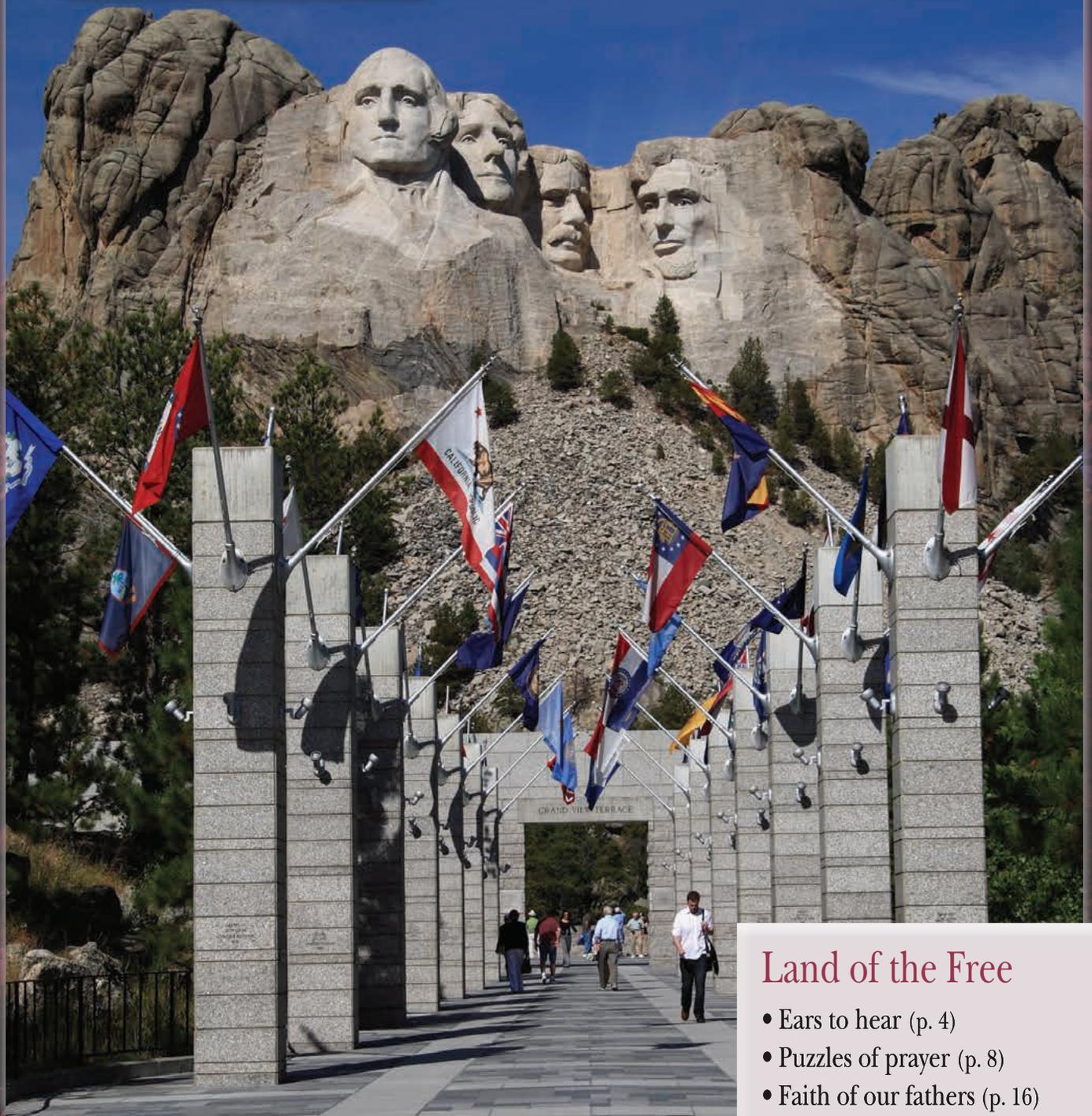


BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE®



Land of the Free

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And don't forget the BA Online (www.baonline.org) for extras you can't find here. We look forward to seeing you online!

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Prayer for a Busy Church

This BA will arrive in most US homes around July 1. What rare and notable plans do you have for the second half of 2012?

- A youth camp or retreat for you, your children, or your grandchildren? If you'll record a unique and inspiring camp/retreat episode from this summer, we'll consider printing it to spur others on.

- An amazing vacation? Where will you worship while you're away? E-mail us about the friendly church you found away from home, and we'll include it on our Mail Bag page.

Some weighty items are on our calendar between now and Thanksgiving Day:

- July is the zenith of summer, and the Fourth reminds us of American independence and fireworks. That's why we're running our annual section on the hot topics of patriotism, politics, and faith — pages 16-19 in this BA.

- August 12, 1863, was the dateline printed on the very first issue of *The Hope of Israel*, a publication now named the *Bible Advocate*. We're planning to memorialize BA's history as one of the oldest religious publications in America and to improve its service in the future. Join us, please, as we celebrate our one hundred fiftieth year of publication in this and the next six issues.

- August 25-29 are the dates of our next International Ministerial Congress (IMC), near London, England, UK. CoG7's global work has been much blessed in recent years. This meeting will both celebrate these blessings and, by God's grace, lay the foundation for more gospel growth to come. You may not be attending, but you can support the international church just the same. See pages 28, 32 for more.

- October 29 - November 3 is time again for our North American Ministerial Council (NAMC). All licensed and credentialed ministers, lay pastors, and their wives are expected for this biennial event, planned for the Red Lion Hotel on the historic Columbia River in beautiful Portland, Oregon. This venue, our theme (on the Spirit and Spirit-formed ministry), and the diverse agenda for this council promise a rewarding experience for those who attend in threatening times.

Father God, in these harried and hurried days, may Your people come to love You more dearly and serve others in more real and personal ways, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

— Calvin Burrell





Is Seeing Believing?

More than spied by the eye,
real truth is heard through
the Word. **by John T. Klassek**

@ Vladimir Mucibabic—Dreamstime.com

We had nearly finished our restaurant dinner in Tyler, Texas, when a man in black approached and asked whether he could perform a few tricks for us. I politely declined.

He happily made his way to the next table, where we couldn't help but watch him ply his magic. He threw a red ball into the air and it disappeared! Amazement and fascination was evident on the faces of everyone at that table. *Is seeing believing?* I wondered.

A friend once lamented that he had never in his life seen a miracle. He implied that belief in the All-Powerful might be enhanced if we witnessed some supernatural event. The Bible lays claim to dozens of such events. We read, for example, of an axe head floating in water, oil flow-

ing from an empty jar, fire falling from heaven, seas parting, and people being healed.

It's easy to think that life today is mundane when compared to heroics of the past. If only I could see a miracle — an irrefutable act of divine intervention not explainable by natural laws — my faith would be strengthened.

Well, consider: Didn't the magician do just that? He really had me fooled when he apparently made a coin disappear into his arm. Everyone gasped when he made a white dove appear out of thin air. I left that restaurant wondering how he did his tricks. I knew, of course, that they were just tricks, but still I wondered how his sleight of hand so easily fooled me.

Hearing

Jesus once told a story to show that even the most awe-inspiring miracles aren't enough to convince an unbelieving heart. A rich guy stated his opinion that if someone were to rise from the dead, then his five unbelieving brothers would change their evil ways. He was told quite bluntly, however, that his brothers should be listening to the words of godly teachers: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

According to Jesus, attaining a strong and enduring faith is based more on hearing than on seeing or experiencing. A familiar text says the same thing: "Faith comes by hearing . . . the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Again, the emphasis is on hearing, not seeing.

Several times in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus appeals to our capacity to listen: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." This overture is further supported in God's appeal to us: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts . . .'" (Hebrews 3:7, 8).

So is there any place for the visual, or ecstatic, experience? An "out of this world" mountaintop event occurred when Peter, John, and James saw Christ transfigured before them, shining like the sun and talking with Moses and Elijah. Before the disciples could get a grip on what this meant, a cloud enveloped them and a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

(Matthew 17:5). The disciples were no doubt amazed by this visual and auditory experience, yet the voice that spoke told them distinctly to *listen* to Jesus.

From these scriptures, faith and understanding are obtained and established by hearing, not by seeing. God wants us to be persuaded of His existence and purpose by His Word, as opposed to visible manifestations.

Satan's tactics

Real life examples can help. In the Garden of Eden, God told Adam and Eve not to touch or eat of a certain tree. Notice how Satan then used visual appeal to deceive Eve: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate" (Genesis 3:6).

Satan used the same ploy, thousands of years later, when he tried to tempt Jesus. He showed Jesus stones and suggested He turn them into bread. Jesus resisted, relying on the strength of God's Word: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Satan then showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the earth, a temptation embellished by a dizzying, heightened experience, to which Jesus again responded, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve" (v. 10).

Satan knows how to utilize our visual references to completely fool us. One of Jesus' disciples warned about the "lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) — the risk of placing undue emphasis on visible, desirable "things."

Knowing and understanding

come from hearing. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). An intelligent, confident relationship with Jesus is not based on visual experience but on hearing, weighing, and believing His words. God appealed to an ancient people who cherished and valued materialism over the value of really listening:

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you . . . (Isaiah 55:2, 3).

Listening for God

Do we know what it is to really listen? How much peace and quiet exists in our busy, multimedia-enhanced days? Have you ever switched off the radio or television, put away the headphones, and just sat on the verandah to enjoy the setting sun with nothing more than the songbirds in the trees? Have you ever allowed yourself total silence, where you are comfortable with your own thoughts and meditations?

Do you really want to find and know God? The secret is in listening for Him and hearing Him. Take quiet time every day. Learn to pray. God will listen to you, for God hears our prayers.

Words often get in the way of this. Apparently we'll be judged for every idle word we speak (Matthew 12:36, 37). Therefore, James advises us, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak . . ." (James 1:19).

Of course, not everything we hear should be denied common sense scrutiny. The secret is in listening and knowing that our eyes easily fall prey to deceit. So if you happen to meet a magician making red balls disappear, pulling rabbits out of hats, or predicting the future with a pack of cards, count yourself lucky if he later confides in you, "Looks can be deceiving." His words will be truer than his art. **BA**

John Klassek works as an IT technician and film producer for MessageWeek Ministries (www.message7.org). He and his wife, Rebecca, live in Western Australia.



God wants us to be persuaded of His existence and purpose by His Word, as opposed to visible manifestations.



Looking for Big Miracles

Corel Photos

by **Joseph M. M. Howard**

In Cecil B. DeMille's epic *The Ten Commandments*, Charlton Heston impersonated Moses at Mount Sinai. That emerging nation's first prophet spoke with God, who intoned the commandments in a clear bass voice as they burned into the stone tables. Coming down the mountain, Moses found the children of Israel engaged in ritual festivity before the golden calf Aaron had fashioned for those who wanted a god they could see and touch. Moses angrily threw the tables to the ground, and they disintegrated.

Though DeMille's cinematic license dramatized the Exodus, the miracles that actually happened exceeded those spectacular events on the silver screen. But why aren't really big miracles happening now? Perhaps because better and subtler ones happen more often.

The intelligence that designed and built the universe had no trouble making supernatural

modifications to the physical realm — those miracles that thrill the movie-going populace. Now God works within human minds more than He did during the times of Moses and Elijah.

When the disciples spoke in tongues (foreign languages) to a crowd of Israelites observing Pentecost in Jerusalem, thousands repented to become disciples of the Messiah (Christ). The Holy Spirit worked there in people's minds, lifting them from the transitional religious rituals God had established and pointing them to the Messiah. God was writing His laws in people's minds, making changes not with mere physical stuff but within the attitudes and outlooks of free moral agents. Working with human minds requires a far more powerful and delicate touch. It requires intimately understanding the intricacies of unique individuals who cannot be brought to loving, trusting obedience by fiat, but only by accepting that following God is the best way of life.

To see true miracles, look beyond the pillar of smoke by day,

the fire by night, and the parted waters of the Red Sea. Starting small, cultivate the same magnificent faith enjoyed by prophets and apostles. Let faith grow without the miraculous special effects God used to disconcert and convert people who never knew the sin-sacrifice Christ would make on the cross to rescue them from eternal death.

What happened to the big Bible miracles? The greatest ones are still around — more of them than even in the days of Jesus (John 14:12b). You can experience a continuous miracle as you turn to God for pardon and ask Him to help you think and act more like Christ and less like your selfish, sinful human flesh. He'll help you have a new desire to please Him rather than your carnal wants. You may often act the old way, but God will teach you to be more and more sound-minded, able to reason through the various situations of this irrational world instead of acting out your feelings as you once did.

Through joys and trials, you'll become more adept at resisting the evil pulls of a flesh-and-blood existence naturally attuned to the broadcasts of Satan and his demons. Then you'll be ready to trade this flesh-and-blood existence for a spiritual body with an enhanced mind no longer vulnerable to evil. In suspended animation, you'll sleep in Christ's arms until you join Him on His return to earth, ready to be a fit helper and living more joyfully than humans can imagine. **BA**

Joseph M. M. Howard is a pseudonym for a CoG7 member in the northeast US.

Questions & Answers

In addition to forgiveness of sins and eternal life, is physical healing promised in Christ's atonement at the cross, as Matthew 8:16, 17 and 1 Peter 2:24b could suggest?

Both texts you cite contain quotes from the marvelous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the prophet describes the sufferings of God's Servant (Messiah) and the benefits that accrue to all who trust Him (Jesus). Several words are used in this chapter to describe the human maladies for which Christ is the cure: our grief, sicknesses, sorrows, pains, transgressions, iniquities, and sin.

There is enough depth, breadth, and flex in these words and in their Hebrew originals to cover most any ailment we may experience — anything that disrupts our "peace" (v. 5). The accent of Isaiah 53, however, is on Messiah's suffering for sin, which is a spiritual sickness that precedes and produces all other kinds.

Matthew 8:16, 17 presents Jesus fulfilling Isaiah 53:4 by healing all kinds of diseases, both spiritual and physical. The former are logically prior to the latter and represent Jesus' priority in ministry. This is illustrated in the next chapter, where the physical healing of the paralytic ("take up your bed, and go . . .," 9:6) is presented as the full fruit of Christ's power to save (i.e., rescue; deliver; make completely whole in body, soul, and spirit). His spiritual healing ("your sins are forgiven you," v. 2) is the root from which all other benefits ultimately spring.

First Peter 2:24b ("by whose stripes you were healed" — see Isa. 53:5) sits in a context where healing from sin-sickness is the core idea. Rather than teaching that Christ's sufferings free us from pain and woe, verses 18-24 of 1 Peter 2 affirm that God's people often do endure grief and suffer wrongfully. Such misery, when

endured for righteousness' sake, places them squarely in the footsteps of their master, Jesus.

The healing received by His stripes in this passage is not a shield against physical pain and suffering in this life. Rather it is that "[He] bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (v. 24) so that we might walk in His love today and exchange this mortal body tomorrow for a new one without sickness or death.

The question regarding to what extent Christians may expect physical healing in the present life continues to spark biblical debate. The view from here is that, while bodily healing can indeed happen in response to faith and prayer, it is not guaranteed for us until the final redemption (resurrection) of our bodies in glory (Rom. 8:19-23).

— Elder Calvin Burrell

What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16)?

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the divine act by which a believer in Jesus is "immersed" into Christ at the moment of faith and repentance (1 Cor. 12:13). Recognizing the truth of this spiritual baptism may produce deep emotion in the subject, though it is not essentially a subjective experience. Rather, it is the objective act of God in forgiving our sins through the merits of Christ and in writing our names in the Book of Life, thus plunging us into the spiritual body of Jesus — His church.

It is less certain what Jesus meant by the two words "and fire." They could indicate that His unbelieving hearers would suffer the pains of final judgment (v. 17), but they more likely allude to the Spirit's purifying work in believers (Acts 2:2-4; 1 Peter 1:7).

— Elder Calvin Burrell



When They Ask You to Pray

Even when no miracle follows, praying for the sick still matters.

by **Brian Knowles**

Almost every week, someone asks us to pray for a much-loved friend or relative whose health is in dire straits. Over time, the number of such requests accumulates. Our short list can consist of cancer cases, heart attacks, surgeries, broken bones, and various infections and diseases — all serious conditions.

Over the years we've prayed for many of these situations, only to "lose" the subject of our prayers through death. This usually causes deep dismay and sometimes discouragement. We may ask ourselves, *Does it do any good to pray for the sick? Does God really hear our prayers?*

An agnostic friend once answered, "He doesn't answer because He's not there. He's

just an anthropomorphic pipe dream." I reject that notion out of hand. I've seen enough answered prayer to know that God sometimes heals miraculously. The following thoughts may help to clarify this difficult issue.

God is sovereign

When Moses asked God His name, God replied, "*Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*" (Exodus 3:14). No one is entirely certain what that means, but the best scholars suggest "I am who I am" or "I will be what I will be."

When Job attempted to call God to account for his seemingly unjust suffering, God asked him, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?" (Job 38:4). God might have meant something like, "Who are you, mere speck of transient dust, to question My reasons for doing anything?"

Later, God asked Job, "Would you discredit my justice? Would

you condemn me to justify yourself?" (40:8). Humbled by these words, Job came to understand the utter sovereignty of God, as did Moses, that God can do anything He wants to do.

We do not know what suffering God may require of us. Many of His greatest servants have suffered horribly — and not through any lack of faith on their part. Jesus himself endured great pain, and finally murder, to accomplish God's purposes in His brief human life. "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" (2:10).

Death is part of life

Sooner or later, we all die. A given sickness may be "unto death" or it may not be. God may or may not intervene in the natural course of events to heal us, as He did with Hezekiah (2 Kings 20). Even the mighty prophet Elisha, though, died of an illness (2 Kings 13:14). It's a

matter of what God's sovereign will is in any situation.

The point is, God is not a genie in a bottle who jumps into action at our whim. He is the Creator and Sovereign of the universe. He does what He wants to do, and we have no choice but to accept it. We are the clay; He is the potter. His will transcends ours.

No matter how much we may want to see someone healed, or live, God may have other plans. Even if He doesn't reveal His will, it is still appropriate to ask that it be done. God always does the right thing.

Sometimes we may feel that God is deaf to our prayers. He is not (Isaiah 59:1). God even heard the silent prayers of Hannah, Samuel's mother (1 Samuel 1:12, 13). God hears, but how He responds is His choice. We must approach God with humility, respecting His sovereignty.

The apostle Paul didn't get everyone healed (2 Timothy 4:20; 1 Timothy 5:23). Note also Philipians 2:25-27, which says that Epaphroditus was sick almost to the point of dying, but God chose to intervene and save him. Why does God heal this one and not that one? We don't know.

Paul's attitude was "Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8, KJV).

A bigger picture

When we're asked to pray for someone in a health crisis, we may recognize that it's not just that person we're praying for, but parents, spouses, children, friends, caregivers, and doctors. The crisis affects them all. By allowing sickness to linger, God may be working out important

spiritual things in the lives of others. He may be teaching any number of us patience (James 1:3). Do we treat the sick person with the same compassion and empathy we would like if we were in the same situation?

We know of a husband and wife who *both* have cancer. Can you imagine what this is like for their children, let alone themselves? We are also praying for a pastor whose six-year-old daughter has stomach cancer. The pastor's whole church has rallied around this little girl. All are drawn in. As Paul wrote, "There should be no division in the body [the church], but . . . its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it . . ." (1 Corinthians 12:25, 26).

Empathy means walking a mile in other people's Nikes — feeling what they feel, their pain, their yearnings, their fears, their emotional agonies. If a wife is fighting for her husband's life, we fight with her. If a child is suffering, we adults surround her like redwoods around a fragile sapling. Have you ever visited a children's hospital? It's one of the most gut-wrenching experiences you can have. Who could not have compassion?

Granted, we can't pray for everyone, but we can certainly pray for those who ask us for prayer. We can pray for healing, for grace and strength, for the power to endure and overcome, for stamina and faith for support people and caregivers, or even in some cases, for financial help. Depending on proximities, we can offer hands-on prayer or physical help, or we can give encouraging gifts. Sometimes just holding someone's hand can

help. The closer we are to God and the more empowered by the Holy Spirit, the more we can be led to help in the most appropriate ways.

Serious business

Are you asked to pray for the sick? If so, remember to take your intercession seriously. People's lives may hang in the balance. When others are sick and in need of prayer, we must set aside our own interests and put energy into meeting the need. Paul made this plain: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Remember that our sovereign God hears our prayers. What kind of person would you want praying for you if you were fighting for your life: one who prays perfunctory prayers or one who is full of faith and belief that God hears? The Lord may be building that kind of faith in us when we are asked to pray for someone else.

Life can be messy. We are learning, as a body, to care for each other — to apply kingdom principles in the present that we might eventually see the time "when God will restore everything" (Acts 3:21). **BA**

Once managing editor for *Plain Truth* magazine, **Brian Knowles** now writes for *The Sabbath Sentinel* and other publications from his home in Monrovia, CA. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, except where noted.





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In earnest care for others' ailments, do we miss a greater need? by **Dr. Kim Papaioannou**

The healing of a demon-possessed boy following the Transfiguration account is one of Jesus' more familiar miracles (Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:17-27; Luke 9:37-42). Rarely noticed is that two healings happen here, and the overlooked one may be the more important. We'll follow the story mostly from Mark's Gospel, consulting Matthew and Luke as needed.

An ailing boy

As Peter, James, and John descend the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus, they meet the other nine disciples surrounded by a crowd. At the center of attention is a father who has brought his suffering boy to the disciples, but they cannot heal him.

According to Matthew 17:15, the boy suffered from *sel niazetai*, a word referring to epilepsy or some form of convulsion. In this instance the ailment is caused by an unclean spirit (v. 18; Mark 9:20; Luke 9:42). The case was especially severe: The demon often threw the boy into fire or water, presumably intending to kill him (Matthew 17:14).

As Jesus approaches, the father entreats Him for help (v. 14). Jesus asks that the boy be brought to Him. Seeing Jesus, the unclean spirit throws the boy into a violent convulsion.

The suffering boy; the father entreating Jesus; the disciples looking on in bewilderment, embarrassed that they had failed to help; the crowd wondering what would happen: What a sobering

picture! Such is the impact of sin on humanity. It makes us wish that Jesus would take action to resolve the situation. Quickly.

But He doesn't — not immediately. Instead Jesus begins what sounds like a casual conversation: "How long has this been happening to him?" (Mark 9:21). Does Jesus not know this information? Is it so vital to a miracle? Does He not comprehend the severity of the situation, or does He have a deeper purpose in mind?

An ailing father

As the story unfolds, it becomes apparent that the father is also ailing — not physically but spiritually. The father lacks faith. Long before taking his son to Jesus, he surely had visited many doctors. Then he brings his son to the disciples. But neither group has given a solution. Now as he brings his son to Jesus, somewhere in his heart he is afraid he will be disappointed again. He wants his son restored but wonders whether anyone can help. Jesus, aware of this lack of faith, is determined to heal not only the boy but also the father.

Jesus turns away from the suffering child and directs His attention to the father. The question "How long has this been happening to him?" is not intended to garner information but to help the father look at his inner self.

The father hastily answers the question (vv. 21b, 22a) then turns right back to the suffering boy: "If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (v. 22b). The plural "us" highlights the intensity of the situation. Not only is the boy suffering, but the father too is at the

point of desperation. The words “if You can do anything” underline his lack of faith. He wants his son healed, but down deep he doesn’t think Jesus can do it. So he is asking for “anything” — any relief, even temporary.

Calm and composed, Jesus replies by quoting the doubting words of the father, almost in rebuke: “If you can?” And without losing a beat adds, “Everything is possible for him who believes” (v. 23, NIV).

The father is now forced to look inside. Confronted with the realization that the healing of his son might be hindered by his own unbelief, he looks deep within. Doubt appears to reign supreme, but in the kind face of Jesus he senses a glimmer of hope. Nearly despondent, the father cries out professing his minimal faith and acknowledging his doubt: “I believe; help my unbelief!” (v. 24).

Upon this confession of the father, Jesus turns and casts the unclean spirit from the lad. As he and his dad walk away, both are changed forever. The boy has been restored to health and freedom from demonic possession. The father realizes that the Person before whom he knelt is no charlatan, impostor, or popular faith-healer, but the One from God who sees into every heart.

Spiritual ailments

Spiritual ailments are subtle and harder than physical illness to pinpoint. They disguise themselves under an external form of godliness. Pride and arrogance masquerade as confidence; selfish ambition as a desire to reach high for the Lord; restless opposition to leadership as a

selfless desire for the good of the church; jealousy as zeal; dislike for people as dislike for sin; hate of sinners as love of purity; faithlessness as an ability to think intelligently, logically, critically. Many believers march to church every Sabbath wearing the best religious self, yet hide deep spiritual insecurities under a cloak of piety.

Spiritual ailments are also dangerous. They sap the power of individuals and churches to live victorious Christian lives, turning them into lukewarm, insecure, powerless entities, unable to be what God intends them to be.

Hope

If you find yourself in this situation, do not lose hope. The story just studied offers two avenues of hope. First, Jesus did not heal the child when the father’s faith became complete but when the father simply acknowledged his faithlessness and asked for help. Jesus does not expect believers to have full faith, true humility, pure selflessness, and Godlike love before He will help. He waits not for perfection before He will act. As with the father of the story, it is the acknowledgment of need and request for help that prepare one to receive

and set in motion the process of spiritual restoration. Have you looked hard and honestly inside recently?

Second, it was only in his intense desire to help his son that the father became aware of his own faithlessness and sought and found help. Likewise, it is as we minister to others that we become aware of our shortcomings and sense the need to ask for and find divine help. Are you involved in a passionate ministry to bless others?

Our God is a loving God. He longs to heal those who are suffering physically. He longs to forgive and heal those who are living in sin. But not least, He also longs to heal those who profess His name but may not experience the fullness of joy and power that comes with being a child of God. **BA**

Dr. Kim Papaioanou heads the PhD program and teaches New Testament at Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies in The Philippines.



It is the acknowledgment of need and request for help that prepare one to receive and set in motion the process of spiritual restoration.

Miracles: Seeing One and Being One

by Ernie Klassek

It's not hard to find people who say they never saw a miracle. They sound a little unhappy.

Ask Christians what they call a miracle, and they might name some from their Bibles: Jesus healing sick people, raising the dead, walking on water, or turning it to wine. They might think of the apostles doing miracles, only to conclude, "But that was back then. I'd like to see miracles now. Just one will do."

Fair enough. Let's look for a miracle now. We'll find one before this page is done, but will we believe it? One can see a miracle and still not believe.

Or one can *not* see a miracle, and still believe. When the other apostles told Thomas about seeing the greatest miracle of all — the resurrected Jesus — he didn't believe. Thomas finally saw Christ, who then said something that reaches right down through the ages to us: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

The number of "those who have not seen and yet have believed" includes nearly every Christian since the church began. Jesus said they, including us who believe, are *blessed*, which may also be translated "happy." Believers are happy people.

Then we read that Jesus appeared to His disciples again, this time on the seashore at early morning. His disciples did not recognize Him there.

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish (21:5, 6).

When the disciples did as Jesus said, they witnessed another of His miracles. Here's a lesson for us all: In obeying Jesus, we become aware of His miracles.

Then the disciples recognized Jesus. When Peter finally dragged the net ashore, "It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn" (21:11).

Writing this fourth Gospel,

John used a word that is translated variously into English. We just read "to haul the net in" (v. 6) "and dragged the net ashore" (v. 11). Both *haul* and *dragged* are from the same Greek word.

Earlier in John, Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (6:44). "Draws him" — same Greek word.

Jesus also said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (12:32). "Will draw" — same Greek word.

Lining up John's use of this word in sequence, we see how God creates Christians and builds His church through miracles:

1. The Father draws people.
2. Jesus' death on the cross makes it possible for all to be drawn to Him.
3. When, as Jesus' disciples, we do as we are told, He gives a miraculous increase — both fish and men (Matthew 4:19).
4. When dragged ashore with many large fish, the net was not torn — another miracle. This may be compared to the church, of which Jesus said, "The gates of Hades will not overcome it" (16:18).

The church is made up of living miracles. Every time we meet a true Christian, we are looking at a miracle. And when we meet a fellow human being who is being drawn by God, we see another miracle in the making. **BA**

Ernie Klassek, who calls Booragoon W.A., South Australia, home, is "dad" to the author of the article on pages 4, 5. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

[Spirit-formed words]

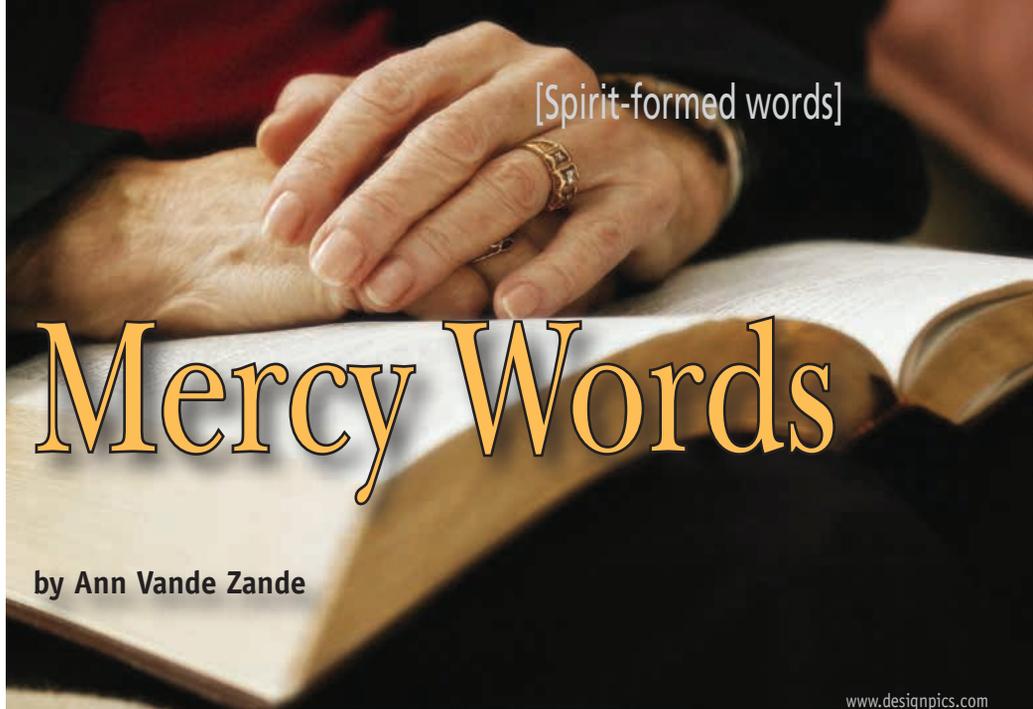
Our daily telephone conversations had become a ritual I knew my mom depended on. Each morning before calling, I searched Scripture for an encouragement to share. Each time Mom's frail voice responded, "Wait, Annie. Where's that verse? I want to write it down to read again later."

The reply delivered a painful reminder. Mom knew the scriptures I'd read. She'd probably memorized them. She'd loved God's Word for years and instructed countless others in Bible study. But now at 79, her body racked with cancer and on constant painkillers, she had trouble remembering the truth imprinted on her heart. The readings conjured it up, stirring and strengthening her.

Immediately following her terminal diagnosis, I'd struggled with an intense desire to help my mother, to support and carry her in her dark time. I'd survived my own life-threatening illness that almost crushed my hope. So now, I ached with a passion to give what I'd received. My efforts seemed futile until I remembered how Scripture and the comforting words of others delivered strength into my weakness.

In fact, potent grace carried me in ways I'd never known possible. I experienced firsthand how God's unrelenting compassion shared from committed servants wields incredible authority. Gentle, life-giving morsels of mercy and love emboldened me to carry on despite the enormous burdens before me.

As believers submerged me in prayer and Scripture, my drained spirit strengthened to face each day with the various procedures, pains, and letdowns, to fight for



Mercy Words

by Ann Vande Zande

www.designpics.com

life and hope for deliverance.

Proverbs attests to the might of words: "Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (16:24) and "The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life" (15:4a). God spoke His incredible creation into existence (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24), and the Gospel of John equates the Word of God and Jesus as one and the same (John 1:1, 14). Why would we ever question how much influence we exert when we sustain the weary and weak with compassionate truth?

My deliverance came through an incredible healing of my body and a slower healing of broken emotions. My mother's deliverance will come, but it might arrive through death, not through restored life on earth. Even so, in her last days we are clinging to hope together. And I know that I am loving her well.

It's natural to believe that we're powerless in the midst of despairing times, but God's Word challenges us to lean into the struggle. We may feel awkward or insecure, thinking we can't make a difference, but that

isn't true. Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit empower us with words that carry the weary. As we surrender to Him, our utterances become powerful weapons in God's arsenal of mercy. Further, we can ask for "an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary" (Isaiah 50:4a), confident of His help in our support of others.

Sometimes we get so tangled up in the questions of healing that we focus on issues beyond our understanding and control, causing stress in already trying times. We forget that we partner in the administration of hope with our words of mercy. Then we can entrust our efforts to God, fully assured of His goodness to carry others, and us, even to the very end. As we surrender to Him, our efforts change isolation into a time of gentle companionship. **BA**

Ann Vande Zande
writes from Owatonna, MN.





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In the May-June BA (p. 7), readers were invited to send their views on issues raised in the article "Divine Healing Today." What follows are the responses we received, edited for space and clarity. Further response may be published in a future Mail Bag page. — Editor

I appreciate your honesty and vulnerability. As New Testament Christians, we go by the example of Jesus Christ, who went about healing the sick. In the same way that God forgives all our iniquities, He heals all our diseases (Psalm 103:2, 3).

We should always pray that God's will be done. However, we have no examples of Jesus asking the Father whether it was His will

to heal or not to heal anyone. Apparently Jesus thought it was always God's will to heal.

I believe healing ministry is a central part of what God has called me, and the church I serve, to do. I always encourage others to pray for healing according to God's will. We assume God's will is to heal. We just don't know how He will heal. It may be instantaneous (rare) or

much more quickly than doctors expect (most common).

We have a fairly steady stream of praise reports and healings.

*Bob Fogarty
Kansas City, MO*

Thanks for having the courage to ask the hard questions. This approach makes the reader think. The best part is where you question why, in ministering to the sick, it's a mistake to pray that God's will be done. Finally someone has stated the obvious factual truth.

I believe the miracles of the early church were to bring the church into a prominent position. Once it was firmly established, miracles became fewer and fewer. Paul (by God's power) did not heal several men who helped him in ministry, including Timothy. Combine that with his statement that prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish away — but with no mention of healing (1 Corinthians 13:8) — and I believe we have our answer. This does not change the fact that our sovereign God reserves the right to intervene and heal anyone, anytime. I also believe that God will someday restore public healing through His servants for the same purpose He gave it in the early church.

*Joseph Willie
Folsom, LA*

I was quite disturbed by your article. This doubt-inspiring message sounded as though it came from the enemy himself. For anyone under attack, it may have crushed hope for healing or prevented someone's salvation.

I was amazed that you yourself so easily doubt and disregard the One who “shall arise with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2), the One who opened His back to give us that healing.

It was Jesus’ ministry to be “healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23). We are to be like Him (doing the Father’s will), so it is God’s will that all be healed. God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power. Jesus went about doing good, and healing was manifested (Acts 10:38). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), so I dare say it is we who are missing part of the equation.

Short of quoting the entire Bible that screams “healing for all,” I submit these few passages for you (and perhaps some disheartened readers) to consider, and to remind and exhort us to “comfort each other and edify one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11) and that “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

*Mindy DeAscentis
Monterey, VA*

We shouldn’t do little or nothing for the needs of a Christian. The gift of healing may be taken from one who had it, and healing can come through an elder who didn’t have the gift previously. Elders should anoint, and we should all pray fervently, as elders are not the only ones who may receive whatever gifts Christ will provide.

*Richard Wise
Watervliet, MI*

Having cancer and receiving no conventional treatment for over four years has given me a unique perspective on healing. Two years ago, then-Pastor Ken anointed me with oil and prayed for me with the elders and congregation.

Those prayers have been answered in full! I have never been more at peace with myself, nor has my walk with God been greater. I still have cancer; God has it hanging around as a reminder. But He stabilized it. (I was a problem child and still need correcting from time to time).

I thank God that I was blessed to have cancer, blessed that it changed me so that I may truly live. I consider myself healed in the only way that counts, and I am confident He will use my life for a good purpose.

*Bruce Clark
Redmond, OR*

I do believe the scriptures on divine healing. I also believe we are leaving out a very important part of it. We need to get back to self-help, with the knowledge and perfect creation He gave us to utilize (Hosea 4:6). Many health problems could be prevented with truth applied to our lifestyles.

There is so much greed-oriented corruption in the food industry. Most people are not getting necessary balanced nutrients. Now 63 years old, I didn’t learn all of this soon enough and am now struggling with borderline diabetes.

*Mark Trueblood
Benton, TN*

The promises of healing are for God’s people, Israel, and for the church. “If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight . . . I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you” (Exodus 15:26). This covenant of health and healing is conditional, as it is in James 5:13-16.

Conditions in the latter text include singing, calling for the elders, praying in faith, and confessing trespasses to one another. Is it possible that many are not healed because they look for cheap grace without obedience?

*Tom Robinson
Canyon Country, CA*

Recently we lost our mother, Maria Romero (wife of Joe V. Romero of Midland, Texas), to a mismanaged bowel surgery. During the three months of her illness, we prayed for many things. First our prayers were about healing. We wanted a miracle.

After a while we understood the severity of her illness and began to question whether we had a right to ask that her life be extended. I was in constant prayer for God to help my unbelief. I had no doubt that God *could* heal her, but my doubt was *Will He?*

Then my prayers changed not for her healing but rather for those suffering with her — we who would be left behind. I learned that God’s knowing the needs of His children before we ask was not just a verse but also a reality. He knew well what Mother needed, and the matter

continued on page 24



On June 28, 1787, at the State House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Benjamin Franklin (then 81 years old) addressed the United States' Constitutional Convention. This is the text of his speech:

Mr. President:
The small progress we have made after 4 or five weeks close attendance & continual reasonings with each other — our different sentiments on almost every question, several of the last producing as many noes as ays, is methinks a melancholy proof of the imperfection of the Human Understanding. We indeed seem to **feel** our own want of political wisdom, since we have been running about in search of it. We have gone back to ancient history for models of government, and examined the different forms of those Republics which having been formed with the seeds of their own dissolution now no longer exist. And we have viewed Modern States all round Europe, but find none of their Constitutions suitable to our circumstances.

In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible

Providence

of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. — Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a Superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance.

I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth — that **God** governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that “except the Lord build they labor in vain that build it.” I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a bye word down to future age. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.

I therefore beg leave to move — that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service.

Sources: www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/benfranklin.htm; wallbuilders.com

and Patriotism

Prayers and Promises

"I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" (1 Timothy 2:1, 2).

Try this in July and August. At 9:00 p.m. daily, stop whatever you're doing and pray one minute for the United States and Canada (or for your own nation, if you live elsewhere); for our citizens, our leaders, and political candidates; for our churches; and for peace in Israel. Our nations and churches need the prayers; we need the practice!

A biblical guide for our evening prayers is in 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God calls His people to

- humble ourselves
- pray
- seek His face
- turn from our wicked ways.

In return, God promises to

- hear from heaven
- forgive our sins
- heal our land.

This verse was the LORD's (Yahweh's) promise for Israel under the old covenant. Surely it can be applied also to the lives, churches, families, and even wider communities of Christians under the new. The same God (Elohim) who promised to heal ancient Israel is committed to redeem and renew today's weak, poor, blind, brokenhearted, and oppressed — through the gospel!

So let us pray! "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Timothy 2:3).

In the United States of America . . .

- In late 2011 the US House of Representatives approved a bipartisan resolution by a 396 - 9 vote, reaffirming "In God We Trust" as the official national motto.
- Each first Thursday of May the National Day of Prayer continues as a part of our nation's history and its official public practice, even if not in the White House.
- The current President recently proclaimed Memorial Day (May 28, 2012) as a day of prayer for permanent peace, and designated "the hour beginning in each locality at 11:00 a.m. of that day as a time to unite in prayer."
- The Constitution prohibits any religious test as a requirement for holding public office in this country.

In the US and every nation . . .

- "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach . . ." (Proverbs 14:34).
- "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).
- God shows no partiality, but whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him (Acts 10:34, 35).

Photo, opposite page: Duplessis, Joseph-Siffrede, artist. "Benjamin Franklin, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing slightly right, wearing fur collar." 1907. Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.



by Calvin Burrell

Under democracy, the political landscape often includes three types of ground: the two opposing lines that lob verbal assaults toward the other, and the space between them.

This middle ground contains those souls who respect wisdom on both sides of an issue. Moderates like to avoid extremes — the ditches on either side of the road. A moderate is not the same as a fence-sitter, who is generally indecisive, double-minded, and finds it distasteful to take a stand in battle.

A moderate, on the other hand, can adopt or adapt good ideas from either side and often stakes his position somewhat to the right or left of center. In the serious game of politics, moderates are willing to bend on non-moral issues to avoid gridlock, for the greater good. They run the risk of shelling from both sides, considering that preferable to falling into either opposing ditch.

The Hebrew Bible advises

those who walk in the ways of the Lord to “not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:32; 17:20; 28:14; Joshua 1:7; Isaiah 30:21). These texts don’t fully explain “to the right” or “to the left.” It takes every word of God to teach us the errors on both sides of the straight and narrow way.

In democratic governments and politics, most of us know what these terms mean. “To the right” means conservative: keeping government small, taxes low, morality traditional, business big and booming, national defense strong, and criminals locked up. Most conservatives in this country say that America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles and is still the *exceptional* nation. Thus, significant change to the norms of our heritage should be resisted. Evangelical Christians tend to the right, with texts like Proverbs 14:35; 24:21; and Jeremiah 6:16 to support their conservatism.

“To the left,” then, means liberal: using the resources of government to do much more than

protect its citizenry from criminal elements or foreign invaders. It also means protecting the environment, everybody’s civil rights, and the interests of labor and of the underclass, of the poor, of the sick or disabled, of the elderly and oppressed, and of undocumented workers and minorities. It means pursuing less war and more peace.

Many items on this “liberal” list are also concerns of Scripture, supported by large numbers of Christians. Often scorned in modern parlance, Proverbs 11:25; Isaiah 32:5, 8; and 2 Corinthians 9:13 all employ the word *liberal* (KJV; *generous* in NKJV) in a positive light.

To be fair and equitable, then, we may recognize that some conservatives (but not all) are motivated by biblical as well as national concerns, and the same may be said of liberals. More information can increase our respect for the opposition and move us toward breaking the political gridlock that grips this country today.

In this era of public acrimony and demonizing the opposition, America could use the safety and sanity of a few more moderates. To believe and speak the political truth as we see it is fair game. To label a political opponent who does the same as a liar or a fool is probably unfair, except that it shows us to be in the same category we’ve assigned him.

The ancient advice to turn not to the right hand or to the left was given to keep God’s people on the straight and narrow way of obedience. Could it also serve to reduce our uncivil discourse and help solve today’s political dilemmas? **BA**

Hot Button: Homosexuality



@ Julien Tromeur—Dreamstime.com

As culture coarsens, our Christian compassion can be refined. **by Brian Franks**

In February 2012, Washington became the seventh state (Maryland has since become the eighth) to legalize gay marriage. Civil unions were previously recognized here. Now marriage has been redefined as being between two consenting people without respect to their gender. According to the news, the bill was signed with raucous applause, and the governor beamed with pride.

As a Christian, I don't favor this latest twist and could be up in arms over it, but I'm not. I have not abandoned hope that America will yet see the wisdom of God's ways, but it won't be easy. Long ago we began to push Him away in matters of evolution

(Scopes Monkey Trial aftermath, 1925), abortion (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973), and now homosexuality and gay marriage.

The government has a bearing on these issues, of course, but broader culture has the greater influence. The first positive media reference to homosexuality goes back to the 1959 movie *Some Like It Hot*. Many more movies have followed this tack since. In May 2011, for the first time ever, a majority of Americans polled by Gallup had been swayed in support of gay marriage (Newport).

People redefine and make as many changes as they wish, but God's truth remains clear and unchanged (see sidebar, p. 20). Just

as important as knowing God's view is responding properly in the spirit of Christ.

Christian response

How should the church deal with our culture's burgeoning homosexual agenda? Should we be gay friendly or strongly anti-gay? Churches that condone homosexuality and allow openly practicing gays in leadership positions, with no call for change, have accepted the world's view, not God's.

Equally wrong are those who act as though this were the unpardonable sin (it is not!), ten times worse than any other.

The Bible places homosexuality on a list with other more "respectable" sins (covetousness, fornication, extortion, reviling) that exclude people from God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). Why then should we revile homosexuality more than other sins?

How should we handle those who so struggle? By neither condoning the practice nor casting the first stone. People caught up in the homosexual lifestyle or who have a weakness for that sin should not be shunned as un-savable. Let us treat them with the same love and respect that we receive from Christ in our own sins. If we are empathetic

enough, we will likely find some already in church who need our support, not our condemnation, to overcome. Since we don't stone adulterers or Sabbath-breakers but welcome them because they need God just as we all do, why should the church act so differently toward homosexuals?

While we need not accommodate homosexuality as the new normal, we should not fear it. Let us reject the hateful, violent actions others have taken against homosexual persons in the name of Christianity. We ourselves were once sinners and needed a friend, so let us pray for and share God's love for all kinds of people through friendships.

To befriend sinners, inside or outside the church, is not itself a sin. Jesus did it. Whatever style of sinner we may encounter, including the sinner who walks in our shoes, let us be Jesus to that person. Let us find the grace and truth to say two things as Jesus did: "Neither do I condemn you. . . . Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). **BA**

What the Bible Says

Few people deny the Old Testament's opposition to homosexuality (see the "grievous sin" of Genesis 18:20; 19:1-13 and the "abomination" of Leviticus 18:22), but some believe the New Testament changes that. Look at two key texts:

- Romans 1:26, 27 says, "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." Some say that only a certain kind of homosexuality is condemned here, not the kind that represents a long-term love relationship between two same-sex partners. However, this overlooks the consistent evidence of God's Word on the matter.
- First Timothy 1:9-11 says, "We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers — and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me." All these sins are contrary to sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel.

— Brian Franks

Brian Franks pastors the church in Walla Walla, WA. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



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The Unpardonable Sin

by Arlo Gieselman

Could a loving God say there is a sin that will not be forgiven? Yes, there is one. Just as some loving parents have been forced to exercise tough love, some stubborn people will force God to do the same.

Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Matthew 12:31). Blasphemy had a death penalty (Leviticus 24:16), and the wages of sin is still death. Jesus did not sin but died for our sins. No one will be forced to accept Him as Savior. You can pay for your own sin in the resurrection of damnation if you wish. Everyone has the choice of eternal death or eternal life.

The unpardonable sin comes in two forms. The first is refusing to repent. This does not mean a one-time refusal by someone first told about Jesus or salvation. It is an attitude or lifestyle of unrepentance over a lifetime. I offered a Bible to a Muslim woman, who calmly said, "No, I just believe what my parents taught me." Not having God's Spirit, she did not commit the unpardonable sin. Her chance for salvation will be when God opens her mind.

God wants all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). There are physical harvest seasons and spiritual harvest seasons. In the Old Testament, only a few were called to knowledge of the truth. Joseph in Egypt did not reveal himself to his brothers the first time, just as Jesus hasn't revealed Himself to most Jews yet. Joseph revealed himself the second time (Acts 7:13), just as Jesus will be revealed to all Jews during the one thousand-year reign (Romans 11:25-32).

As many as 50 billion people have lived and died. Most never heard of Jesus, the only name for eternal life (Acts 4:12). If these are the only days of salvation and most of those 50 billion are lost, then Christianity is a logical failure.

God has several resurrections at the millennium of Revelation 20, while Satan is bound. All the dead

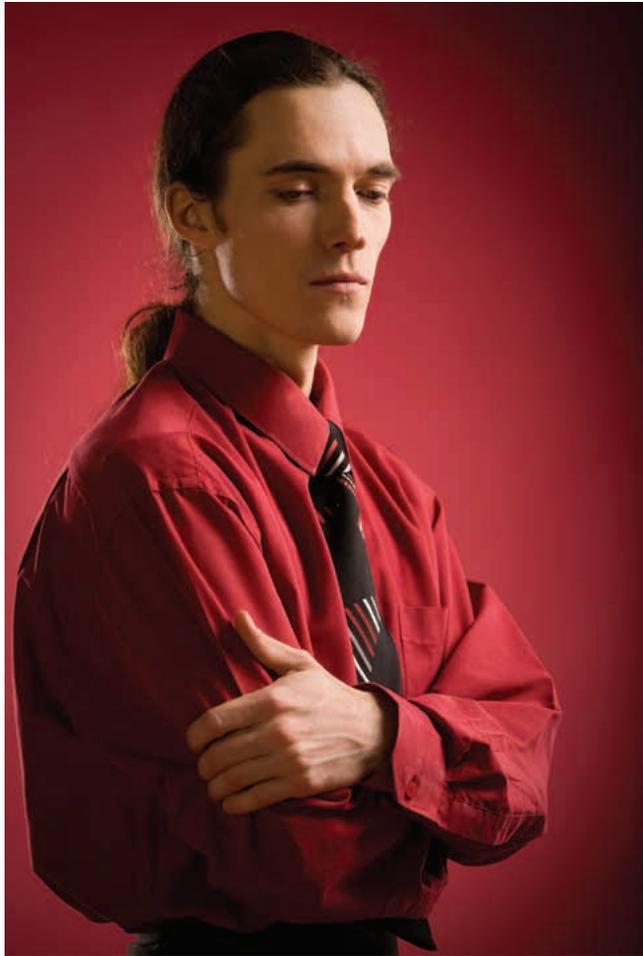
will be resurrected but not all the same day. Verse 6 guarantees eternal life to all in the first resurrection. The resurrection of damnation at the end is for those who committed the unpardonable sin. Between the two are the resurrections of grace (1 Corinthians 15:23). The sin of blasphemy is as simple as refusing to repent after the Spirit of God reveals truth.

The second way to commit the unforgivable sin is to fall from grace and turn back. We can enjoy sin so much that we refuse to quit, which is why we are warned to remember Lot's wife. Hebrews 6:4-6 says it's impossible to bring people back if they had the Holy Spirit but fall away. This would be like a dog returning to his vomit (2 Peter 2:22).

If we sin willfully after having knowledge of the truth, there is no longer a sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:26). To struggle against sin while trusting in Christ is not unpardonable, but to abandon self to sin and unbelief may be irreversible.

President Andrew Jackson once granted a pardon to a man named George Wilson. George refused the pardon and was hanged. Jesus has granted a pardon to every person on earth. To accept this pardon, we must repent and be baptized for the remission of sins to receive the Holy Spirit (mind) of God (Acts 2:38). This puts our names in His book of life and avoids both the unpardonable sin and the second death of Revelation 20:14, 15.

Arlo Gieselman attends the Church of God Kansas City in Independence, MO, and conducts a ministry to truckers at nearby truck stops. Though Arlo is a good friend of the editor and of CoG7, not every idea in his Viewpoint necessarily represents positions adopted by the Church.



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Robbing Satan

The risks and rewards of sneaking behind enemy lines. **by Roger Palms**

He claims he doesn't believe in God, but then he rails against God for all the bad things that have happened in his life. Life has not treated him fairly, this relative of mine says, and to him, it is all God's fault. The God he doesn't believe in is to blame for all that has gone wrong in his life. He doesn't see the inconsistency in what he is saying.

I've tried to work with him, to explain to him the gospel of Christ. He isn't interested. He is too busy being unhappy. When I point to the Savior, he becomes angry. He doesn't realize that he is actually very interested in God, but not for positive reasons. He thinks God is the cause of his troubles.

Enemy camp

Then one day I heard a man talk about robbing Satan. He spoke of going into the camp of the enemy, where Satan keeps the doubters, the angry ones. This man's goal, he said, is to rob Satan of his treasures, the souls that the Devil wants to keep.

It is hard to go into the camp of the enemy. The culture of the enemy tells us that we are narrow-minded and bigoted. We hear "You assume that only your way is the right way. You won't allow others to have their own views of God." Often we are driven back with attacks about "your view of God" and "your assumption about my being wrong" and "your inability to see

that others have a right to their opinions too.”

If I quote the apostle Peter who said, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), that is seen as only my opinion. If I turn to the words of Jesus who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6), I am told that there are many ways to God. There have to be if God is really the loving God that Christians say He is.

I have to admit that I am narrow; I am a follower of the narrow way. Jesus said, “Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13, 14). To choose to follow Him and what He teaches is to part ways with the culture and its teachings.

What I can't tell someone is that he is a captured person. His broad views are not broad at all but are fed to him by the evil one, who knows how to manipulate him. I can't say it, but I know it. I know that when I was without faith in the Savior, I too quoted words from the unbelieving culture to keep Christians at arm's length. I thought I was wise and was unwilling to have anyone tell me otherwise.

So I go into the camp of the enemy as a listener, open to hearing what this other person has to say, knowing full well that, when explored, the thinking that the culture teaches will fall apart if allowed to move forward to its own conclusions.

God's battle

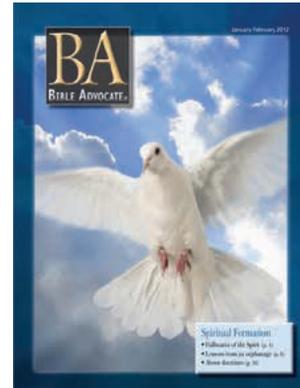
The battle for the lost, such as my relative who is so angry at God, is not my battle alone. King Jehoshaphat learned, as I have, that “The battle is not yours, but God's” (2 Chronicles 20:15).

I do not go into the enemy's camp alone but in the power of the One who said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5) and “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves” (Matthew 10:16). I go on a rescue mission to reach those who are captured by the great thief, those who will die in his captivity. I go offering life through the One who said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

Will I be attacked? Will I be insulted? Of course I will. That's exactly how Jesus was treated. But someone once went into the enemy's camp for me. In spite of the accusations, criticisms, and labels of narrow-mindedness that I once heaped on others, someone robbed Satan of me. Now I can do no less than to return to that enemy camp for another — perhaps even the one who is still saying, “Life has been unfair to me, and it is all God's fault.”

If I can, I'll commit robbery against Satan. **BA**

Roger Palms, former editor of *Decision* magazine, writes from Fort Meyers, FL. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



Celebration of the Spirit

The recent emphasis on the Holy Spirit has been long overdue and wonderfully forthcoming. Jesus' disciples could do their work only in the power of the Holy Spirit. That power has a broad range of application, not a narrow one. We are the ones who limit that power because of abuses we've seen or maybe because we fear failure. That is not the fault of the Holy Spirit. This power is essential for the work of the church and in living for Christ.

We often come up short because we think the Spirit will just be “with” us, rather than “in” us. We treat the Spirit like an outsider rather than an insider. What might happen if we practiced Jesus' promise that the Spirit is *in* us (John 14:17)? We can actually talk to Jesus like He is in us by His Spirit, instead of as a person “up there.” This can make us uncomfortable because the Spirit reveals issues that we would rather keep hidden (Galatians 5:16). Once these are dealt with, the fruit of the Spirit can be evident in our lives (vv. 23-25).

There is no limit on what we can ask God for. Jesus said to ask, seek, and knock. If we ask for the Spirit, He will not give us a stone or a scorpion. Nothing asked for, nothing received.

D. G.
Meridian, ID

Forum on Healing

continued from page 15

of life or death was between her and Him. Mother would tell us that all would be OK and that she was ready.

My three-year-old niece suddenly became blind and is now in a hospital for tests. She is in God's hands, and He knows her every need. I have learned to pray for those treating her illness. To pray for her parents' hearts and ask the Comforter to be with them and help them stay firm with God as their precious little one suffers.

I no longer speak for God: only He knows what tomorrow will be. When I'm asked about her healing, I have a responsibility not to give false hope in order to comfort. We often make promises on God's behalf and then claim it was not His will to heal, as if He would deliberately withhold something so needed.

Here it is in a nutshell for me. God is God; He can and does heal. That is between Him and the one who suffers. Those involved feel pain because we love. There is great suffering in this world, but we don't shed the same tears for those we don't know as for those we do. God, on the other hand, cares and meets *all* His children's needs.

*Cecilia Baker
Jung, Victoria, Australia*

I read the article on healing with more than academic interest. I have ministered to believers who received much prayer in faith but died from terminal illnesses. I have also witnessed God heal in strange ways, e.g., heal a hip dis-

order when a sister was prayed for regarding deafness.

I believe God's will is to exercise healing gifts today comparable to those in the Bible. This healing includes moral and spiritual, as well as physical dimensions. God heals in many ways. He may use prayer, mere compassion, or physicians. He may use medicines, herbs, nutrients, or various forms of therapy. It is vitally important to let go of our own approach and trust God for guidance about healing (or anything else), then follow it.

Why are there so many failures in healing? I've never seen an acceptable, simple answer to this question. It may relate to lack of faith or bad habits, but not always. Our bodies are subject to mental and emotional stressors; they wear out. It is God's prerogative to know when and how healing will occur. No formula will produce exactly what we want, when and how we want it. Attempting one is more in the realm of false prophets and magicians than of Christians. What the disciple does is pray, listen, empathize, and exercise faith and compassion in ministering to the sick. Some things will only be healed in the resurrection.

Is it a mistake to pray that God's will be done? Some teaching from Word of Faith circles has not been helpful in this area. I've studied with their schools, read their books, and listened to their preachers. It is a very serious error to remove God's will from our prayers (see Matthew 6:10; James 4:15). It is impossible to pray in God's name (*beshe-mi* in Aramaic) without considering His will. That is the essence of calling on His name. The core of being a disciple is to seek His

will. It is impossible to really pray in the name of Jesus without praying that the Father's will be done.

Anointing oil? Consider the link between the words *Messiah* ("Anointed") and *massage*. From ancient times, a common and effective practice has been to rub olive oil into sore muscles, joints, and other parts of the body for healing. According to Holy Scripture and tradition, the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, but it also has practical use.

God can and does heal with or without oil. In a healing context, anointing with oil has often meant praying along with physical-medical treatment, not just dabbing oil on the sick as a symbol of the healing Spirit when we pray. The responsibility of elders to anoint and pray for the sick does not exclude others from praying also. Parents, healthcare providers, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ all can exercise healing ministry.

A serious misunderstanding of what prayer really is exists throughout the body of Christ. In Aramaic, the language in which Jesus taught His disciples to pray, the word for *prayer* is *slotha*, which means "to set a trap" — i.e. to capture the thoughts and counsel of God. If we would do more listening than speaking when we pray, we might find more answers to our questions.

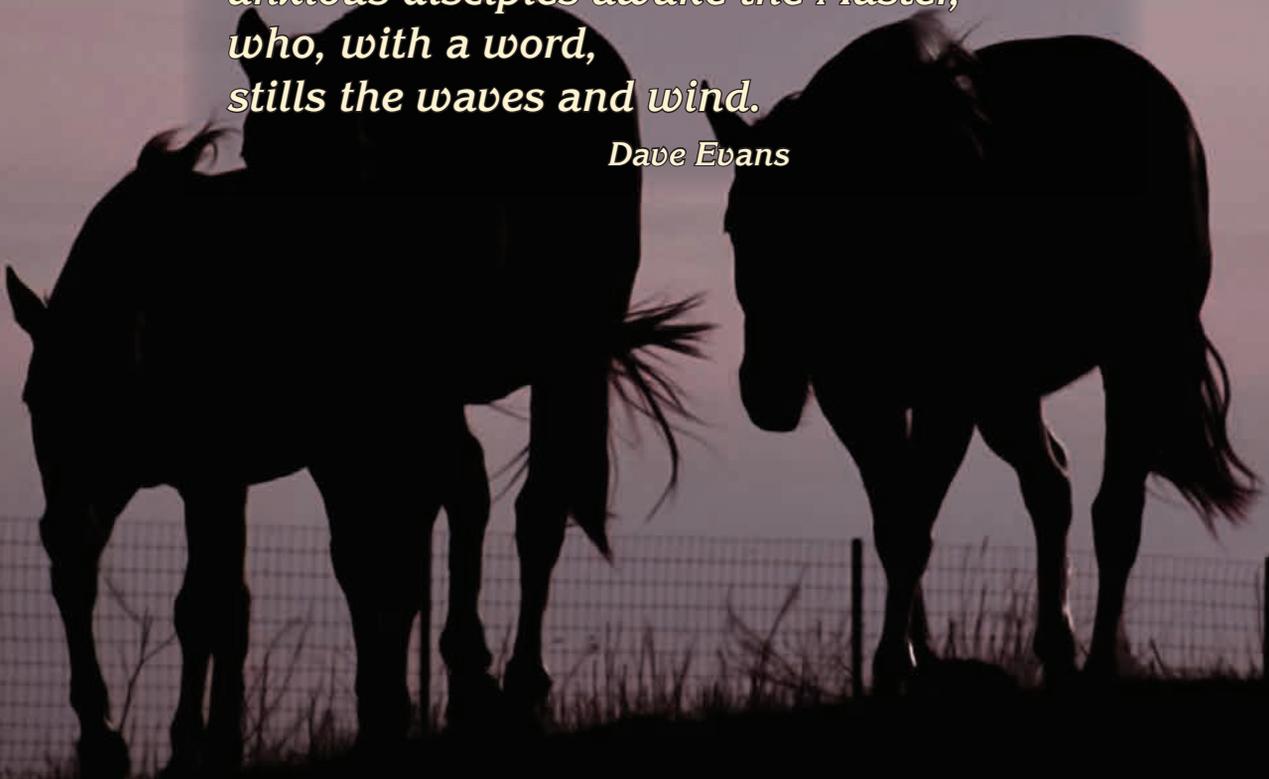
*Jim DeFrancisco, MBA, PhD
Mishawaka, IN BA*

 *To probe this topic further, we recommend a full-length testimony of healing by Pauline Lewinson, who combined faith and prayer with wholesome eating and living. Visit baonline.org.*

Ruler of the Wind

*In the darkness, before the sun
embraces the morning,
strong, fierce winds
gust through the canyon:
leaves whistle, trees groan under the strain,
small branches snap,
metal stall roofs rattle;
horses, nerves on edge, alert to danger;
the chill paints a rosy flush
on my cheeks and nose —
then a momentary lull, and calm.
It's then the Ruler of the wind
captures my thoughts. . . .
Out to sea, strong, fierce winds
send waves crashing across the bow
of the small ship;
flushed with fear,
anxious disciples awake the Master,
who, with a word,
stills the waves and wind.*

Dave Evans



August Emphasis

SVA



Spring Vale Academy

Mark Caswell, Director

August 16 is when fall semester begins on our lovely Owosso, Michigan campus. Why consider attending a church school away from home? Why Spring Vale?

- A student who was behind one grade level and failing is now a graduate because of the care and attention he received from the SVA team.
- A student with no spiritual direction has come to know her Savior and is committed to serving the Lord for a lifetime through the academy's ministry.
- A student from a solid home has his faith strengthened to pursue a life of leadership and service, due to Spring Vale's influence.
- A student questioning her entire belief system is now fully persuaded that God exists and His Word is reliable.

There are many reasons to enroll at Spring Vale. Or maybe you want to serve youth in one of these staff positions: **principal, director of development, dean of boys, dean of girls, assistants to the deans, teachers of Bible and of mathematics, or maintenance manager.**

Check us out, find student application forms and job qualifications at www.springvale.us, or call Mark Caswell at 989-725-2391.

July Emphasis

Change for Your World: IMC

See page 28 and back cover



Whittlebury Hall, an established conference center, is situated in the village of Whittlebury in picture-perfect Northamptonshire, just outside London.

More About Spring Vale

- Spring Vale has gone global. We have received clearance to enroll young people from other countries. This became much more difficult after 9/11. We have interest from Denmark and Egypt, and pray to have other international students become part of our school family.
- Qualifying students earn LifeSpring School of Ministry credits for Bible classes taken at Spring Vale.
- Spring Vale's first annual fall Homecoming event, especially for alumni, features wonderful programs, fellowship, and sports: alumni vs. students soccer and volleyball games. Coming in October.

Spring Vale Academy • 4150 South M-52 • Owosso, MI 48867



Graduation 2012

A well-filled auditorium greeted the senior class for Spring Vale Academy's sixty-third commencement service, May 27. Before diplomas went to fourteen proud graduates, addresses were delivered by Amber Noble (salutatorian), Molly Nienhuis (valedictorian), and Paul Coulson (commencement). Brother Coulson is father to one graduate (Isaac) and to the late Courtney Coulson, an SVA alumnus who died from a car accident only months ago. The SVA family shares this loss, making Brother Coulson's address particularly meaningful.

The Blessing of the Class, a tradition involving family and friends, was led by Pastor Max Morrow. Whaid Rose presented General Conference Scholarship Awards to Molly Nienhuis (Academic Excellence) and Stefanie Kendrick (Spiritual Leadership). Stefanie also received the Student of the Year Award. Diplomas were presented by Mark Caswell (director) and Tracy Kendrick (board chairman).

The Class Verse ("For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind," 2 Timothy 1:7) was a reminder that SVA equips students not only academically but also spiritually, preparing them for a lifelong walk with Christ. We thank God for the gift SVA has been to the Church, and pray for His gracious provision in student enrollment and finances for a new school year.

— Whaid Rose



LITES

The LITES year has now ended. Before returning home, the team organized an event to support the Stanberry pro-life clinic by collecting new and used baby items.

Team members assisted with the program for the April 27-29 Dakota Youth Retreat in Alfred. They also enjoyed serving at "Acquire the Fire" in Kansas City, Missouri, as well as visiting Pine View nursing home and getting their feet wet in evangelism.

For those interested in the LITES program, visit lites.cog7.org. First day of classes is September 3, 2012.



*LITES Team 2011-2012 (L to R):
Monica Schlenker, Jonathan Wallace,
and Beatriz Vences*



Bible Bee in San Antonio

Triple Tree Church had its third annual Bible Bee on May 6, with 36 children (ages 3-13) from three churches participating (photo includes adult leaders of the event).

The goal of competition is for children to memorize scriptures and learn more about a Bible book or character. Prizes, including cash, are given to winners in three age categories. All participants got a medal, t-shirt, and small prize. The best prize of all was the reward of all these precious children hiding God's words in their hearts, as many knew their verses "word perfect." We plan to improve next year's Bible Bee and encourage other churches to participate.

— Zahida Hrenyk



Heber Vega of Upper Marlboro, MD, is the new superintendent for the Northeastern District. Heber has served the San Diego, CA church as pastor for the last 20 years.

IMC Coming to UK

The previous BA asked readers to watch for further notice about the International Ministerial Congress scheduled for August 25-29 in the United Kingdom. Here's the notice: **By God's grace, we're going to London!**

Elders Clyde "Chip" Hinds (Tahlequah, Oklahoma), Steve Kyner (Jamestown, North Dakota), and Whaid Rose (Thornton, Colorado) will represent the US and Canada in this quadrennial meeting of delegates from up to forty member nations.

Please see pages 30 and 32 (back cover) for more on IMC, and pray for the work of CoG7 — around the corner and around the world. Thanks for your support!



***NAMC:** Portland's Red Lion on the River, where all licensed and credentialed ministers, lay pastors, and their wives are invited for North American Ministerial Council, October 29 - November 3, 2012. For more information, contact namc@cog7.org or call Calvin Burrell at 303-452-7973 (English) or Raul Lopez at 703-944-1820 (Spanish).*



Steve Krome of Chattanooga, TN, is now Southeastern District superintendent. Steve and his wife, Allison, own a business and enjoy serving churches from Memphis to Miami to North Carolina.



Women of Wonder: *With Psalm 139:14 as their text, these Florida women worshiped and celebrated together, April 22-24, at an Orlando retreat center.*



Relief to The Philippines: *A recent typhoon and flood affected brethren in and around Cagayan de Oro, Mindianao, home of the national CoG7 office. Disaster Relief was delivered to those who suffered most. Filipino pastor and leader Wilfredo Hinggo is shown here helping distribute relief materials. Readers' donations to our CoG7 Disaster Relief Fund (P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233) assure that the Church is prepared to help when, not if, the next disaster strikes somewhere on the globe.*

Announcing . . .
**The General Conference
 Biennial Convention**

Omaha, Nebraska
July 1-6, 2013

**Omaha Hilton and
 CenturyLink Center**

**Come discover Omaha.
 There's more there
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International Congress

IMC Face-to-Face in August

As many of our readers know, our church's International Ministerial Congress (IMC) will hold its quadrennial meeting, with the Lord's help, August 25-29, 2012, near London, England.

The tasks for this occasion will be to update the status of the congress and of its member countries and sympathizers, and to reframe our commitment to its bylaw objectives. These two objectives are promoting doctrinal unity among member countries and developing evangelization programs in the seven world zones.

To accomplish this, delegates will stress the biblical and theological theme of "Unity in Diversity." In the midst of a world divided by economic, ethnic, cultural, and ideological factors, the church is called to be one body. Unity among humanity is possible only through the gospel of Christ Jesus. Any other means is doomed to failure.

On the other hand, the congress should help us join efforts to develop evangelization programs to reach sinners — those within the local church and those in countries where we have no presence. This is necessary to justify our existence because a church that does not evangelize is not truly a church. That is, the

church is only a church when it fulfills the mission our Lord entrusted to it.

Other issues to be addressed in the congress include "Basic Christianity," reflecting on all aspects of doctrine that have been pillars through the centuries for the Christian church and faith. Also, we will reflect on Romans 14, where the apostle Paul masterfully exposes the concepts of respect and tolerance as a distinctive Christian behavior. And we will promote *Cristo Viene* and *Change for Your World*, which have been great blessings to support evangelists and missionaries around the world.

In addition, our congress agenda will include administrative tasks, such as amending bylaws, granting membership to new countries, and selecting the IMC executive committee. By the grace of God, even routine business can offer further impetus to this international organization and give glory and honor to the God who has redeemed us.

Finally, this congress in the UK should respond to its economic needs by creating a financial system that will allow resources to fulfill its biblical objectives. Those



IMC President Ramon Ruiz

who have less will need to be helped in our mission, because the theme of "Unity in Diversity" relates not only to the doctrinal and liturgical but also to the economic. We hope to have a congress where member countries and interested observers can be represented with dignity. May no barrier prevent the participation of all.

— Ramon Ruiz
Monterrey, N. L., Mexico



The Race

What do the Olympics and CoG7's International Ministerial Congress have in common? They both convene in England this summer, both attract global response, and both teach us about life's priorities.

Such lessons are at the heart of the Oscar-winning film *Chariots of Fire*. At the 1924 Olympics in Paris, Eric Liddell, a Scotsman, withdrew from the one hundred-meter dash rather than run on the Lord's Day. When admonished to abandon his convictions and run for the sake of his king and country, he declared that his ultimate allegiance was to a greater King, his heart fixed on a better country.

Liddell then ran the four hundred meters, for which he had not trained. Before the race, a stranger slipped him a piece of paper with these words from 1 Samuel 2:30: "Those who honor Me I will honor." Paper in hand, Liddell not only won that race but also broke the world's record for that distance.

His heart fixed on a greater prize, Liddell had no desire for celebrity status. After the games, he set sail for China, devoting the rest of his short life to missions. When a crowd gathered to bid him farewell, he raised the familiar strain of Isaac Watts' hymn:

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun/
doth his successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

As the train departed, he shouted, "Christ for the world; the world for Christ!"

Under dangerous circumstances in China, Liddell gave himself to missionary service until he was separated from his family and imprisoned. Even in confinement, he served the Lord with joy. When his freedom was arranged by Winston Churchill, he declined the opportunity, giving preference to a pregnant prisoner. A little more

than two decades after the Paris Olympics, he died of a brain tumor.

An imperishable prize, not the Olympic gold, was Liddell's true passion — and Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. Those who would win this ultimate prize are given to focused living, rigorous training, and strict discipline — like champion athletes. They run, not aimlessly but with eyes on the prize, doing whatever it takes to win. The broader context for Paul's analogy is his passion for souls: "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (vv. 19-22). Apart from devotion to Christ and a soul passion, such disciplines gain but little.

Millions may have watched *Chariots of Fire* without gleaning its intended message. Liddell's life illustrates the combination of athletic discipline and missionary zeal. It is deeply inspiring.

So as our congress convenes August 25 in the UK, may each delegate be inspired and challenged by Liddell's story. May its business be guided by these priorities. And may our devotion to Christ match these fitting lines by Ira Stumphill:

Oh Jesus if I die upon a foreign field
someday, 'Twould be no more than love demands,
no less could I repay, 'No greater love hath mortal man than for a friend to die, '/
These are the words he gently spoke to me, 'If just a cup of water I place within your hand/
Then just a cup of water is all that I demand, '/
But if by death to living they can thy glory see, 'I'll take my cross and follow close to thee.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference
President



“Change for Your World”

This year’s offering will support the
quadrennial meeting of the

International Ministerial Congress

August 25-29, 2012

Near London, England, UK

Theme: “Unity and Diversity”

A gift in July-August will help IMC change
your world, by God’s grace. Use the “IMC
Change for Your World” earmark for a
local offering, or mail it to International
Ministerial Congress, P. O. Box 33677,
Denver, CO 80233.



Kenya



India