the more other areas of our lives are affected, like sleep, eating, health — even relationship with God.

Questioning God

Questioning the Almighty in times of loss is as old as Job. Who wouldn’t wonder about a God who had once provided everything and then, in one breath, blew it all away? His silence to our prayers for work only adds to the pain of the pink slip. Job voiced what many feel:

Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! . . . Look, I go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; when He works on the left hand, I cannot behold Him; when He turns to the right hand, I cannot see Him (23:3, 8, 9).

Indeed, at times this is a God beyond figuring out. But even in the midst of frustration, Job challenged his own doubt:

But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold (v. 10).

God always knows the way of His people. He engineered Israel’s escape from Egypt. In fact,

Gary suggests that when you think layoff, think Red Sea. While God may seem removed, He is invisibly overseeing your passage to the other side. Trusting Him in job loss, then, isn’t a sprint to the far shore but a grueling, tedious walk of faith.

Gary feels those in job loss need to be reminded of this sweeping Old Testament event. He’s even made it part of Inspired Calling’s curriculum, based on Robert J. Morgan’s thin volume *The Red Sea Rules* (Thomas Nelson). The book’s premise: The God who led you in will lead you out.

Not admitting to such emotional and spiritual struggles in job loss risks greater problems in other areas. Gary explains, “I know people who have said, ‘Oh, I’m fine, I’m fine. I’m just moving on. Losing my job is no big deal.’ But those emotions tend to creep back into your thinking at very unpredictable times. When people have lost a job and have anger they haven’t

How the Church Can Help

Gary Hansen feels that the local church is the best place to assist those going through job loss. Inspired Calling’s six-hour sessions, in fact, are presented at churches. Also, Gary and one of his team members, Al Hodges, have started support groups for the unemployed in their local congregations. Once a week they meet for prayer, review *The Red Sea Rules*, and work on skills-building. Since mid-December, six people in Gary’s group have found jobs. Contact Gary at Inspired Calling (www.inspireddcalling.com) for ideas on what you can do in your church.

Besides this, Gary urges the unemployed to network with those in their congregations who may know of job openings. If they lack technological skills in setting up profiles on the business site LinkedIn, they can seek those in their congregations who do know and can help. To learn more about technology and the changing face of job search, visit www.cog7.org/BA. 

— Sherri Langton

dealt with, it can creep back into their marriage and into stressful situations with their kids. They tend to overreact.”

Strength in numbers

How, then, can an unemployed person work through these issues? Not by himself, Gary says. While God is our “very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1), He also uses fellow believers for support. “Two are better than one,” the teacher writes in Ecclesiastes 4:9 — not just for a greater return of labor but also for survival through tough times:

If they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up (v. 10).

A jobless person may need to take the first step by telling others what he’s going through. “It’s very uncomfortable to tell somebody you just lost your job,” Gary admits. “But if you can start

talking about it with your close friends or family, then the sting goes away a little and you can get past the whole self-esteem issue. You can begin to talk about help.”

That help, Gary feels, comes through deeper connections: prayer partners. “Start with people you know and trust; ask them to start praying for you,” Gary suggests. “Ask them to call you once or twice a week to see how you’re doing, and tell them how you’re feeling. [Doing this] promotes healing. It’s like putting salve on the wound.”

Going it alone in a layoff isn’t just unhealthy; it’s dangerous. Gary believes that isolation after a layoff is “the Devil’s playground.” You can combat his lies by fixing your thoughts on what is true, honorable, and right (Philippians 4:8). “Satan lives in a world of half-truth,” Gary explains. “He’s going to tell you just enough so you’ll think about what he’s planting in your mind, but he’s twisted it for his own

purpose to cause a negative result in your thinking.

“[Satan’s half-truths] could be something about your wife and her attitude toward you or about a job you applied for. Maybe it’s a job that would involve moving, and Satan will plant lies about whether it would be a good idea to move or not, when it might be a wise move for your career.”

Prayer partners are the weapons to help you combat these half-truths. Gary says, “When you bring prayer partners into your life, you can tell them about what your thought life has been. You say, ‘I’m feeling awfully discouraged. I just don’t feel like I’ve got a lot of skills or I’m too old or I’m overweight’ — a hundred different things. Your friends can challenge those lies and help turn your thoughts from negative things to the blessings God is giving you, and remind you of the positive things you can do with your life.”

Changeless God

Much about job loss has changed since my out-of-work days in 1989. Looking for employment is mostly high tech now. Sites like LinkedIn help put your best foot forward to recruiters. Even Twitter may soon be harnessed by those looking for work. Other impacts of joblessness — emotional, spiritual, and relational — have not changed and never will.

Neither will God. No matter how deep the recession or how high the unemployment rate, He retains His power and plan (Ephesians 3:20; Jeremiah 29:11). He still watches over His people, guiding them toward deliverance in His time and way. **BA**

The Other Victims

Jenny Hanahan (see “My Journey,” p. 12) offers these insights on job loss from a spouse’s point of view:

“People tend to forget that the supporting spouse doesn’t go off to the Bahamas while the other goes through a layoff. It’s just as much, if not more, stress on the supporting spouse who isn’t looked at by others as having sacrificed anything. The supporting spouse has to keep the other’s spirits up as well. The loss of income to the family is a loss to everyone and turns all their lives and credit upside down. That is a sacrifice of both husband and wife, or of the whole family.

“Don’t treat the supporting spouse and the family as though they are observers of the loss. They are participants.

“When two people love and respect each other, what affects one, affects the other. If a family is involved, others need to understand that the whole bunch is experiencing loss and stress.”

— Sherri Langton

“What’s the matter with you?” asked my wife with a tone of bewilderment.

She had every reason to be bewildered. Here we were, a young couple with two small children on an idyllic beach on Tasmania’s northwest coast. We had good health. My wife was very much a Proverbs 31 woman. We were a happy family. Our neighbors would help us anytime.

For migrants who had come to Australia penniless a few years earlier, we had done well. With a good job, I owned our car and a weatherboard home on several acres in the bush. Many of my forefathers strove all their lives for as much but never achieved it.

I had everything I ever dreamed of, yet somehow I felt as though I were unemployed and not doing much worthwhile. Why?

The answer came one day as I read Matthew 20:1-16 about some fellows standing around doing nothing until the day they were given new jobs. The part about their wages at day’s end and their reactions is funny. Read it.

Jesus begins with: “For the kingdom of heaven is like. . .” Reading His other stories with that introduction, we know He wants us to understand something about a working relationship between Him and us.

On Earth some two thousand years ago, Jesus called fellows of all walks to work for Him. They were mature men, successful, yet He offered them a new job. “Follow Me,” He told them, as much as to say, “Work for Me.”

When I first read this, I was puzzled because those men

Work for the Unemployed

by Ernie Klassek

dropped everything and followed Jesus and went to work for Him. But I’m no longer puzzled, because the same happened to me. I was in my thirties — prime of life, with everything going for me. But when God called, I dropped what I was doing and followed Christ.

It was all a matter of priorities. My ultimate goal in life was no longer material goods. Now I was working for Him.

My new job, helping spread the good news of God’s kingdom, became the most rewarding imaginable. Working for Jesus made the highest pay on Earth look petty. And I had great work mates.

They too were called to work for Jesus at different life stages — some quite young, some in their prime, some elderly. We all did the same as Christ’s first disciples: dropped what we were doing, rolled up our sleeves, and went to work for Him.

What about people who strive for only success and riches all their lives? Could they be no more than some poor unemployed in God’s sight? Up to the time of our calling, had we not been like those idle fellows in

Christ’s story? And not only we, but also people called throughout history had been the same — millions of men and women, girls and boys — until Jesus gave them their true purpose in life: to do their bit in God’s work by working in His kingdom, praying for many, helping their fellow citizens, sharing their hope. The list of jobs is endless.

You never know. At a time in life when you too are busy doing your own thing, God may call you to follow Jesus. You’ll find working for Him is the best job you have ever done.

The pay, the reward, is the most equitable, too. While salvation can’t be earned but freely given, it’s the same for everyone, whether you started early in life, halfway, or in the twilight years.

The kingdom of heaven is for all who were once doing nothing and now follow Jesus Christ. There is plenty of work for the unemployed. **BA**

An Austrian emigrant, **Ernie Klassek** lived 36 years in Tasmania. He now lives in Booragoon, a leafy suburb of Perth, Western Australia.



Taking the Pink Slip

by **Ralph Hanahan as told to Sherri Langton**

Things didn't look good at work. In late summer 2008 the state of South Carolina, where I'd been employed for twenty-two years, struggled with budget problems. All agencies would be cutting expenses, and some might reduce their workforce. The one I served three years as a computer tech, Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities in Greenville, could be one of them.

The next few weeks, my wife, Jenny, and I discussed how a layoff would impact us. Things would be tough: The national economy had begun a severe downturn, with layoffs in the news almost nightly. Jenny worked as a real estate agent but was bringing home little because of the housing market slump. Still, we both came to the same conclusion: If the choice of a layoff came down between my co-worker, Mike Camp, and me, I should be the one to go.

That might sound strange, since I had seniority over Mike in the state system and was within seven years of retiring. But Mike and I had become close friends. Plus I was in my mid-fifties with

a grown son; Mike was just forty years old and married with four young children, ages six to ten. The youngest, Aaron, was severely autistic. Over time he had made remarkable progress in therapy. Jenny and I agreed we couldn't just stand by and let a layoff end a salary and medical benefits the Camp family desperately needed.

As we prayed about the matter, we found guidance in the Scriptures: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends," Jesus said (John 15:13, NIV). Though I wasn't literally laying down my life for Mike, I did see my job as part of my life. Would I let it go for Mike's sake?

We also read, "Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:33, NIV). It's natural to protect yourself when hardship comes along. Could Jesus be telling me that self-sacrifice was the best way to preserve my life?

Those scriptures, plus prayer, cemented our decision. I notified Governor's School that, if someone had to be eliminated, I would take the layoff for Mike. God's peace held us steady.

As weeks went by and the

economy worsened, the school began laying off some part-time, non-permanent staff. When I returned to work from a short vacation in October, rumors circulated around the school that I would be laid off. Sure enough, the Friday before Thanksgiving break, I was called to the human resources office and told that my job was being cut. "Why don't you think about it over the weekend," the HR director suggested, referring to my offer to take the layoff for Mike. But I didn't need to think about it; my mind was made up.

I got home around 4:30 that afternoon — earlier than usual. Jenny took one look at me and knew instantly I'd been let go. I wasn't sure how she'd react: With the real estate meltdown, she needed help with her personal bills. I knew this decision would financially hurt her as well as me.

When I explained the circumstances to Jenny, she told me, "There isn't anything else you could have done." That relieved me so much. We both knew my taking the layoff was the right thing to do and that God would provide for us somehow.

All this time I thought the layoff was just between the Camps

and us, but Mike's mother contacted *Good Morning America* about it. In December, the whole story came out with Mike's family, Jenny, and me on national TV — the Camps' way of saying thanks. I was surprised and embarrassed by all this attention, since we hadn't intended for this to go any further than my co-worker and his family.

It saddened me for our nation, that what we did would be considered a big deal. Not long ago it would have been considered part of the "American way," but now people considered it newsworthy. Has compassion died in America? Perhaps it's declining, but my heart says that many others are doing similar things, without notice.

Jenny and I received many e-mail messages, blog posts, and well wishes after that TV appearance. The comments ranged from "My faith in humanity has been restored" to "You have shown us what a true Christian example is." Though grateful that others were inspired by what they'd seen or heard, I agonized over why the spotlight should be on me and how to focus all the praise on God our Father. This led me to think of Jesus' words:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. . . . In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14,16, NIV).

The next few months of job searching proved tough. I had been without work when our



Left to right: Brian O'Keefe (Good Morning America producer), Ralph Hanahan, Lorrie Camp, Mike Camp, and Jenny Hanahan

son was young, so I knew things wouldn't be easy. But at the time of my layoff from the school, South Carolina ranked second in the nation for unemployment. I filed applications online and fought discouragement when no work came through. To make things worse, Jenny didn't have one house sale during that time. We depended on the prayers of our church family, friends, and concerned strangers. Thanks to them, we continued to thrive on God's peace. Even on our hardest days neither Jenny nor I regretted my taking the layoff for Mike.

In April our prayers were finally answered: I was offered work from the state at a different agency, and then a second offer came at a higher salary. The job allowed me to reenter the state's retirement system as well. We know this extra blessing came from God, since most state jobs were frozen at the time.

Looking back, Jenny and I

wonder how we survived financially during those five months without work. Except for a small sum given by a friend, we received no assistance from anyone. Through the comfort and providence of our Lord, we made it.

And we learned several lessons along the way. We learned how to support each other during job loss. We learned that sometimes God uses a bad situation to teach what it means to do the right thing. We learned that God is still in charge of the affairs of His people and that He will not abandon His children; He will provide in His time and way if we're patient.

Ralph and Jenny Hanahan fellowship with Midlands Christian Church of God, an unaffiliated Sabbatarian group in Columbia, SC. He serves as an elder there.



Photo: Steven Zuraff (Shawnee, OK)

Man Without a Party

by Israel Steinmetz
Kansas City, Missouri

I saw a man wearing a shirt that said, "Jesus is a Republican!" Like others, he believes that Jesus-followers should all choose the same political party. Lots of Americans can't seem to tell the difference between duty to God and duty to country, between their allegiance to Christ and their party of choice.

Looking at Jesus, we see a different picture. Like us, He lived at a time of political intrigue where numerous forces jockeyed for power. Local authorities sought privilege under Rome, while religious groups, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, exercised influence through the courts and synagogues. On the fringe, Essenes and Zealots utilized asceticism and violent resistance,

respectively, against the status quo.

Jesus never aligned Himself with any of these. Rather, He boldly proclaimed the kingdom of God, a community at odds with the kingdoms of the world. In God's kingdom the last come first, the humble are exalted, the proud brought low, the peace-makers triumph, and the servant is great. Christ submitted to human government, but asserted that its only authority was delegated from a Higher Power.

Jesus called people to follow Him and seek His kingdom, regardless of which earthly kingdom they represented. In years to come His disciples would include zealots and Roman soldiers, Pharisees and tax collectors, common peasants and Roman royalty, Jews and Gentiles. Each of them saw in Jesus something greater than partisan allegiances and earthly associations. Each entered a kingdom far surpassing anything human beings could build or govern.

We are called to follow the King of kings and to seek first His kingdom. He tells us to submit to earthly authority, pay taxes, respect authorities, and pray for leaders. We may engage in political activism or civil service, but we always remember that God rules above earthly powers and that our true struggle is with spiritual powers of darkness, not with another political party.

This should give us pause when we think to divide the body of Christ along partisan lines. It alerts us to the fact that no earthly party perfectly represents God's kingdom; rather, each must be critiqued in the Light. It reminds us that neither liberals nor conservatives are the enemies of Christ. The spirit that works disbelief and rebellion in people from every political party is the real foe.

Christians, not Americans, are God's chosen people, and our hope lies not in the triumph of our party or nation but in the triumph of Christ and His king-

dom. Jesus looked at the various parties of His day and assessed them in light of their conformity to His kingdom. Jesus was a man without a party, a man committed solely to the advancement of the kingdom of God. May we follow in His steps.

On Stem Cells

by Joseph Howard
Hartly, Delaware

If you know about stem cells only what popular news programs or publications say, you may think that

- stem cells offer the promise of marvelous new treatments soon to be harvested from embryos that will mitigate or cure dread and terminal diseases, with breakthroughs right around the corner and more research needed to eliminate much suffering and death.

- humanitarian science ought not — indeed must not — be impeded by the feelings of confused or squeamish people with religious or philosophical objection to the killing of embryos.

- embryos killed by the stem cell extraction process are only *potential* life, as the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled.

- embryos killed by stem cell harvesting are excess embryos from in vitro fertilization clinics, to be destroyed if not used for experimentation; thus, none are killed and all are helped by stem cell research.

Now the reality: Genetics and embryology inform us that an entire human being, distinct from Mother and Father, comes to life

at the moment of conception. An embryo is not an “it” but a he or she. Every hereditary trait is programmed into the genes as an embryonic self was built. Each of us exists now only because that self was not destroyed in the womb.

Stem cells harvested from adults, not embryos, are now being used to heal ailments recently thought to be incurable. While embryonic stem cells might be more versatile, stem cells taken from the patients’ own bodies (many in the skin) are free from rejection by the immune system, thus needing no protection by dangerous immuno-suppressant drugs. It is shameful and immoral to kill pre-born people for experiments that may or may not someday yield cures.

Evangelical Christians have fought the good fight against the murder of the tiniest. Prizing the sixth commandment as much as the fourth, Sabbathkeepers might well join other evangelicals, including physicians, in opposing the killing of our youngest descendants. We should learn from them and choose the best methods to advance our common cause. Working together will not only show love to our

progeny but also may help erase the misunderstanding and prejudice held by many on both sides of the Sabbath/Sunday divide.

On Abortion

by Lowell Padgett
Manassas, Virginia

I fear for the U.S. So many in high places are champions of abortion, yet claim to be Christians. Can one who is occupied by the Father, Son, and Spirit become an advocate for this debased sin? If God works in the Christian to do His good pleasure, would one dare say He directs them to support abortion?

I sent gentle letters to several U.S. senators asking how they’d reply in the judgment when God asks about the children. Senator X replied with form letters, saying how he wished to make abortion available to all. Senator Y said the government has no right to tell a woman what to do regarding procreation; he firmly supports abortion rights.

Years ago I knew a farmhand
continued on page 23



Prizing the sixth commandment as much as the fourth, Sabbathkeepers might well join other evangelicals, including physicians, in opposing the killing of our youngest descendants.



Art by Janice Henderson Orr (Joplin, MO)

The King's Nightmare

Most dreams fade as the day dawns. Exposed to gospel light, this one still beams bright.
by Robert Coulter

Have you ever had a nightmare you couldn't remember? Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had such a dream — one with great meaning for all the world's peoples, past and present. It's all there in the Old Testament book of the prophet Daniel.

Unable to recall his vision, though greatly troubled by it, the king summoned Babylon's wise men to tell him the dream's content and meaning. When this proved too formidable a task for them, Nebuchadnezzar decreed that all the seers of Babylon, including three of Daniel's

close friends, should be executed (Daniel 2:1-15).

Daniel offered to tell the king's dream and its interpretation, if given time. Once he returned to his friends, the four of them prayed earnestly to learn the dream. Mercifully, God did reveal both the vision and its meaning to the prophet. Before relating it to the king, Daniel glorified God, stating emphatically that it was not by his own ability that the vision was known but by divine revelation (vv. 16-30).

Daniel declared, "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue — an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance" (v. 31). The statue was composed of several metals of decreasing value. Its head was pure gold, its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs bronze, its legs iron, and its feet a mixture of iron and clay (vv. 32, 33).

Daniel continued: "While you were watching, a rock was cut

out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them" (v. 34). The rock's blow pulverized not just the feet but also all four kingdoms represented by the iron, bronze, silver, and gold. They became like chaff blown by the wind; no trace of them could be found. The rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth (v. 35).

Such was the dream. But what did it mean? God had given both the facts and their meaning to Daniel, and so he continued explaining to Nebuchadnezzar.

Interpretation

What did the head of gold represent? Nebuchadnezzar and his kingdom of Babylon, revealed the prophet (vv. 37, 38).

"After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron . . . As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle" (vv. 39, 40, 42).

The identity of the three kingdoms after Babylon is confirmed by history. The breast and arms of silver represented Medo-Persia, the empire that succeeded Babylon in 539 BC. Daniel witnessed the overthrow of Babylon by Darius the Mede and the death of Belshazzar, Babylon's monarch, on the night of its fall (5:28-31).

The kingdom represented by the belly and thighs of bronze was the Greek empire of Alexander the Great. Succeeding his father as head of the Hellenic

League in 336 BC, he put down rebellions in Greece, conquered Persia, and sped eastward as far as the Ganges River in India. His conquests ended when he died in 323 BC at the age of thirty-three.

Rome was the fourth kingdom, represented by the legs of iron and the feet of iron mixed with clay. Rome's history is ancient; it is known to have developed over the centuries by the conquest of many peoples. It reached its greatest size in Emperor Trajan's reign (AD 98-117).

Another kingdom

The decisive point of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is when the stone struck the feet of the statue, destroyed it, and became a huge mountain filling the earth 2:34, 35).

The kingdom symbolized by that rock was established by God. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom . . . It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever" (v. 44). The destruction of these four realms with one blow was made possible by the fact that Rome had absorbed by conquest the territories,

wealth, peoples, and cultures of its three predecessors. Thus all the kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's statue were represented in Rome when the rock struck and destroyed it.

The toes of iron mixed with clay were not ten kingdoms, as some suppose. The mixed material of the feet and toes simply illustrates the disunity of Rome's citizenry at the time of its destruction (v. 43). This lack of cohesion helped precipitate Rome's fall in AD 457 and permitted several new kingdoms to develop on its ruins in Western Europe.

Big picture

Let us study to get the big picture of this revelation from heaven, received by a pagan king and interpreted by a godly prophet. Understood correctly, it is good news indeed.

Who or what is represented by the rock that struck the statue's feet (vv. 34, 35)? Throughout Scripture Jesus is called a rock, or stone. He is referred to as "a stone that causes men to stumble and . . . fall" (Isaiah 8:14), "a tested stone, a precious cornerstone" (28:16), and the "stone the builders rejected . . . the capstone" (Psalm 118:22). Peter

By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus, our rock and king, has struck a decisive blow against the earthly kingdoms of proud, sinful humanity.

God's Kingdom Is . . .

The Bible reveals God in several dimensions. In the sacred pages we discover Him as creator, sustainer, king, lawgiver, and judge of the universe; as covenant-maker and redeemer for all the elect; and as heavenly Father for the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Here we consider God as king, the sovereign of all things. Whatever comes to pass under heaven in time or eternity passes first through the divine counsel; nothing can escape His knowledge or frustrate His plan. Our God reigns!

He is the king eternal (1 Timothy 1:17), the blessed and only potentate, the king of kings (6:15). He is the Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24) who reigns over all (1 Chronicles 29:11, 12). Because eternity is an attribute of God, His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (Exodus 15:18; Psalm 10:16; 29:10; 145:11-13; Jeremiah 10:10).

Among the children of men under the sun, whenever and wherever, the Lord God omnipotent rules (Revelation 19:6). This, then, becomes the working definition for the kingdom of God: The kingdom is that realm where the God of heaven rules and reigns.

The phrase *kingdom of heaven* is a synonym for the *kingdom of God* on Earth. These two phrases are used interchangeably in the Bible, as a comparison of the following verses demonstrates: Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:28; Matthew 5:3 and Luke 6:20; Matthew 19:23 and 19:24.

— BA

called Him the “living Stone” in 1 Peter 2:4-8, while quoting the three texts above. Jesus referred to Himself as a rock in connection with the impending judgment that fell upon the Jewish nation a few years after His ascension (Matthew 21:44).

The rock, representing Christ, destroyed the statue and became “a huge mountain and filled the whole earth” (Daniel 2:35). The term *mountain* in prophecy refers to “kingdom” (Isaiah 2:2, KJV). Thus it is certain that the “mountain that filled the whole earth” and will never be destroyed or left to another people is God’s kingdom that came among men in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was born during the time of Rome’s domination, the fourth kingdom. He began His ministry by proclaiming, “The time has come . . . The kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:14, 15). Jesus spoke often of the “kingdom of heaven” or “kingdom of God” as being present during His earthly ministry (Matthew 12:28; 23:13; Luke 11:20; 17:20, 21). Paul wrote that the kingdom of God is not composed of material things “but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17) — i.e., it is a spiritual kingdom.

This spiritual phase of God’s kingdom was established through the witness of the gospel of

Christ (Acts 1:8), the conviction of sinners by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11), and the missionary endeavors of the apostolic church (Romans 1:14-16). It is composed of Christ’s disciples whose lives are governed by His Word and Spirit, and it continues to exist through the preaching of the gospel.

The Church of God (Seventh Day) recognizes this present phase of God’s kingdom in its statement of faith: “The spiritual kingdom of grace exists now as God rules in the lives of obedient believers. This kingdom was announced and revealed through the prophets and the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The king’s nightmare is actually good news for God’s people: By His life, death, and resurrection at the First Advent, Jesus, our rock and king, has struck a decisive blow against the earthly kingdoms of proud, sinful humanity. God’s spiritual kingdom permeates through the world now and will perfectly fill the whole earth as a victorious, literal reality at Christ’s return.

“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony [witness, KJV] to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

BA

Robert Coulter, minister for more than fifty years, resides in Denver, CO. Scripture quotations were



taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.

We may be members of many things: a club, a clan, a council, a country. Some belonging is by choice; some is not. I didn't choose to join the Lawson family; I was born a member. Today, I gladly choose to "belong" there and enjoy all duties and privileges of that family, right where I was born.

I'm much like Dionysius, a member of a group called the Areopagites. Its members believed in Ares, the Greek god of war (Acts 17). They met in Athens with other groups to discuss ideas and philosophies. Paul took their meeting as an opportunity to preach the resurrection, and Dionysius believed what he heard. God's Spirit moved, bringing him to believe in Jesus. By faith, Dionysius found himself a member of the body of those who follow Christ. In that hour, his loyalty switched from faith in a false god to membership in God's church.

Me too, Dionysius. By faith in Jesus, I also belong to the body of Christ, His church. I became a member by the work of God's Holy Spirit, calling me to faith and repentance. This is the most important membership on Earth and where every believer's first loyalty ought to be.

With membership in Christ's body comes both privilege and responsibility. Yes, there are rules to follow, wrongs to give up, truths to believe, good things to do. These are not given to save us from the guilt of our sins or from our sinful nature; only Jesus does that. Rather, these duties come with belonging. When Dionysius joined Christ's body, he had to give up Ares. He never went to another Areopagus

I Am a Member!

by **Kenneth Lawson**

meeting, unless it was to preach Jesus!

Here's the deal. If we want forgiveness of sins and the promises of life that come with membership in Jesus Christ, then we also take the belief system of the Word of God and accept the responsibility of belonging. As members of the body of Christ and belonging to that holy temple in which the Spirit of God dwells, we live in true righteousness and holiness.

With regard to Christ's church, God made me a member instantly — when I was reborn by His Spirit through faith in Jesus. Then I made a choice to join and become a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day), a group of believers within the body of Christ that share my beliefs and goals. My membership in this group doesn't guarantee that I'm a part of Christ's bigger body; only God's grace in Jesus and the new birth can guarantee that (Ephesians 1:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22).

Belonging is important! I belong to the body of Christ by faith and a new birth. I serve that body by being a member

of the Church of God (Seventh Day). Belonging to the body of Christ thrills me, and I am happy with membership in our church organization. It provides me with avenues of service and with partners to serve my Lord Jesus. Our dependence on and concern for each other are both responsibilities and great delights.

I am proud to be a member of the Lawson family. And I'm even more thrilled to belong to God's family. In this household of faith, I have a share in the eternal promises of God and of Jesus Christ. They are mine! There is no greater joy and fulfillment than belonging to the body of Christ, and no greater avenue of service for me than to be a responsible member of the Church of God (Seventh Day), part of Christ's body, God's true church! I was born again here, and now I gladly choose to belong, right where I was born.

I am a member! I belong! **BA**

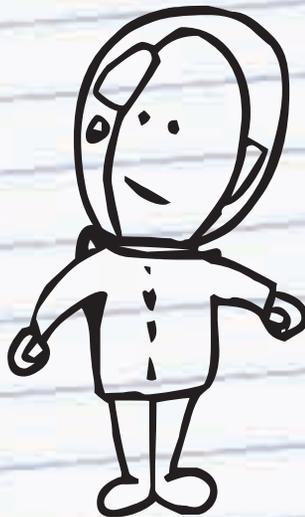
Kenneth Lawson pastors the church in Redmond, OR.

HEARTSPEAK

Everything I know I learned in the 7th grade

by Michael Mancha

You're never too young to learn a lesson in life.



Nothing good ever comes from anything prefaced with the phrase “Don’t be mad, but . . .”

Don’t be mad, but I drank all the milk.

Don’t be mad, but I lost your CD.

Don’t be mad, but you’ve been replaced.

Don’t be mad, but it’s over.

That phrase is a way of trying to soften the blow before delivering news that almost always hurts and, after the blow, is followed by a variety of apologies.

The element of surprise makes the news heartbreaking. You haven’t prepared yourself for this. When someone tells you something beginning with that little phrase, your life — even if for a moment — is completely altered.

My first “Don’t be mad” moment — the first one to leave a chip on my emotional wall — came in the seventh grade.

For the most part, nearly all the things young boys encounter at thirteen are met with great immaturity. We are awkward and confused and rarely think things out.

For example, in the seventh grade I fell completely and absolutely in love (or so I thought) with a girl named Jacee Means. She was a cheerleader, blonde and popular, and I was convinced I was in love. If you’re wondering what convinced me of this, it was a dream — the kind that plays out like a chick flick and ends with me standing outside her window holding a stereo. Clearly I wasn’t actually in love — just a victim of immaturity.

During my first year of junior high, I hung out with a group of people, all seventh graders and all band students — an equal mix of girls, guys, brass, and woodwind. Until that moment in my life, the attraction of the opposite sex had never been anything particularly important to me. And at that age I wasn’t particularly appealing to them.

But this time, by some twist of fate, I managed to catch the attention of one of them. Her name was Amy. She played the flute and had crazy curly hair and braces. She was my first girlfriend.

I would like you to think that I won over her heart, like a scene from **The Notebook**, but it didn’t happen that way. Actually I didn’t even try. It played out more like things typically did when I was in junior high. Amy went to her friend, who then came to me, who then told me that Amy liked me and then asked me if I liked her, and then she returned to Amy with the answer. Complicated, right?

Truthfully I had no idea what I was doing. I’d never had a girlfriend before. Sure I had written all these little movie-like moments in my head — scenes of romance and saying all the right scripted lines in perfectly crafted settings. But in real life I was the nerdy kid who barely said anything to anyone.

I tried all the typical boyfriend stuff. I sent her a teddy bear and candy for Valentine’s Day. We went on cute little

dates to the mall, and we held hands, kind of. But after a few months of blind boyfriendly-ness, the inevitable met me in the hallway. . . .

“Michael, don’t be mad, but Amy wants to breakup.”

I remember honestly trying to figure out how I should react. I had no clue how to handle a break up. So I just said, “OK” and walked to the bus and went home. That night, when I realized I had been dumped, I cried. It seems dumb, but I did. I cried real heartache tears. My lack of relationship experience and romantic judgment led to my downfall. My heart had been broken — supposedly.

For most of us, the impact of some “Don’t be mad” scenarios is momentary, and it teaches us small, valuable lessons. But sometimes the impact is severe and carries with it life-altering emotions and aftermath. And that phrase can make its way into our lives in many different ways.

I have some bad news . . .

I hate to tell you this but . . .

I’m sorry but . . .

There’s something I need to tell you . . .

All these phrases centralize around one thing: adversity. Really, any way you look at it, adversity on any level is still adversity. Realizing you woke up late or that you burned the waffles is only momentary, but finding out your father died or having your heart truly broken can be enduringly tragic. The point is that these moments, these phrases, cause a shift in your life, forcing you to find another solution or some way to deal with it.

The apostle Paul had an encouraging approach to adversity. He rarely complained about his struggles but learned to be content in every situation (Philippians 4:11, 12). He viewed struggle as part of the process, saying, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (v. 13). Paul accepted that if he was going to follow Jesus and be deeply surrounded by the current culture, he would have crosses to bear. With each struggle came new understanding and maturity. He confronted the shift, asked God for wisdom, and carried on.

I’m going to go out on a limb and say that Amy’s breaking up with me wasn’t the worst tragedy in my life. It didn’t take me long to get over it because it really wasn’t that bad of a deal. But it did cause a shift, one that I sincerely had to face. And even if only in the smallest way, after her I looked at things a little bit differently.

When the big things come along, feelings like fear, doubt, stress, or even panic are normal. Even Jesus asked God if He had second thoughts (Matthew 26:39). The process of facing adversity and overcoming it, no matter what level it’s on, will no doubt make you a little tougher, a little wiser and better prepared. But if left untested, it can leave you with your head in a hole in the ground — in other words, going nowhere.

Justice and Generosity for All

by **Gabriel Guzmán Leal, Phoenix, AZ**

The U.S. has always been known for its liberty, justice, and generosity. Things are changing in this slow economy, leaving us much to think about. People on the margins must struggle for work, health, housing, and security.

What can guide us to solve such problems? Jesus narrated a kingdom parable (Matthew 20:1-16), comparing Himself to a landowner in search of laborers for his vineyard. At different times, the man commits to paying his workers a day's salary. At day's end, he pays all of them the same, including those who worked only one hour.

The big point of this parable is the scandalous generosity of God in giving the same reward to all who serve Him, regardless of the length or level of their service.

In addition, some have applied the parable to the realm of social justice. While it is unjust to give anyone performing service less than promised, to give more than due is characteristic of the divine generosity (v. 15).

Jesus' story demonstrates the owner's just and generous nature. The early workers have no problem with their wages, nor the hours of their work. The grumbling begins only when others who arrived later received the same wages as they. This is unfair, they argue, since they had worked more than the latecomers. They protest the master's generosity.

"Are you envious because I am generous?" asks the master. The envy of the first laborers blinds them to the blessing in their hands: fair wages. In his kindness, the master sees the need of those hired at the last. If he pays them solely for hours worked, they won't have enough to feed their families. But now those parent-laborers go home with full hands. Their children will not go hungry tonight!

In Arizona and other places, too many day laborers in town squares cannot earn the daily bread their families need. Many of these men find themselves working for a pittance under poor conditions. Their employers take advantage of them in various ways, without showing much justice or generosity.

The border boss of our day is not like the landowner in Jesus' parable. Here disparity, exploitation, mistreatment, and prosecution are the daily bread of thousands of late-coming laborers not lucky enough to have been hired. Some die, leaving their families in need; others fall into the hands of authorities. To the Christian public, they are nameless and matter not.

Meanwhile, those fortunate enough to be hired first protest against those who arrive last, forgetting that there might be work and bread for all, as depicted in the parable. What about us? Do we grumble about wages paid to the latest laborers? Would we remove them from the town squares? Will we share with them as they work among us?

How will we show the late arrivals, and all who are mistreated, that there is equality and justice in this kingdom? Or will we spiritualize the parable by keeping quiet before the injustice and oppression around us?

The message here is more than what people receive in dollars; it is about respect and dignity for all. Much remains to be done to end policies and practices that work against these standards in society. In ancient Israel, laws protected foreigners (Leviticus 19:33, 34). God reminds us that we too were once strangers and foreigners (Ephesians 2:19).

Where is the church in this? What should it do in the face of so much pain? Where is that kingdom of justice and generosity we preach and pray for (Matthew 6:10)? Will we pray and work to bring the kingdom to reality here on Earth?

Faith-Plus Forum on Politics

continued from page 15

with a mother pig who had given birth to a fine first litter. But then the sow savaged the entire litter — killed them all. The farmhand declared, “Just wait, old girl. When cold weather and butchering time comes, I’ll hang your carcass in the smoke house.”

We simply will not tolerate an animal that kills its young. But creatures made in God’s image have killed nearly 50 million babies with approval of a majority of the Supreme Court and many leaders on Capitol Hill and in the White House. Are they so blind to think God doesn’t see?

Separation? Yes!

by **Bob Moyers**

Liberty Center, Ohio

Jesus is the Word, and His words must be protected. That’s why our founding fathers gave citizens the right to worship freely and express themselves about God as they understand Him and denied the government the right to create a state church or religion. We need only look inside ourselves to see and hear the testimony of Jesus and to share the Word of God with others. This is our ultimate protection from the state, and it is given to the people, for the people, and by the people. Three cheers for separation of church and state: Amen! Amen! Amen! **BA**

For Jason Overman’s comments on this topic, visit www.cog7org/BA.

Word study

In answer to a question about Mt. 16:18 [March ’09, p. 7], it was stated that if Jesus had intended to build His church on Peter, He would have used *petros* [i.e., a small stone] instead of *petra* [i.e., a bigger rock]. To our English eyes and ears, this explanation seems logical, but it doesn’t hold up in the original languages.

The Greek wording is a translation of the original Aramaic that Jesus would have spoken. In that language, Jesus’ nickname for Simon Bar-jona (the apostle’s Aramaic name) and the word for *rock* are exactly the same: *Kefa*, transliterated in the New Testament as “Cephas.” Jesus’ play on words comes across best in languages like Aramaic, where both Simon’s nickname and *rock* are identical in form (*Kefa/kefa*, or “Cephas/cephas”).

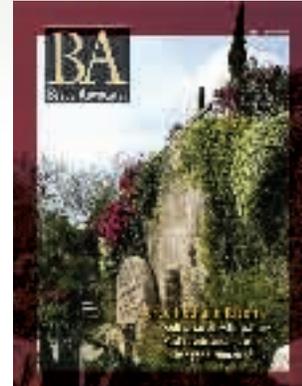
In Greek, however, the wordplay can only be rendered imperfectly (*Petros/petra*), due to that language’s use of gender. The word for *rock*, *petra*, is feminine. To use *petra* as a male’s name, however, requires changing the spelling to masculine form: *Petros*. Thus even in the Greek, *Petros* and *petra* are actually the same word. In the New Testament, *petra* is used for a variety of rock-like objects regardless of their kind or size, including smaller stones, while its masculine form, *Petros*, is used only as a proper name, not as a separate word for “small stone.”

J. G.
Brighton, CO

Cheers for April-May

“Religion vs. Salvation,” by Dr. Guillermo Contreras Morales [p. 8], is a perfect message. I plan to use some quotations from it to illustrate my next Bible class.

D. S.
Tipton, OK



The cover photo was taken at Holy Land Experience, Orlando, Florida. We were privileged to visit there on 3/4/09 and were spiritually moved by their passion play.

A. and L. B.
Citrus Heights, CA

BA blessings

Thank God for providing our world with blessings like the BA mission. Since receiving your mails, I’ve changed most things in my life arising from pornography, etc.

O. A.
Rivers State, Nigeria

Thanks for your helpful journal and contribution to my understanding of Bible truths and analysis of issues at the heart of God. May God bless your work with greater success.

T. T.
Oyo State, Nigeria

I just received the new issue of BA. Thank you for sending it. We also share the magazines with others here, and they felt the same!

T. V.
The Philippines

*The hawk soars and doesn't question
the direction
of the wind.
Riding high on the currents
he simply soars.
He doesn't ask, "Why, Lord,
have You chosen
to direct the wind in this way?"
No, the hawk simply takes
what comes
and is content to ride
whatever current the Lord provides.
Why can't I, likewise,
simply soar,
gliding
on the winds of change
as easily,
simply,
as if I trusted completely
the Maker of the wind?*

Judyann Ackerman Grant



Did you know . . .

- that youth camps and young adult retreats are scheduled in several states in July and August? For a full listing of opportunities, see the June BA (pp. 28, 29) or visit <http://nfyc.cog7.org/>.
- that Eddie Villalba of Denver was recently named General Conference coordinator of Spanish Language Services, a position created to more effectively meet the needs of our growing Hispanic membership?
- that the General Conference board has given its blessing to the creation of a CoG7 men's ministry alongside our National Women's Ministry? The efforts will begin this fall with men's conferences in several locations.



Spring Vale Academy

Mark Caswell, Director

Seventeen happy seniors received their diplomas on May 24. Valedictorian was Erin Noble. Abigail Nienhuis was salutatorian, and eight more graduated with honors (3.5 GPA or above). CoG7 President Whaid Rose presented trophies with monetary awards to Erin Noble for academics and Sarah Noble for spiritual leadership.

Other highlights of graduation weekend included a baptism (sophomore Ashley Briggs) and the first-ever Staff Member of the Year award. Initiated by students, this honor went to math teacher Karen Janetzke for her efforts in helping students succeed.

SVA energy team. Ken and Karen Riggs and Bryan and Sue Burrell, came from Oklahoma to help install new siding on the school building. The siding goes up in three layers: a four-inch insulation and nail board; a Tyvek wrap; and a stucco-surfaced, paintable hardboard. The siding is attractive; and it will considerably reduce energy costs. Future insulation projects are slated for the dorms and staff housing. Other recent projects have addressed campus safety issues.

Spring Vale starts soon. Have you considered enrolling at Spring Vale Academy or sending your high school youngster(s) here? Have you recommended Spring Vale to others? Have you ever supported one of our students financially?

At Spring Vale, we are passionate about

- entrusting your child to the Master Teacher, Jesus.
- praying for your child, by name, each morning before school.
- engaging a campus pastor to work with your young people.
- employing teachers, deans, and other staff who are mentors and role models for Christ.
- teaching students to work – honorably.
- allowing students to learn through leadership and service: worship, SOUND and ACTION, preaching, and other activities.
- achieving excellence in academics. Michigan standards for high school graduation are some of the toughest in the nation. Our qualified faculty seeks to meet and exceed these requirements.

Apply now for fall semester. Dorms open August 19, and classes begin August 20. Need application forms, financial aid, or scholarship info? Contact us online at www.springvale.us or call the office at 989-725-2391.

– Debra Boyles

The National FYC youth ministry has a newly redesigned Web site! Lots of pictures, video, summer event listings, articles for youth, and just about anything you want to know about what's going on in the youth realm will be here. Surf on over to <http://nfyc.cog7.org> and tell us what you think!

Tribute to Pastor Nathan Lawson

"If you plan to start a school and want me to be director, you've got the wrong man. I'm here to interview as your pastor." – N. Lawson, 1983

Now the Conroe, Texas, CoG7 (in the village of Cut-n-Shoot) pays honor to the right man – Pastor



Left to right: Phil (son) and Eva Lawson, Nathan and Ellen Lawson, Shareen (daughter) and Wes Carr (1998)

Nathan Lawson – for twenty-five-plus years of dedicated service.

In Nathan's life, action harmonizes with belief. As a star halfback on his high school football team, he chose not to play in the Oregon state championship game because of his Sabbathkeeping belief.

Nathan's commitment to God was never more evident than in the deaths of his wife, Ellen (2006), and his daughter-in-law, Eva (2003). Tremendous pain came to him and his family, yet his faith did not waiver. At this critical juncture for our congregation, he offered "Jesus now – more than ever" to the people he served.

We will long remember Nathan's willingness to be at every church program and activity: weddings, funerals, Bible studies, prayer meetings, VBS, rest home ministries, youth meetings, workdays, and Conroe Youth Conference weekends where over three hundred youth gathered.

Nathan took pride in keeping the church property looking good. Often we saw him raking leaves, spraying weeds, riding a lawnmower. At services Nathan greeted the young and old and made all feel important. Long after most others had gone home, Nathan stayed to listen to people share their burdens and blessings. He was always willing to share the Bible with us and to encourage us in our walk with God.

In paying tribute to Nathan and his family, we are celebrating God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

– Dennis O'Banion

Grace Sanchez of St. Paul, MN, became the new director of North American Women's Ministries on July 1. She replaces Mary Ling of Amherst, OH, who faithfully served in the position for eight-plus years. Thanks, Mary!



Upcoming Events

Spring Vale Academy opens for fall semester, August 19, near Owosso, MI. Contact 989-725-2391.

Senior Adult Retreat, August 21-26, at Sis-Q Meadows near Cave Junction, OR. Contact Ken or Dale Lawson: 541-923-0571 or office@marioncog7.org.

National Hispanic Women's Retreat, September 4-7, San Francisco, CA. Contact Sylvia Corral: 209-869-0777 or sylral869@aol.com.

Michigan Women's Retreat, September 11-13, at The Springs in Gladwin, MI. Contact Esther: 989-274-0104 or esther416@charter.net.

Michigan Men's Retreat, October 16-18, at The Springs in Gladwin, MI. Contact Joe: 989-777-9525.

Elder Charles Addo, a leader of the Church in Ghana, West Africa, for many years, passed away on April 13, 2009.



Elder K. C. Walker Dies

Kenneth Cortez Walker was born to Elder R. K. (Rufus) and Minnie Walker on March 27, 1911, in southeastern Oklahoma. He was one of ten children.



The Walker family migrated to Alabama in 1929 so Rufus could work with the Church near Henagar. There Kenneth met and married Jewel Millican on July 14, 1931. They had one son, Philip (1942-98). After Jewel's death in 1987, Kenneth married Helen Ligon Whited in 1988. She survives him.

Kenneth entered the Church's gospel ministry in 1936 and spent the remainder of his life advancing the kingdom of Christ. He pastored churches and held evangelistic efforts in Alabama, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas. He taught at Midwest Bible College in Stanberry, Missouri; wrote many *Bible Advocate* articles; spoke on radio; and authored books on his favorite subject of Bible prophecy.

After serving the Conroe, Texas, congregation and Southwestern District for many years, Kenneth retired from full-time service in 1978 and moved to Mentone, Alabama. There he continued service as pastor in the Hammondville church and by preaching over a Ft. Payne radio station.

Elder Walker died on May 5 in a Collinsville, Alabama, rest home. Elder Robert Coulter officiated at funeral services on May 8, and the body was laid to rest near Henagar, Alabama.

"Spring Thing," a three-day youth event in April, featured joint planning and participation by the Meridian and Nampa, ID, churches. Denise Palmer (Meridian) and Pastor Monico Muffley (Nampa) provided adult leadership.





Honduras Mission

by **Bev Brenneise** (shown in photo, with Honduran toddler)

The CoG7 Medical and Dental Mission Team's trip to Honduras (April 10-19) showed its growth. At 38 members, this was the largest team yet.

Observing this group has been like watching an infant struggle to crawl, then steadily and confidently learn to walk. A strong cohesiveness has formed. Strategies are in place to improve effectiveness. A team of ministers has been added to lead evangelistic services. Public awareness has grown. The team communicates more and bonds better. It plans to strengthen itself and raise necessary funds.

In Honduras, weather was hot and perspiration rolled. The people, though, were beautiful. German Santos, president of the Church there, provided many local members to assist the clinics.

We all have stories of people we met. Each individual connection became a meaningful memory.

I asked permission to photograph a man in a wheelchair. Emboldened, I asked how his legs had become this way. "Polio," he responded, contracted at nine months. More talk revealed he'd lived in New York eight years. I felt a personal bond; we had communicated.

A nineteen-year-old with badly worn teeth asked that we pull them. Instead the dentists filled her cavities and veneered her teeth, using a new machine they'd brought. When they asked her to smile for a photo, she wouldn't. Then a mirror was brought so she could see her beautiful, repaired teeth. She smiled!

Dr. Julian Espino consulted a man who'd coughed three months, despite local medicines. Taking a thorough history, Espino realized that esophageal reflux caused this patient's cough. At the final evening service the patient reported his cough was gone, thanks to new medication.

A ten-year-old girl helped Dr. Maria Stoner for two days in Tegucigalpa. She impressed the doctor with her insatiable curiosity and remarkable understanding for medical instruments and their uses. Dr. Stoner thinks the girl may study medicine someday.

A TV crew in Choluteca televised the mission team in action. The next evening the mayor sent an open-air bus so the team could tour the town!

In five days of clinics in Honduras, seven doctors consulted with 1,670 patients about many, many ailments. Five dentists saw 654 patients with cavities, gum problems, and decay due to malnutrition. Two volunteers gave 300 treatments for head lice. Eight pastors delivered 29 sermons at ten churches and a stadium, prayed for more than 300 people, and anointed 70 with oil. Fifty gave their lives to the Lord.

Our goals are to provide medical and dental care in free clinics and to preach the gospel. We give prescriptions and medications that many couldn't otherwise obtain. For those needing follow-up, we assist as many as funds allow. The cleft palate of a little girl from Chiapas was repaired. Hernias have been repaired; cysts, tumors, and cancers removed. Two teenagers will have oral surgeries and root canals. Several will have auditory evaluations and may receive hearing aids. A little girl's clubfoot will be repaired.

When we're not able to do anything else, we always pray. Dr. Eduardo Bermudez, our medical director, reminds us that we may give the medications, but God gives the blessings.

A seed sprouted from the '08 mission in Nicaragua. Dr. Ceci Madrigal, who worked then and joined us again in Honduras, continues to offer free evening clinics in Managua, Nicaragua, after her daytime job.

What began as a one-time trip to Chiapas, Mexico, has blossomed into an annual event with missions to Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and now Honduras. Our goal is to expand this list and to add teams for service. We have grown, adapted and, thanks to God, become missionaries.



Missions Ministries

Change for Your World

Did YOU Remember to Save Your Pocket Change?

Every July, Missions Abroad asks a special offering to help with world missions. Due to the growth of our global church and the greater responsibility of our International Ministerial Congress, we are asking members in the U.S. and Canada to save pocket change through the year and give it to missions. Of course, if you want to add some paper money to it, that's OK! Send it any time during the year.

This year your offering will help cover expenses for our International Ministerial Congress (IMC) in serving CoG7 conferences and churches around the world. Only through your support can we operate our IMC office and fund the growing costs of travel to coordinate global efforts. The gospel of Jesus Christ is preached freely by the coordinated efforts of our IMC, but costs are rising as our church grows all over the world. Your pocket change can help us reach the world with the good news of Christ, our soon-coming king.

God will accomplish wonderful things with your special offerings to encourage your brethren all over the globe. **You** can help bring Change for Your World through this annual offering sponsored by the General Conference Missions Ministries. Please save your change and give generously so our church can reach even further with the gospel of Jesus!

Send your offering to Change for Your World, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

Visit our new Missions Ministries Web site at www.cog7missions.org.

International Tour

Kenya

The Church here can join the psalmist in declaring, "The Lord has been on our side." In the last four years, the Church has been rocked by dissension within and civil violence without. The post-election violence saw many members displaced, their houses burnt, and churches demolished.

Despite these upheavals, I am thankful to report that the Church is experiencing better days for the glory of the Lord Jesus and is becoming a shining example in East and Central Africa.

Administration of the Kenyan Conference is under the leadership of John Njogu and a board of seven dedicated men who desire to create a new ethos to embrace the change and challenges that lie ahead. The Church's office in Nakuru is equipped with computer, Internet facilities, and a dedicated secretary, Sister Pauline Wangari. The needs of the Church in East and Central Africa are served from this office, funded through Missions Abroad.

Sixty churches are scattered in 16 districts across this nation, with 22 pastors, 40 elders, and 20 deacons. Membership stands at about 3,000. Workers here ought to be commended for the



sacrifice they make to preach the gospel under often difficult conditions. Those who benefited from the bicycle project are very thankful for their only means of transport from church to church.

The country is greatly affected by HIV/AIDS and the pressing financial and emotional needs generated by this dread disease. The support given through the Orphans and Widows Fund is creating a positive impact on the lives of many. The South Nyanza women's ministry cares for 225 orphans, many of whom are HIV positive. Without this help, these children would be without basic necessities, including an education.

The Disaster Relief Fund has well assisted Kenyan brethren to alleviate poverty and food shortage resulting from extended drought, crop failure, and the impact of '07 post-election violence. Many communities have been impacted through the gen-

erosity of this fund.

The Kenyan Conference has reopened Chesoen Academy, a primary school built by generous contributions from brethren in North America. More than 30 of the students are absolute orphans who receive assistance from the Church. Special thanks also goes to the youths from the British Conference for helping renovate the school (see photo).

The conference is planning its first convention in December 2009 and a regional convention for East and Central Africa in December 2010.

Missions Abroad seeks to purchase property to establish a distribution center in Kenya. This will allow the Church to deal more effectively with the demands for relief assistance and with expected Church growth. Another aim of the African church is for sustainable economic development so that members can become self-sufficient and ultimately impact the Church and wider community as confident, competent witnesses for Christ.

Join us in praying for the growth, peace, and success of the Church in Kenya and all of Zone 5. May Africa rise and answer God's call.

— Robert Crawford
IMC Zone 5 Representative



The Body

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27, NIV). Several metaphors in Scripture describe the church. Each paints a different picture touching on the

church’s nature and mission. Examples: household — a loving, caring family; kingdom — authority and privilege; priesthood — service and intercession; temple — God’s presence; building — habitation and protection; flock — care by a shepherd; army — fighting spiritual battles; bride — intimate relationship.

For me, *body* is the most intriguing. The human body’s design and function teaches us about the nature and mission of the spiritual body, the church.

We are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” wrote David (Psalm 139:14, NIV), highlighting the incredible physical body. It is a most complex and unique organism, pointing to the wisdom of its Creator. It is made of many parts, none of which can function independently. With its parts working together, the body enjoys health, enhancing our capacity to live out purpose and mission.

The same is true of the spiritual body — made of many members diverse in their gifts and callings, yet interdependent and accountable to one another. A member of Christ can no more function without the rest of His spiritual body than an arm or leg can function when separated from the physical whole. When the body functions as designed, a watching world will see with amazement the outworking of the life of Christ in ordinary men and women. This is the most beautiful picture on Earth; how wonderful that we can be part of it.

A picture of body life at its best is developed in Ephesians 4; its recurring words are *unity* and *oneness*. When cells become disloyal in the human

body and no longer act with regard for the whole, cancer results. So it is in the spiritual body. Medically, cancer is our greatest fear; spiritually, this is the church’s most destructive threat.

In the church, therefore, our commitment should be to “keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (v. 3, NIV). We do so by remembering that there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, through all, and in all (vv. 4-6).

Paul then launches into the subject of spiritual gifts and their function within the body. Each of us is gifted. We learn, and we build up the body while exercising these gifts, causing it to mature. As a result, we are no longer infants, tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine. Rather, we grow up in Christ, who is our head (vv. 14, 15).

I conclude from these verses that fights and divisions within the church result from believers’ failure to grow up — spiritual children living in adult bodies. They also highlight my growing discontent over the low view of Christ’s body. The individualism of secular culture and the “McChurch” mentality have taken their toll, resulting in a generation of consumers instead of committed disciples. For them, church life is no different from stopping by their favorite fast food restaurant. Spiritual accountability is out of the question, and commitment to Christ doesn’t necessarily mean commitment to His body. If this causes me discontent, I can only imagine the pain it causes our Lord, the church’s head.

This issue of the *Bible Advocate* will arrive in your mailbox just days prior to our church’s biennial convention in Corpus Christi, which translates “body of Christ.” Whether or not you plan to attend, join me in prayer that as the body of Christ gathers in a city called by that very name, it will receive a fresh vision of what it means to truly be the body of Christ in a world that has lost its way.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President

SHINE

Serving Him In Nations Everywhere



SHINE: our Medical and Dental Mission Team, 2009.

This international team of pastors, doctors, dentists, and assistants came from Mexico, Nicaragua, and El Salvador; New York, Maryland, Iowa, Colorado, Missouri, Texas, Arizona, and California to serve in Honduras, April 10-19.

For more on this trip, see p. 28. Applications, guidelines, and reports are posted at www.cog7sac.org/ and www.cog7missions.org/.

“Let your light so SHINE . . .”

(Matthew 5:16).