

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE

March 2005

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Coming in the April-May BA:

If God is good, why in the world do bad things happen?

In the March issue of *Now What?*: a wife deals with being abandoned by her husband (<http://nowwhat.cog7.org>)



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Something Else



On day two of a new year at our table in townhome 2B, I gaze through the patio door and across winter-brown grass under gray skies. Four green electrical boxes inside a split-rail fence separate us from a golf course. Spindly, barren trees and a few scrawny evergreens (Colorado is semi-arid) line the first fairway as a lone golfer, braving the near-freeze, scoots by in an electric cart. Beyond, near-new homes stretch to the eastern horizon.

I'm having one of my metaphysical moments, with few words to describe it. It simmers down to this: Why is there something out there, instead of nothing?

No purple mountain majesty triggers my musing today. The Rockies are on the backside, a view mostly blocked by homes like ours across the street, west. Our unit faces the golf course, appealing in its own right, and I face the same question: Why is there something — like lofty peaks behind, blades of grass ahead, buildings all around — instead of nothing? The question both haunts and comforts me today here in unit 2B.

Something exists, this I know. If nothing existed, we wouldn't be having this discussion, would we?

And the something that exists didn't come from nothing, I muse. No thing can only produce more of the same thing, no? To suppose that once there was absolutely nothing but now there is something is absurd. Either the something that now exists has always existed in some form or something else produced it.

Might the raw materials of the universe have always been here? Could space and matter be self-existent, the great I AM, and forever to be? Scientifically, I think, that is impossible. An eternal, closed system would long since be depleted and dormant.

All right, then. One option remains. If the natural order of the universe is not eternal, then it had a beginning. And if it had a beginning, it had a Beginner because something can't come from nothing.

Put another way, if the something that exists today is not eternal, then it must have been produced by something else that is. That's the only answer that makes good sense to me: "Something else" is why there is something — anything — instead of nothing! That Something Else the Bible calls God.

— Calvin Burrell



Evolution

vs.

Intelligent Design

Scientific evidence that God is in the details.
by Richard A. Wiedenheft

PhotoDisc

The theory of evolution by natural selection has dominated the scientific world for almost a century and a half. And while most evangelical Christians have always disparaged and dismissed the theory, their arguments have done little to loosen its grip on the thinking of most scientists, educators, and millions of their students.

But now evolution is being challenged on a new front by scientists themselves — not necessarily Christians — who are part of what is called the Intelligent Design (ID) movement. They claim that evolution simply cannot explain the incredible complexity and exquisite pattern so apparent in the natural world. On the contrary, these could only be the result of intelligent design.

The roots of this movement can perhaps be traced back to a book written in 1984 by three scientists. These men challenged the validity of experiments that supposedly demonstrated that life could have arisen by chance from some primordial soup. Near the end of their book they write:

A major conclusion to be drawn from this work is that the undirected flow of energy through a primordial atmosphere and ocean is at present a woefully inadequate explanation for the incredible complexity associated with even simple living systems, and is probably wrong.¹

In his 1996 book *Darwin's Black Box*, Michael Behe, professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, puts it this way:

The simplicity that was once expected to be the foundation of life has proven to be a phantom; instead, systems of horrendous, irreducible complexity inhabit the cell. The resulting realization that life was designed by an intelligence is a shock to us in the twentieth century who have gotten used to thinking of life as the result of simple natural laws.²

Irreducible complexity

One of the cornerstones of Behe's arguments is the concept of irreducible complexity. A system or a mechanism can be reduced to a point beyond which it becomes a pile of junk. He uses the example of a mousetrap: It is so designed that removing any one of its five essential parts renders it utterly useless for catching mice. Either all the parts are present, proper-

ly connected, and functioning, or the mousetrap doesn't work.

Geoffrey Simmons, M.D., calls this "all-or-none," or the "whole-package phenomenon (WPP)."³ The whole package has to be in place, or nothing gets accomplished.

The living world is full of "whole packages" — intricate yet irreducibly complex mechanisms and processes. These present a huge problem for the theory of evolution, which posits that complex forms of life can develop step by step from simpler forms, gradually adding functionality as they become more and more complicated. As Behe says:

An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly . . . by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional.⁴

Even Charles Darwin recognized this "Achilles' heel" of his theory. Behe quotes from *The Origin of the Species*: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down."⁵

In Darwin's day, however, scientists were just beginning to recognize that living organisms were made of cells, which they understood little about. The cell was an unknown or, as Behe terms it, a "black box." The presumption was that once they came to understand the cell, scientists would find simple structures and processes that would support the theory of evolution.

'Simple' cells

When I studied biology in high school and college in the 1960s, teachers talked of simple cells and simple one-celled animals. The thinking was that amino acids somehow developed into uncomplicated functioning cells, which eventually adapted to their environment to become more complicated cells, which developed into multi-cellular plants and animals — and on and on until all the life forms as we know them today were developed. So the theory went.

However, with the advent of the electron microscope in the mid-twentieth century, scientists could begin to open the "black box" of the cell. Around the same time, X-ray crystallography enabled researchers to determine the structure of various molecules, including complex protein molecules. These advances revealed far more complexity than anyone had ever imagined. The simplest of cells is anything but simple.

Geoffrey Simmons estimates that every cell contains one billion compounds including five million different kinds of proteins, each one having a unique shape and characteristics that enable it to play a specific role in the body. In addition, there are more than 3,000 enzymes critical to chemical reactions

that take place in the body. Cells come in many varieties and shapes; they serve many different and specialized functions in the body. Some cells work as individuals floating in the blood; others connect with identical cells to form skin or muscles, for example. Still others send out long extensions to communicate with other cells.⁶

When one looks into the workings of any one cell, he finds incredible complexity.

The "simplest" self-sufficient, replicating cell has the capacity to produce thousands of different proteins and other molecules, at different times and under variable conditions. Synthesis, degradation, energy generation, replication, maintenance of cell architecture, mobility, regulation, repair, communication — all of these functions take place in virtually every cell, and each function itself requires the interaction of numerous parts.⁷

Behe likens all this activity, accomplished at the molecular level, to the workings of machinery. The simplest cell is a veritable factory of molecular machines, and evolution offers no mechanism whereby this factory could have gradually assembled itself over long periods of time.⁸

The simplest of cells is anything but simple.



An example: cilia

For us non-biochemists, the details of how the body functions at the molecular level can be hard to grasp. But it is in the details that evolution faces its greatest challenges, and it is in the details that we can see the marvel of a creation that cries out for intelligent design.

One example of an irreducibly complex system, detailed by Behe, is cilia — cells with hairlike extensions that can move like a whip. The respiratory tract is lined with cilia, helping expel mucus. Sperm cells have cilia that enable them to swim. These apparently simple cells are actually complex molecular machines.

If you cut through a cilium and examine its cross section under great magnification, you discover that it is composed of a number of tiny tubes, or microtubules. Just inside the “skin” of the cilium is a circle of nine pairs of these tiny tubes. In the middle of the cilium is yet another set of two microtubules linked to each other. All the microtubules are, in fact, cylinders made up by a circle of even smaller strands or fibers.

The current understanding of biochemists is that the motion of the cilium depends on two

protein molecules that go between a microtubule of one pair and one of the microtubules of the pair next to it. One of these proteins is dynein, the “motor” of the cilium. The other is nexin, which serves as a link or tie between the adjacent pairs.

Under the right circumstances, the dynein pushes against the molecules in the microtubule next to it so that the two tend to slide past one another. In fact, if the microtubule pairs weren’t tied together by the nexin, the dynein molecules would just keep pushing the adjacent tubule along like a telescoping antenna until they reached the end. But the nexin connectors prevent that from happening. With the dynein pushing and the nexin holding, the microtubules bend! This action of all the dynein motors pushing over and over again and all the nexin linkers holding on tight is apparently what makes cilia whip and the cell move.

This is a simplified explanation of an intricate mechanism, one that, according to Behe, is irreducibly complex and “an enormous monkey wrench thrown into its presumed gradual, Darwinian evolution.”⁹

Other examples of complexity

Behe details other examples of irreducibly complex systems in the body, including the seemingly simple task of moving proteins created in one part of a cell to another part of the cell where they are needed. One method, which he calls a “mind-boggling process” and another contradiction to evolution, is vesicular transport “where protein cargo is loaded into containers for shipment [from one part of the cell to another].”¹⁰

Simmons cites insulin production as a process that is irreducibly complex as well:

In the process of insulin manufacture, none of the several “pre-insulin” molecules are useful (envision a car being made along an assembly line). Not only is this an all-or-none process, but so are the mechanisms that tell the body when to secrete insulin, how much insulin to produce or secrete, for how long, where to send it, how to link it to nutrients in the blood, how to transport it, and how to turn it off when the job is done.¹¹

And then there’s blood clotting, so essential to life for all warm-blooded animals. It involves a complex and intricate cascade of molecular reactions involving some 20 chemicals. If any one of them is missing, the system just doesn’t work. How could this possibly have evolved gradually? Behe writes:

The fact is, no one on earth has the vaguest idea how the coagulation cascade came to be. . . . Blood coagulation is a paradigm of the staggering complexity that underlies even apparently



It is in the details that we can see the marvel of a creation that cries out for intelligent design.

simple bodily processes. Faced with such complexity beneath even simple phenomena, Darwinian theory falls silent.¹²

What does it all mean?

In his conclusion, Behe writes about the implications of all the knowledge about cell structure and function that has been accumulated over the past four decades.

The result of these cumulative efforts to investigate the cell — to investigate life at the molecular level — is a loud, clear, piercing cry of “*design!*” The result is so unambiguous and so significant that it must be ranked as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science. . . . The observation of the intelligent design of life is as momentous as the observation that the earth goes around the sun or that disease is caused by bacteria or that radiation is emitted in quanta. . . . But no bottles have been uncorked, no hands slapped [to celebrate this discovery]. Instead, a curious, embarrassed silence surrounds the stark complexity of the cell Why does the scientific community not greedily embrace its startling discovery? . . . The dilemma is that while one side of the elephant is labeled intelligent design, the other side might be labeled God.¹³

Behe finds this rather odd, given the fact that 90 percent of Americans say they believe in God and about 50 percent attend religious services every week and that you regularly hear references to God from politicians and sports stars.

But the apostle Paul would certainly not have been surprised. He wrote almost 2,000 years ago of those who “did not like to retain God in their knowledge” (Romans 1:28). And while the Intelligent Design movement is a serious challenge to evolution, I don’t think we should be optimistic that Darwin’s theory will collapse anytime soon, nor that large numbers of scientists will embrace God as the Intelligent Designer. The mainstream of society didn’t pay much attention to God before Darwin, and I doubt it will pay much attention after his theory is relegated to the footnotes of the history of science.

On the other hand, Christians can have greater confidence that our belief in God is not based on a blind faith that is in conflict with science. On the contrary, we can glorify God with the psalmist: “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well” (Psalm 139:14, NIV). With every advance of science in understanding the intricate design of the creation, we know more and more “full well” how wonderful the Creator is.

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

The more we learn of the exquisite, fantastic design of the creation, the more clearly we can see the magnitude of the Creator’s eternal power and majesty! **BA**

Online

Want to read more about intelligent design and evolution? Read the full version of this article in the *Bible Advocate Online* (www.cog7.org/BA).

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Richard A. Wiedenheft and his wife, Darlene, live in Falls, PA.

Questions & Answers

If wonder and beauty in nature are evidence for a good God (Psa. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:20ff), why aren't tsunamis and other natural disasters evidence of an evil God — or no God at all?*

Grappling with tough questions about natural disasters requires putting things into perspective. First, remember that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Indeed, we live in a beautiful world that testifies to the existence and greatness of God. But the wonder and beauty we observe in today's natural world can't compare with what existed before sin entered the picture. Beautiful as it is, the earth is broken, as Paul noted: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom. 8:22, NIV).

Second, when we consider the destruction that oceans can bring and that 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water, human survival on this planet is a wonder in itself. Scripture says God sets the boundaries of the oceans (Job 38:8-11).

Third, tragedy and suffering in nature are part of life in our broken world. Yes, God can prevent catastrophic events, but He allows them because the greatness of His mercy and love triumphs over them. The devastation in Southeast Asia is of epic proportion, and the grief of the survivors is unimaginable. But stories of miraculous survival and the triumph of faith, hope, and love abound each day as reminders that "This is my Father's world,/O let me ne'er forget/That though the wrong seems oft so strong,/God is the Ruler yet" (Maltbie Babcock).

Natural disasters are not evidence of an evil God; they are evidence of a broken world. They do not prove the non-existence of God; rather, they testify to His greatness and providential love in the midst of life's darkest hours. Indeed, our God can make beauty out of ashes (Isa. 61:3).

— Elder Whaid Rose

Is homework permissible on the Sabbath? I have maxed out my courses in a competitive school and study seven days a week to keep up, or my grades drop. I know Sabbath is set apart, and I read the Bible more then. What's your advice? I am 15.

God asks us to remember the Sabbath and not work on it (Ex. 20:8-11). We understand "work" to mean employment and routine labor of the other days. Your study and mental growth is a part of your daily work at this point, even though it doesn't provide your income — yet.

Some kinds of work are permissible on Sabbath, like the "work" of mercy and relief to the needy, of serving others at public worship, and of studying Scripture. Some schoolwork may not violate the spirit of Sabbath, if you find in it the delight of learning more of God's creation and how it "works."

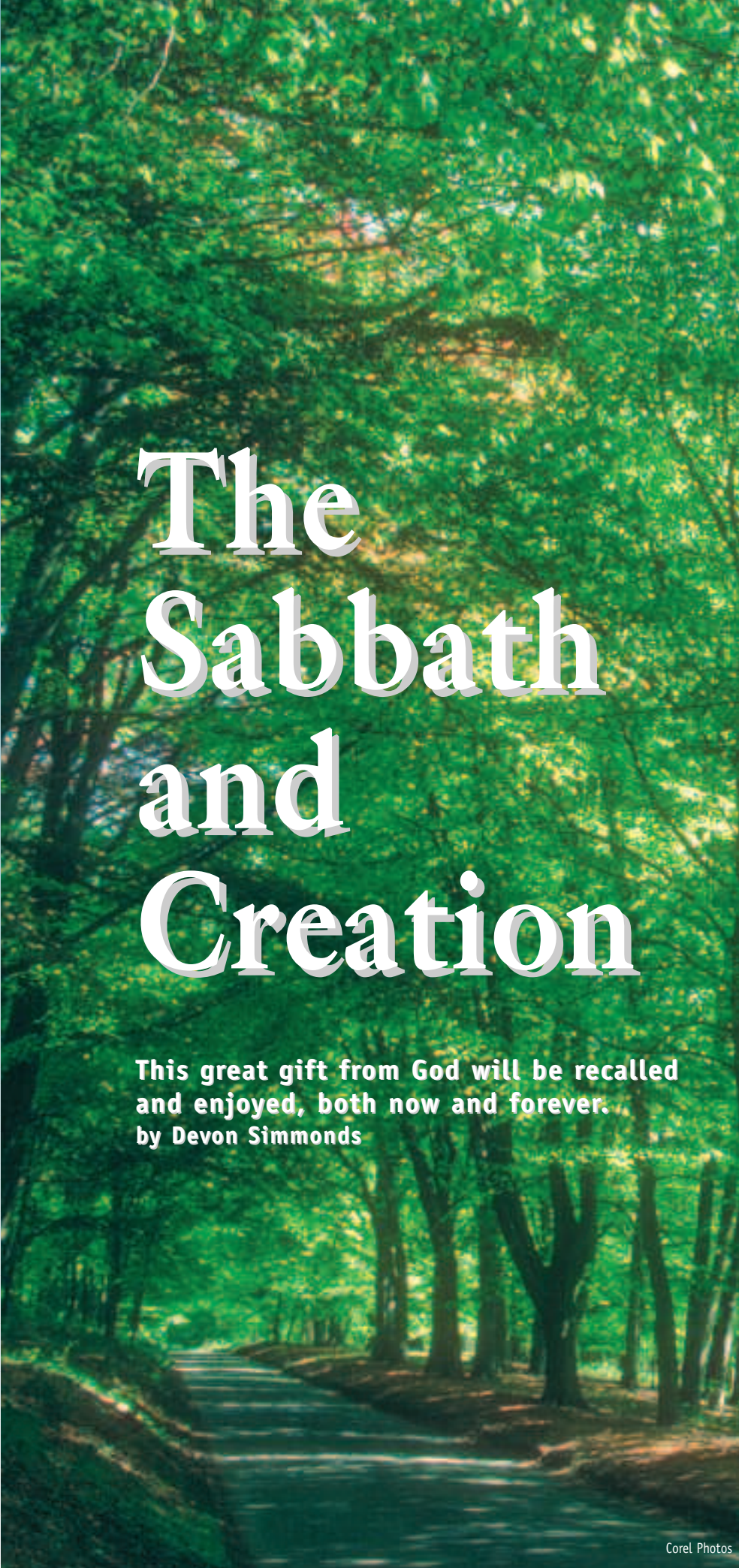
Though some assigned reading or writing on Sabbath could be fine, consider that you might learn more the other six days by resting from homework on the seventh. Many people report this principle working for them in other areas.

Your commitment to schoolwork and to God's Sabbath are commendable, though you experience tension between them. Based on your love for God and your desire to obey Him all week long, I'm confident that your solution will be fine.

— Elder Calvin Burrell

We Ask

* Readers are invited to write their own responses to the first question (God and nature) and send them to the Editor for possible publication.



The Sabbath and Creation

This great gift from God will be recalled and enjoyed, both now and forever.
by Devon Simmonds

The first two chapters of the Bible are among its most intimate — a word that describes warm friendship and close familiarity. Under divine inspiration, Moses paints a picture in Genesis 1 and 2 of increasing intimacy between God and His creation.

Early in the first chapter, the heavens and earth had been created, but the universe displayed an empty state of darkness. Next, God created light to separate day and night and pronounced the light “good.” Then He created the sky, seas, dry land, vegetation, heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and stars), creatures of the seas, birds and animals, and pronounces these days of creative work “good.” Until now, all created things had come into being by the spoken words of God (Hebrews 11:3).

On day six, God made a different call: “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . .” (Genesis 1:26). In saying this, God signaled intent to raise His intimacy with creation to a new threshold. To that point, His nearness to His handiwork had come through the spoken Word. Now He wanted the creation even closer to Himself.

Thus, God made humans in His image and likeness — more like Himself than any other created thing. What joy and thrill the Father must have experienced as He created beings that would possess, in measure, some of His divine attributes and thus be capable of intimate fellowship with Him. With the phrase “and it was so” (v. 30b), the Holy Spirit eloquently affirmed that God effected all

the things He purposed in Himself.

Here we reach the end of the sixth evening and morning, the penultimate day of creation. After all His glorious achievements, God rested from His work; He ceased to create physical things. He did, however, initiate two institutions to support the orderly operation of His creation: the Sabbath and marriage. Both these gifts of God are best understood in relation to God's creative genius as expressed in Genesis 1 and 2. In this context, the Sabbath, much like marriage, is about celebration, intimacy, balance, the rights and dignity of each individual, worship, renewal, and an eternal rest yet future.

Celebration

The seventh day cannot but be celebration — a day to remember and rejoice. It was a celebration of work well done, an acknowledgment of the genius of the Creator and the glories of His creation. The heavenly choir must have sung a litany of celestial melodies of

praise and adoration on that first Sabbath.

When God gave the Sabbath command to Israel, He asked them to keep it because “in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:11, NIV). God wants us to observe the Sabbath in honor — in joyous celebration — of His creative wisdom and awesome power.

Intimacy

For six days God interacted with creation through His word, and on the sixth day He became even more intimate with man. He not only created man by a more personal process (forming him lovingly from dust), not only imparted life to man through more intimate contact (breathing into his nostrils), but also created something more God-intimate by design. In delegating His own dominion to man, God gave us opportunity to become intimate with, and

personally caring about, His creation. In giving man the Sabbath, God gave us time and space in which to become intimate with Himself, at our own volition. Today, more than 6,000 years since, God still invites us to intimacy with Himself.

Worship

Modern science estimates that there may be 100 billion galaxies and that there are 100 billion stars in our own galaxy — the nearest of which is 24,000 million miles from Earth.¹ Who can but worship a God so great? Who can but worship a God with such infinite wisdom and incomprehensible power?

The Sabbath is a call to worship. Lest the creation should forget the Creator, God blessed the seventh day and proclaimed it sacred. As angels worshiped God for His creative work, so we are called to join the heavenly hosts each Sabbath in adoration of this stupendous God.

Renewal

Without question, the Sabbath was given to support the physical and emotional renewal of humanity. Rather than asking man to set his own frequency for rest, relaxation, and recuperation, God gave the standard: one day in seven. The Sabbath is a gift to all of us human beings (Mark 2:27), not just to Jewish people.

Balance

Work is important, but so is rest. In a restless age when stress and depression are primary afflictions, the Sabbath remains one of God's provisions

Weekly Cycle

Think of the link between time — days, weeks, months, years — and natural science. One rotation of the earth on its axis determines a day. The moon's orbit around the earth marks a month. A single revolution of the earth around the sun defines a year. But nothing in the natural world determines a week. Where did that come from? Genesis 1 and 2 account for the weekly cycle — the time in which God created everything and then rested. The movement of the heavenly bodies (1:14) and the Word of God (2:2, 3) have governed how humans mark time ever since.

— *Based on The Battle for the Beginning* (p. 115),
by John MacArthur

for bringing order and balance into human affairs. In Scripture, God insisted upon the Sabbath rest in spite of the hustle and bustle of human society: “even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest” (Exodus 34:21, NIV).

Divine convention on human rights

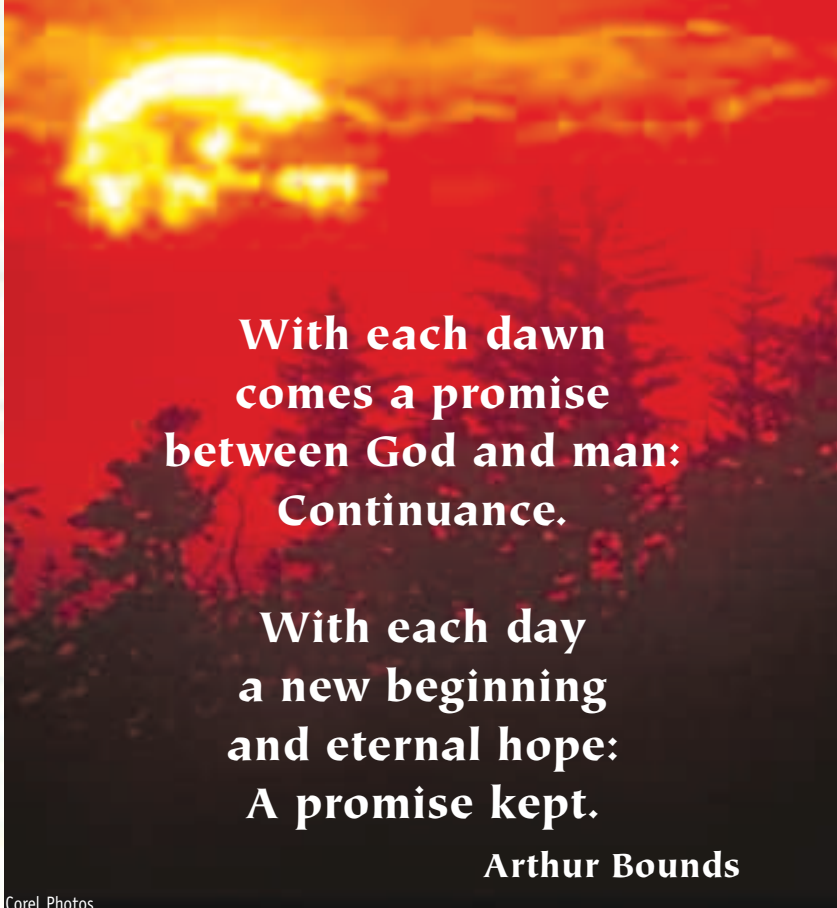
Modern societies, particularly in the West, pay special regard to the rights of individuals. As God renewed the covenant with the nation of Israel, civil liberties were on His agenda, too. In restating the Sabbath law, God emphasized the rights of all individuals to personal space and rest, regardless of their social status. Not only should Israel keep the Sabbath, and so gain the associated benefits, but also servants and strangers — not to mention livestock — had a right to Sabbath rest (Deuteronomy 5:14).

Type of eternal rest

The writer of Hebrews affirms that God entered His rest on the Sabbath of creation and that God invites man to enter that rest (3:7–4:11). Since the promise of entering God’s rest still remains, that promise was not speaking of Canaan. Unbelief will prevent us from entering God’s true rest, just as it prevented Israel from entering Canaan.

This rest of Hebrews 4 is akin to life eternal, a promise to be fully attained only at the return of Christ. Of this eternal rest we read

This verse [Hebrews 4:9] indirectly establishes the obligation of the Sabbath



**With each dawn
comes a promise
between God and man:
Continuance.**

**With each day
a new beginning
and eternal hope:
A promise kept.**

Arthur Bounds

Corel Photos

still; for the type continues until the antitype supersedes it: so legal sacrifices continued till the great antitypical Sacrifice superseded it, As then the antitypical heavenly Sabbath-rest will not be till Christ, our Gospel Joshua, comes, to usher us into it, the typical earthly Sabbath must continue till then. The Jews call the future rest “the day which is all Sabbath.”²

Antidote for atheism

In this post-modern society, secular humanism is fast becoming the dominant religion. Could it be that the abandonment of the seventh-day Sabbath, with its celebration of so great a Creator who has sovereignty over all things, is partly to blame for our present atheistic tendencies?

The best way to put down bad things is to lift up good things. “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth,” Jesus declared, “will draw all peoples to Myself”

(John 12:32). The Sabbath anthem, given proper place in the presence of the Lord of life who gives the true rest, plays a tune so celestial that it drowns out all the terrestrial songs of humanity.

The Sabbath: one of God’s great gifts. Its origin is primeval and divine; its benefits are humane and temporal; its hope is heavenly and its consummation eternal. [BA](#)

Devon Simmonds and his wife, Ann, live in Ft. Collins, CO, and attend church in Denver.

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A Deeper Look at Genesis 1

by John Lemley

Reading the Bible, we can follow some basic steps to discover the meaning of a text: 1) Determine the type of literature. 2) Read the context. 3) Look up definitions of words. 4) Consider the grammatical construction. 5) Compare other scriptures on the subject. 6) Study the cultural and historical setting.

A few of these steps can help us understand Genesis 1. Historically, the Bible's first chapter was mostly read as a literal account of Creation events. This assumption began to change in the nineteenth century as the theory of evolution became more prominent. Theologians scurried for ways to interpret the biblical Creation story to allow for the greater time required by evolution. The day-age theory, the gap theory, and others were developed to accommodate the Bible with modern science.

The Scopes Trial of 1925 was part of this process. A Tennessee law permitted public schools to teach only the story of origins found in the Bible. When John Scopes, a teacher from Dayton, was charged with violating this law, William Jennings Bryan served as the state's prosecuting attorney, and well-known skeptic Clarence Darrow defended Scopes. Transcripts of the trial show the degree to which evolutionary thought had already infected the religious community.

When Darrow asked Bryan if he believed the creation took exactly six 24-hour days, Bryan conceded that these days could represent longer periods. Darrow then proceeded to exploit Bryan's concession to open the possibility that the Creation account allowed for millions of years of evolutionary process. How Genesis 1 was read that day made the differ-

ence in what was believed, and we have been embroiled with the controversy ever since.

How is the Bible's crucial first chapter to be read? Is it a literal account of what happened in one historic week? Fortunately, the Bible's other Creation account — Psalm 104 — helps answer this question. This psalm and Genesis 1 reveal differences in purpose, order, style, and grammar.

For example, the verbs in Genesis are mostly past tense, like a historical treatise, while the psalm primarily uses present-tense verbs that revisit the action poetically. Compare "God made the firmament" (Genesis 1:7) with "who makes the clouds" (Psalm 104:3, NIV). The psalm says that God "walks on the wings of the wind," but Genesis 1 does not use such figurative language.

From these literary contrasts, we may regard Genesis 1 as a historical account, and other scriptures support this thesis. Genesis 1:1, 2 says God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. Hebrews 11:3 confirms this, saying that things that are seen were not made of visible things. Evolution, by contrast, either bypasses the question of origins or theorizes that the universe has eternally existed. Neither approach satisfies the questioning mind nor agrees with Scripture.

Another way of correctly interpreting Genesis 1 is to observe the progression of its action. The chapter reports that Creation took six days to complete. Day one saw the creation of a water-covered earth, an

continued on page 24

You Say...

Would you say that world conditions are better, or worse, now than they were 20 years ago?

The world is a far better place to live today than 20 years ago regarding technology and advancement (Dan. 12:4). However, from the standpoints of Christianity and morality, it has gotten worse.

Evidence of progress is seen from rapid dissemination of information around the world to the advances in medical, chemical, and aerospace industries. The morality decline is affected by technological improvement as information speeds across borders with little censorship in the now-global media. Changes in laws have supported the lowering of moral standards as countries clamor to be seen upholding equality for personal choices.

— *Aubrey Williams*
Mississauga, Ontario

It depends on mindset and circumstance. By the grace of God, I am better off spiritually, worse off economically. Today I can't afford any new car, but I don't covet one either.

The U.S. is worse off spiritually. Financially, we are coasting on credit and deficit spending. We are the world's largest exporter of war materials and porn. With selfish interests, we've killed over 40 million babies [since 1973]. The words of Jesus fit us: "It is finished."

— *Arlo Gieselman*
Blue Springs, MO

Things are worse. During more than forty years of practicing gynecology, I've seen a dramatic increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and the rarity of virginity. In about 30 medical missions trips overseas, my wife and I have noticed that anti-American feeling is growing by leaps and bounds — mostly due to U.S. support of Israel.

— *William D. Lawrence, MD*
e-mail

In 1972 my grandfather died of a heart attack. Today's techniques, then in infancy, may have extended his life 20 years. The computer I'm using,

with Internet, was outside our imagination in 1972. We have better understanding of Scripture, the role of Jesus, salvation by grace, and the place of worship than we did 20 years ago.

Is our country in moral decline? Yes! But as the worlds of Christianity and culture diverge, there is an improved opportunity for the light of Jesus to make profound impact on the darkness. Perhaps the greatest reason for optimism: The coming of our Lord is 20 years closer than it was 20 years ago. Maranatha: Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

— *Pastor Jeff Endecott*
Farmville, NC

Yes, the world is better — and it is worse — than 20 years ago! There is sharper and wider division between good and evil in the world now, a world that has seen unparalleled scientific advances.

Morally, especially in North America and western Europe, there is rapid decline as society embraces lifestyle behavior that was once considered shameful. There is less and less distinction between Christians and the culture. Yet the rest of the world is experiencing tremendous church growth.

— *Elder John Howell*
Tacoma, WA

Does evil allow good to prosper unchallenged? If man could extend for a moment the vapor of his life — seeing more, doing more, running to and fro — yet not fear God, what gain would he have (Eccl. 12:8)? As to man's condition, the many advances today are superficial.

Satellites that transmit the gospel worldwide also spread hatred, porn, and heresies of false apostles for filthy lucre's sake. We may pity Christians now being persecuted for their faith, but it is they who will, on that Day, pity us who knew no persecution.

Much laughter echoes and many tears fall in today's world, just as before (Eccl. 1:9). The ratio of good to evil hasn't changed. For every increase of good, there is a proportionate increase in the evil by the prince of this world, till our Lord come.

— *G. Donahoe*
Adkins, TX



The Choice Before Us

by Graham Hodge

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply . . . I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:15, 16, 19).

Reading through the Bible, we regularly hear God instructing His people in the good and right paths to live. In many ways, Scripture is like an owner’s manual for humans: We belong to the God who made us, and He knows best how we operate.

After presenting His instruction in the owner’s manual, God always gives us opportunity to make our individual choices. This is what it means to be free moral agents. God doesn’t force anyone to obey Him. However, He constantly warns that if we make poor choices, we will suffer the consequences.

The point is this: We are free to choose our ways in life but not free to choose their results. We sit down at the table of consequences. As Galatians 6:7 says, “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we make a good choice. This personal decision determines our relationship with God

and our eternal destiny. Sadly, many Christians believe that once they have made this good choice, God forever controls their lives so that other choices between now and eternity are not that important. Some Christians become passive and believe that every happening from this point on is God’s will and that they are powerless to change it. But this is just not so!

After one becomes a Christian, life continues to be a series of choices. We are still responsible — in control of our spiritual and physical lives — and will suffer the consequences if we make wrong choices.

One area in which many of God’s people make poor choices is that of their physical bodies — the “temples of God.” The Bible urges us, by God’s mercies, to present our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God, and to not be conformed to this world.

God cares for us totally — spirit, soul, and body. The Creator who cares for the sparrow that falls to the ground surely cares for the physical health of humanity, too, as well as for the spiritual. Consider this:

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. . . . And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. . . . “I have given every green herb . . . for food” (Genesis 2:8, 9; 1:30).

Because He has a Father’s heart and looks after His children, the Lord Jesus wants to feed us with all good things. Satan, on the other hand, wants

to conform us to this world, feed our cravings, and trap us in addictions – to fats, to sugars, to junk foods, to tobacco or alcohol – that will wind up diminishing our lives of service and cutting them short.

Satan, whose chief angel is Abaddon (or “destruction,” Revelation 9:11), is a destroyer. One way he destroys is through abuse of food and drink. To some degree, the heart of our modern food industry has become darkened by greed, and we cooperate by making our stomach a god, sacrificing health on the altar of appetite and escape (Philippians 3:19).

The one unmistakable symptom of a health crisis in Western culture today is obesity. If all overweight people just in North America could climb onto a huge scale, they would be more than a million tons above the level of being physically fit. The weight loss industry has become wealthy producing thousands of books, videos, and programs for a nation desperately hoping to control its body fat.

Christians are God’s chosen people to represent His abundant life and love on earth. As such, we should be uniquely placed at the forefront of a radical new approach to life that includes a return to natural and wholesome foods – eating and drinking as God intended.

This is a choice we can make for ourselves.

Graham Hodge, his wife, Leslie, and family live near Somerset, Tasmania, Australia.

Veggie Tale II: A Viewpoint

by Calvin Burrell

Many Christians are seeing benefit these days in eating fewer animal products (especially red meat) and more fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts.

Not that the Bible insists on vegetarianism; it does not. God added meat to the human diet after the Flood, and Israel had its list of “clean meats” for food. Jesus seems to have eaten fish, and Paul affirmed the privilege of eating meat.

Followers of Christ who opt for a low- or no-meat lifestyle make their case mostly from an array of data not available or relevant a century ago. A plant-based diet that reduces or eliminates animal products, they say, does the following:

1 It contributes to personal health and longevity.

Vegetarian diets are associated with reduced risk for obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, colon cancer, and kidney disease.

2 It reflects good stewardship of natural resources.

Producing and preparing meat requires up to ten times more fresh water and energy per pound of food than do grains, fruits, vegetables, etc.

3 It exhibits compassion for the hungry.

Thirty-seven percent of world grain – 66 percent in the U.S. – is fed to animals raised for slaughter. Converting grain to meat wastes nutrients and fiber, raises costs, and makes food more unaffordable for the world’s poor.

4 It displays concern for animals. In the U.S., most food from animals is derived by intensive “factory farming” methods. Over a million land animals are slaughtered for food every hour, and even more aquatic animals are killed. These creatures may suffer greatly from stressful crowding, barren environments that frustrate their instincts, amputations without anesthesia, and slaughter that often involves terror and pain. God’s concern for animals is seen in Exodus 23:5; Deuteronomy 22:6, 7; 25:4; Psalm 145:9; Proverbs 12:10; Isaiah 11:6-9; Matthew 6:26; 10:29; 18:12-14; etc.

Christian vegetarians admit that this issue is among the doubtful ones of Romans 14 – questions every believer must decide for himself and not judge others. With modern realities (#’s 2 and 3), however, one verse in this chapter is too often overlooked: “It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak” (v. 21). **BA**

Facts and figures courtesy of Christian Vegetarian Association (www.ChristianVeg.com).

Resources

National Institutes of Health
(www.nih.gov/)
Health Web
(<http://healthweb.org/>)
Food and Nutrition
Information Center
(www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/)
American Dietetic Association
(www.eatright.org)

In the beginning . . . GOD?

One stroll through nature, and the mind starts buzzing with questions: Was it created like this, or did it evolve? Can such marvels come about by chance, or is intelligent design behind it all? How long has it been here?

It's easy to reduce the natural world to a few short questions: How? Who . . . or what? When? Why? This class even has a fancy name — *cosmology*, the study of the cosmos, or universe. It asks, "How did the natural world and all things in it come to be? What is the history of it all?"

Two basic ways of answering these questions compete for our loyalty in 2005. One says God is the source of all; the other squeezes God out of all.

About origins. Here's what **science** has to say about where the cosmos came from. Either the universe has always existed, or it came into existence about 17 billion years ago by an explosion from a single point of no size: the Big Bang. Nothing existed before this.

Both these possibilities present difficulty and must be accepted

by a kind of "faith." The sun's energy is so great and the Earth so full of vitality that few people can believe they always existed. If the universe were eternally old and without an external source of energy, its heat, light, and life would have long since been exhausted into a cold, dark death.

The Big Bang theory says, "First there was nothing. Then it exploded." This fails to explain how something can come from nothing — the problem of atheism. Many theists have also embraced Big Bang, saying that it supports a singular and astonishingly awesome beginning for the space-time universe.

Enter God. The **Bible** says that the cosmos is *not* eternal but that the Creator is. Once, at a point of origin for space and time, the universe, solar system, and Earth with many of its natural features were ushered into existence by the Creator. God spoke, and "Bang!" — it happened!

This concept, called **Creationism**, also requires faith, since it cannot be proved beyond possible doubt.

Creationism appeals to most thinking people who have not fully deleted God from the big picture.

About history. Since the writing of Charles Darwin (mid-1800s), scientific theory holds mainly to the idea of slow and constant change spread over countless eons of time (since the Big Bang) to bring the universe to its current state. This is the popular idea of **evolution**.

Anything is possible, says evolution, given enough time. In 17 billion years the universe can explode from a single point to incomprehensible size and be strewn with billions of stars and other space objects. A few billion years after the Big Bang, Earth was formed and gradually developed its current features. In comparatively recent times (just a few million years) life first appeared on Earth and has evolved to the many species of plants and animals we know now — and to man! Evolution, so slow as to be unnoticed in human lifetimes, requires these gargantuan gobs of time to explain current conditions in the cosmos.

Primary support for the evolutionary view of history is found in the geological columns of the earth's crust and the fossil remains they contain. To say that everything in the earth's upper layer was deposited through uniform and gradual processes is to concede the truth of evolution. The option?

Catastrophe! The Bible's alternative to this long, uniform view of history is creation and catastrophe. A mature earth, a global flood, and epic earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes since are sufficient to explain the amazing fossil record and geological columns.

The dramatic impact of natural catastrophe upon the earth's surface is not limited entirely to an ancient time in the Bible's primeval period (Gen. 1–11). It is also a part of the continuing history of our natural world, as the following article illustrates.

The Power of Catastrophism

by Richard A. Wiedenheft

After several restless weeks in the spring of 1980, Mount St. Helens erupted ferociously on May 18, dramatically changing the surrounding landscape of Washington state.

Triggered by an earthquake, the eruption began with some 1,300 feet of the lovely peak and upper north flank cascading down the north slope in the largest avalanche ever witnessed by humans. Seconds later, pressurized gases, molten rock, and ash blasted laterally to the north at an estimated 670 mph, overtaking the avalanche and sweeping away everything in its path for up to eight miles. Further away, the trees were stripped and broken like matchsticks, and tree trunks were left standing but completely denuded as far out as 17 miles.

The avalanche roared into Spirit Lake thousands of feet below, forming a new lake 290 feet above the earlier one. Mixing with molten rock, ash, rapidly

melting snow and ice, much of the avalanche became a gigantic mudflow pouring westward into the North Fork Toutle River Valley. Raging along at speeds up to 150 mph, it buried forests, roads, and houses, with debris averaging 150 feet deep over 15 miles. It dammed up streams, created new lakes, and left a barren valley floor punctuated by hummocks — chunks of rock carried along in the flow.

Clearly, dramatic changes can take place in the geology of the earth in a short period. But that's only part of the story.

As soon as the new landscape was laid down, erosion began to take place. Water from rain and snowmelt, as well as mudflows from subsequent eruptions, carved a canyon up to 100 feet deep and 900 feet wide in the new valley floor. Seeing this canyon 500 years from now, one might conclude that it took thousands of centuries for the deposition of all that material and for the canyon to be cut through it. In fact, it happened in only a few years.

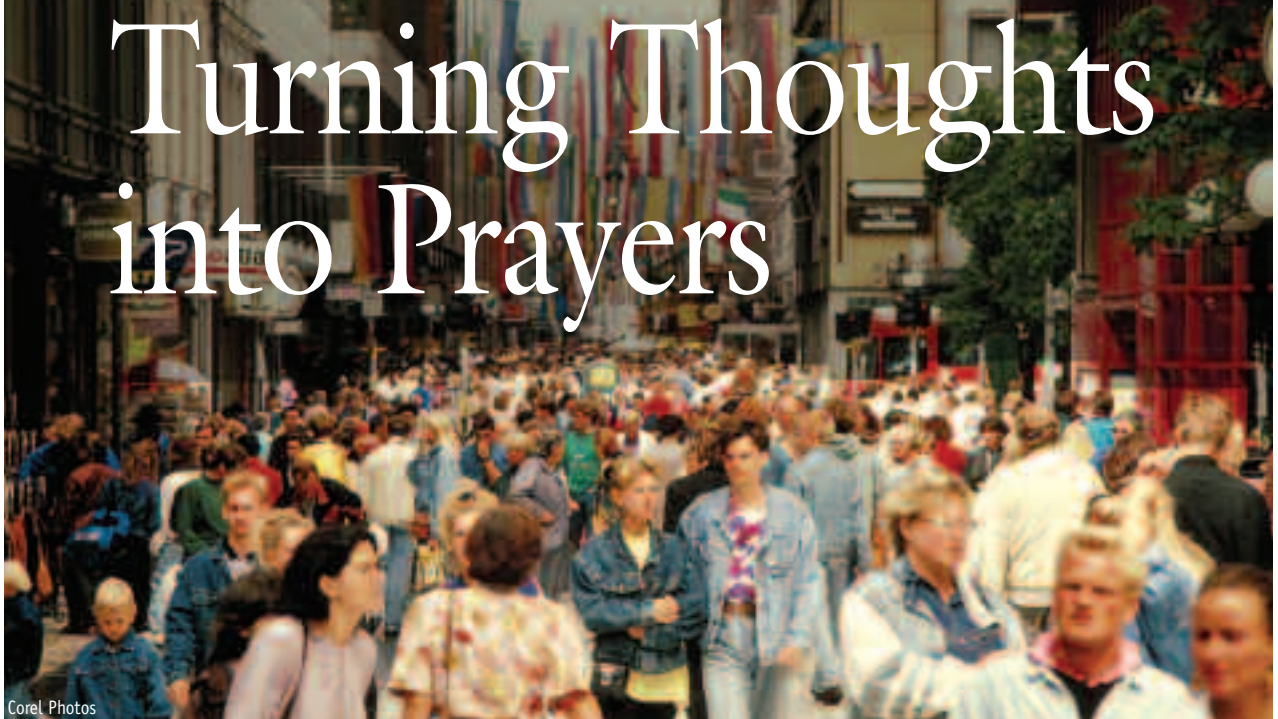
Some have called this the Little Grand Canyon, a miniature of

its namesake in Arizona. To be sure, there are differences! Most notably, rocks of the Grand Canyon are primarily sedimentary, not volcanic, in origin. But young earth geologists theorize that, with no evidence of significant erosion between them, the sedimentary layers of the Grand Canyon were laid down in fairly rapid succession. Soon thereafter, the canyon was formed by gigantic quantities of water, rocks, and sediment quickly cutting their way through recently laid strata. This may have happened in connection with the inundation phase of Noah's flood, when the waters rose on the earth, and with the recession stage, when the waters were dried up — perhaps by major uplifts of continents.

The age of the earth and origin of its geological features will be debated for decades, but the dramatically altered landscape of Mount St. Helens stands as stark proof that major changes can happen in a short time. **BA**

Richard A. Wiedenheft and his wife visited Mount St. Helens and the Grand Canyon in the fall of 2004.

Turning Thoughts into Prayers



Prayer can be as natural as breathing. **by Jan Johnson**

I told the pastor I'd be glad to pass out brochures door to door. But when he handed them to me, I thought, *I'd love to go home, curl up, and read a book.* All my introverted, shy tendencies oozed forth. But because I'd agreed to pass out the material, I gritted my teeth and ventured up the walk to the first house.

As soon as a young mother appeared at the door balancing a toddler on her hip, I slipped into my habit of turning whatever's going on inside me into a prayer. Seeing the weary mom triggered it, I'm sure, because I felt like such a misfit when my children were small.

I showed this mom the brochure with the service times. *Give her patience, God. This little one isn't potty-trained.* When I handed her the pen with the

church's name on it, she smiled. *What a glowing smile. Make Yourself real to her.* As I left the house, I saw that even though my official task was to pass out literature and pens, my real task was to pray for everyone I encountered.

Soon I began enjoying this new role as pray-er so much that I stopped at homes abandoned due to damage from our Northridge earthquake and prayed for the people who used to live there. *Living with relatives can be wonderful and difficult, God. Sustain them.* What started out as a dreaded duty became a fun and interesting experience with prayer.

Majoring in prayer

We make the command to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17, KJV) more diffi-

cult and mysterious than it needs to be. Perhaps it's a simple matter of making prayer the "main business of our lives," a phrase Richard Foster uses in *Celebration of Discipline*. When prayer becomes our major life activity, we experience what it means to "offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually" (Hebrews 13:15, KJV), "devote [ourselves] to prayer" (Colossians 4:2), and pray "in the Spirit on all occasions" (Ephesians 6:18). So many times the word *pray* is linked with words like *always, everything, constantly, and even night and day* (Colossians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 3:10; Romans 1:9, 10). Our perpetual self-talk — the chatter in our heads as we commute, prepare sandwiches, or exercise — as well as the longings of our hearts and the

urgings of our spirits, can be transformed into a continual conversation with God.

For example, I felt annoyed each time I looked at the basketball goal in our backyard. My friend's son, Justin, had pulled the basket down. When it broke, he laughed and said, "I guess it's not the kind that pops up." We hadn't found time to repair it, which meant our family had one less activity to enjoy. Every time I looked at it, I felt annoyed with Justin. Then I felt annoyed with myself. Justin had been in a drug rehabilitation center lately and gotten out. His parents had their hands full. Why couldn't I use the broken backboard as a reminder to pray for Justin? So I did.

What we can pray

If we're going to weave prayer throughout the day, greater intimacy with God is bound to develop. When we run out of things to say to Him, we can bring up whatever or whomever is in front of us.

But what do we pray? Whatever piece of God's will we understand. Some of His will we don't see clearly, but much of it we do. My friend Karen prayed for God's will when she was attracted to a married co-worker. Whenever she was around him or thought about him, she prayed for scriptural truths to become real in his life. "I prayed that he would be a loving husband and a firm, gentle father," she says. "I prayed that God would use him to advance the kingdom. I prayed that I would figure out how to be his friend. It was pretty hard to flirt with him when I was

praying for him that way, and my feelings soon returned to normal."

In the same way, we can pray that we will consider others' needs (Philippians 2:3), examine ourselves for sin (2 Corinthians 13:5), or fulfill our part in helping others come to know Christ (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Breath prayers

But how do we turn our thoughts so quickly? One helpful method is the time-proven "breath prayer" format — repeating a prayer phrase that has great meaning. For example, when situations grieve me but I am powerless to change them, I find myself praying, *Into Thy hands*.

- I am afraid of upcoming surgery. *Into Thy hands*.
- I don't want my job to end. *Into Thy hands*.
- I want this person to love You, but he doesn't. *Into Thy hands*.

Offering this breath prayer is slowly transforming my self-talk and attitude. I'm less willful and more open to God's will.

To those of us who have spent our energies reciting long lists of prayer requests, breath prayers may seem hackneyed and infantile, but they aren't. Breath prayers are so simple

that they're revolutionary. They are different from "vain repetitions," which Jesus described as lofty, impressive recitations made for others to notice (Matthew 6:7, KJV). Breath prayers are quiet groanings of the heart that become more meaningful as we use them.

We need this simplicity in a culture that wows people with words, adorning them with graphics, using them to manipulate and convince. Breath prayers resemble the unembellished approach that Jesus recommended when He spoke of offering a simple yes or no (Matthew 5:33-37). For too long we've thought that short, simple prayers are not sophisticated enough. What a relief to grow into a relationship with God where we don't have to go on and on, explaining everything to Him. We can pray simply and enjoy being with Him in peace.

A breath prayer often flows out of a Bible passage. One time while pondering Jesus' prayer in John 17, I settled into verse 23, especially the last phrase "Thou lovest me" (Moffat translation). Since then, when I need reassurance of God's love, I've found myself saying to God, "Thou lovest me!"

Here are a few other breath



Breath prayers are quiet groanings of the heart that become more meaningful as we use them.

prayers that have become common for me:

Show me the heart of this person. This prayer can ignite in us the compassion of Jesus toward people whom others ignore (Matthew 20:34; Mark 1:41). As I look into the faces of my two normal yet stubborn teenagers, my self-talk turns bitter: *Why can't this kid cooperate? or Who asked for such a stubborn kid?* Instead, I'm learning to turn that into a prayer, asking God to show me what's going on in the heart of these

near-adults. I don't get telegrams from God, but this prayer puts me in a frame of mind to listen to my kids better or watch what God might be telling me through their body language or speech. This prayer has a way of wringing the self-importance, laziness, or grouchiness out of our attitude and giving us a heart for others.

Help me see how I can spur this person on toward love and good works is my personalized version of Hebrews 10:24. This breath prayer came about one

day when I was meeting an old friend for lunch I hadn't seen for some time. She is one of the funniest people I know, and as I drove to the restaurant, I giggled just thinking about all the silliness we'd enjoyed in the past. When I arrived, I found my friend down and moody, needing me to listen and love her. It took about ten minutes for me to slow into her gear (and resist resenting that we weren't going to have a rowdy lunch!) and truly tune in to her. Throughout our time together, I prayed this breath prayer, and it helped me listen to her, empathize with her, and be the friend I needed to be.

I also offer this prayer when I meet people I admire and feel like cooing over them, "You're just such a wonderful Christian, and I would love to be more like you." I know that's not wise or appropriate. Asking God to show me how I can spur this person on toward love and good works reminds me that my hero is also a struggling child of God.

As we incorporate prayer into all the moments of our lives, it becomes part of the rhythm of daily life, a backdrop to all activity, so that the heart becomes a private chapel all day long. What a rich place to be. **BA**

Jan Johnson lives in Simi, CA. She authored the book *Enjoying the Presence of God* (NavPress), from which this article is adapted. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.

On Your Own

What is this author's main point about prayer? _____

What does she teach about the place of prayer? _____

The posture of prayer? _____ The nature of prayer? _____

How can you try "breath prayers" in your own life? _____

In what way does this teaching make unceasing prayer a more realistic goal? _____

Do informal prayers make the whole business of praying seem less dedicated, less sacred? _____

How does this article change your understanding of prayer? How will it change your prayer practices? _____

March 5-April 2 is the Church's Annual Prayer Initiative. Read about how you can be involved (page 27).

You'll find a revealing combination of profound and simple in . . .

John's Writings

The 27 New Testament books may be subdivided by author. Matthew, Mark, James, and Jude wrote one each, with their names attached. Luke wrote two (the third Gospel and Acts); Paul thirteen (Romans to Philemon); Peter two; and the unknown writer of Hebrews, one. The five books authored by John the Beloved — the fourth Gospel, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation — stand distinct in vocabulary, content, and style when compared with the remaining 22 books.

Many Bible lovers can hear the contrast between Mark's Gospel and John's and can recognize a verse as John's epistle — not Paul's — merely by the sound and flow of the text. The differences are even clearer to those who read John's uncomplicated style in the Greek text.

John's vocabulary is rich with repeated words and phrases:

- *Word*, or *logos*, in the prologues (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-5)
- Seven "I Am" statements in the Gospel

- Vivid contrasts: life, death; lies, truth; darkness, light; flesh, spirit; above, beneath; belief, unbelief
- "We know" or "you know" 25 times in 1 John, epistle of assurance. Some form of the word *love* occurs about 30 times in 1 John 4.
- Other favorite words: *dwell* or *abide* , *witness* , *world* , *glorify* .
- All three one-word descriptions — not definitions — of God in the New Testament are here: God is Spirit (John 4:24); God is light (1 John 1:5); and God is love (1 John 4:8, 16).

For John, Jesus is the Word from heaven's silence and light from the shades of eternity. In Christ

we see and hear God as none ever had. The way to life through a door of resurrection is Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Bearing fruit of love, joy, and peace, He is the Vine. As heaven's bread and water, light and life, He is the great I AM, full of grace and truth — God's only Son.

John's Christology is beyond full grasp, but his words of knowing and following Jesus are not complicated. Those who hear may simply believe in Him to have everlasting life. Faith is proved and assurance received as we remain in Him, obey His commandments, and love others.

Feeding the 5,000 is the only major event, before Passion Week, recorded in all four Gospels. John tells the story in 199 Greek words, Mark in 194, Matthew 157, and Luke 153. The synoptics use 53 Greek words in common, but John, amazingly, uses only eight of these in his report (five, two, five thousand, took loaves, twelve baskets of pieces). This points to the fact that the first three Gospels are much closer to each other in form and content than any of them is to John, an independent telling of the gospel.

Figures from How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, p. 122

Comparisons Among the Gospels

Matthew, Mark, Luke

- Center in Galilee.
- Focus on the kingdom of God.
- Begin and end with history.
- Jesus moves quickly from one event/teaching to another.
- He teaches disciples in short sayings, a few longer ones.

John

- Centers in Jerusalem.
- Focuses on eternal life.
- Begins, ends with theology.
- Jesus dwells at length on a few miracles or teaching events.
- He confronts the religious leaders in extended dialogues.

Things I Thought I Knew

In my thirties, although I knew God, taught the Scriptures, pastored churches, and counseled people, I didn't really know what I thought I knew. I wish someone had explained these things to me. It has taken me a long time to learn . . .

That God is God and I am not. I thought if I worked hard enough and was an effective change agent, I would make a difference in my world. I did not take into account that "Everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so men will revere him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Work hard? Yes, I still do. Pray? Absolutely. But think that everything is up to me? Not anymore.

That the church is bigger than my view of it. In my thirties I thought that I was on the cutting edge. Now there is the danger that I may think my thirties way is still creative and progressive. It isn't. People, methods, forms of worship keep changing. My style of proclaiming the message, my way of "doing" church, my take on theology, is not ordained of God. The One who said, "I the LORD do not change" (Malachi 3:6) is also the dynamic One who said, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). That's what He is doing.

That people are influenced by more than me and my ideas. They are influenced by all of society, even by their own genetic makeup. Anything can be filtered one way by one person and another way by some other person. Jesus said the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). God's Spirit will do what He came to do. That relieves me of a lot of pressure and responsibility.

That there are things I cannot control. I can't control national and international politics (though I vote), world economics (though I invest and save), changes in technology (though I try to keep up). In my thirties I wrote my first book on a manual typewriter, earned a master's degree in journalism when nearly everyone read a daily newspaper, and counseled students who were protesting war and the military. Change happens. "You do not even know what will happen tomorrow" (James 4:14). That's true. I adjust to change, but I don't control it.

That immoral influences do harm people. I once thought that individuals could discern for themselves what influence films, television, and other forms of entertainment had on them. Jesus warned, "If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

(Matthew 6:23). I've seen the cumulative effect of darkness on people who never thought that it would have a lasting impact on them. A wise person recognizes darkness and stays in the light.

That forming good habits makes a difference. When I was a young Christian, I started a daily prayer and Bible reading program that has never stopped. Such habits form strong cords that hold. When surprises come, when temptations hit on me, when I need to make a big decision, I have that awareness: "This morning you asked God for His help through the day." I have discovered that "I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts" (Psalm 119:45). I am liberated by my habit.

That "I love you" is far more important than correction and nagging. As a young father, I tended to be a discipline-giver. Now I see that children read attitudes and actions far more than they respond to words. I always believed that children are a gift from God. But I also knew that Jesus warned, "Children will rebel against their parents . . ." (Matthew 10:21). Real love isn't shown through lectures. I know that now.

But Didn't

A seasoned Christian reviews the lessons of a lifetime.
by Roger Palms



PhotoDisc

That growing in love with my wife really is greater with each passing year. A man totally in love on his honeymoon can be even more totally in love 40 years later because his capacity to love increases. Life shared together builds love in ways that men who take their wives for granted or dabble in multiple relationships never experience. I know that because sad men tell me so. When God said, “Rejoice with the wife of your youth” (Proverbs 5:18), He already knew what deep love was still ahead.

That before God I am responsible for me. I will stand before God and give an account for me, nobody else. I will be held accountable for what goes

on in my thoughts, my inner person, and my moments alone. “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). What I once knew as a concept in my mind, I now see worked out in hurting lives. People become what they do and what they think about. I’ve lived long enough to see it happen. I wish someone had shown me some examples then.

That worry, though I still do it, is a denial of trust. Sleepless nights, fretting, anxiety, an upset stomach, tells me that I still think I am in charge. I can see now that Jesus was right: I haven’t added one cubit to my height. I’m learning to be proactive rather than reactive

and to “Cast all [my] anxiety on him . . .” (1 Peter 5:7). That’s what He has always wanted me to do. I haven’t fully learned that, even now.

When I was in my thirties, would I have listened if someone had showed me these things? I don’t know, but I wish someone had tried. Maybe someone I know is wishing I would talk to him about these things today. I needed a mentor then. Maybe I can be a mentor now. **BA**

Roger Palms is former editor of *Decision* magazine and lives in Anoka, MN. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.

Mail Bag

Gratitude attitude

This was a good analysis of one's gratitude attitude ["In Everything Give Thanks," November '04, p. 3]. I took the test and did better than I expected. Songs, praise, and poetry get to me! I try to look at the many who have less than we do, rather than the few who have more. . . . Of course, I have an analytical nature, and it sometimes comes out as critical, but the rebuke of the wise is better than the song of fools (Eccl. 7:5).

J. R.
Andrews, NC



Date setting

A friend gave me [the December '04] issue, and I noted what I believe to be a misstatement. To my knowledge, Hal Lindsey has never set dates for the return of Christ ["From the President," p. 22]. In fact, he is strictly against date setting. He advocates the doctrine of imminent rapture of the church but not on any date. I respectfully suggest that you check this.

S. N.
e-mail

Reply from Whaid Rose: Technically, you are correct that Lindsey did not predict a specific date for Christ's return. It would have been more accurate had I written that Lindsey created a prophetic scenario that pointed to the rapture of the church and coming of Christ at the end of a generation from the rebirth of Israel in 1948. Given the popular understanding of a generation (40 years) and of the time between the rapture and the return of Christ, the date was clearly implied. (I erred in writing 1977 as the date many anticipated Christ's coming. It should have been 1988.)

'Salvation package'?

Whom do we evangelize ["Q & A," December '04, p. 6]? It sounded like the [person] asking thought the Church of God was part of the "salvation package," with the corner on truth and righteousness. You hit the nail on the head to let readers know that the CoG7 does not have the corner on people to be saved in the kingdom. God is good to all those who know and love His Son. Keep up God's work.

L. L.
e-mail

Changing lives

Being the recipient and distributor of BA magazines, I have realized great impact on the lives of people who receive and read them. I have received several hundreds of life-changing testimonies. Here in S. Nyanza, we use them in gospel outreach campaigns.

A. O.
Kenya

A Deeper Look at Genesis 1

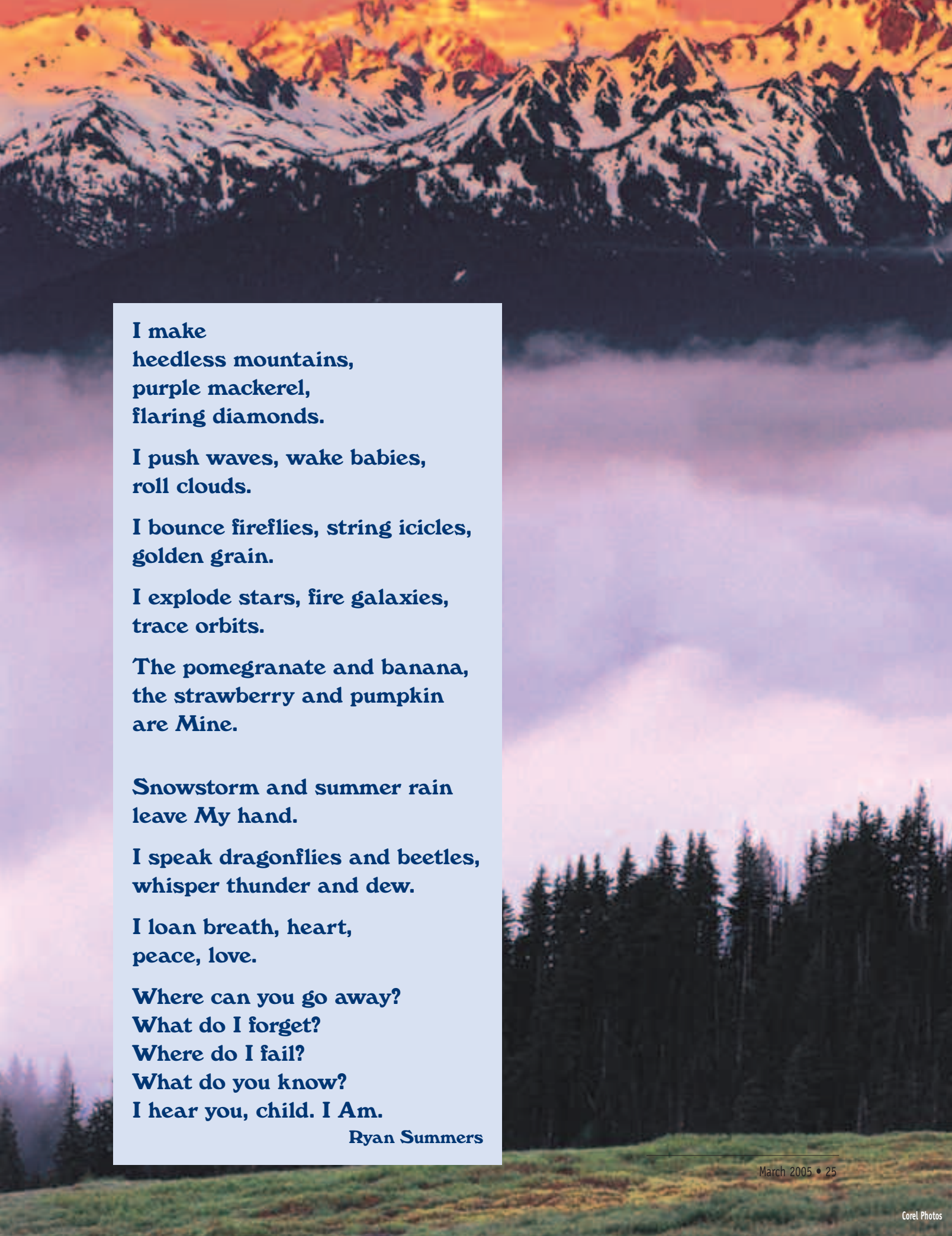
continued from page 12

empty heaven, and light. On day two God created a canopy of water above the earth and the atmosphere of space between them. On the third day God caused dry land to appear, covered it with mature vegetation, and established the immutable genetic law of reproduction by kind. The heavens were filled with stars, sun, and moon on the fourth day. Day five was the creation of animals in the sea and air, and day six, of land animals and man.

This describes quick changes in six days versus the gradual changes of the uniformitarian hypothesis taught by evolution. Exodus 20:8-11 not only confirms the natural week for Creation but also gives it as the reason for the command to rest on the seventh day. Six evenings and mornings is all it took for God to go from nothing to everything. Then He rested.

A lawyer once asked Jesus what to do for eternal life. Jesus responded, "What is written in the Law? . . . How do you read?" (Luke 10:26, NIV). With these questions, Jesus affirmed that how we read Scripture is vital for understanding what God intended to teach us when He inspired it. May we keep Jesus' words in mind when questions arise about evolution. **BA**

John Lemley lives in Vancouver, WA, serves as pastor in Portland, OR, and edits the *Ministerial Forum*.



**I make
heedless mountains,
purple mackerel,
flaring diamonds.**

**I push waves, wake babies,
roll clouds.**

**I bounce fireflies, string icicles,
golden grain.**

**I explode stars, fire galaxies,
trace orbits.**

**The pomegranate and banana,
the strawberry and pumpkin
are Mine.**

**Snowstorm and summer rain
leave My hand.**

**I speak dragonflies and beetles,
whisper thunder and dew.**

**I loan breath, heart,
peace, love.**

Where can you go away?

What do I forget?

Where do I fail?

What do you know?

I hear you, child. I Am.

Ryan Summers

CoG7 in Action



What's new with . . .

► Publications

- New Bible study on stewardship for second quarter (see p. 29)

National FYC

- April 20-23 – National Youth Week/Hunger Lock-In (see p. 28)

Missions Abroad

- Tsunami relief (see p. 28)

Ministries Training System

- Intensive mobile classrooms coming up (see p. 29)

All Ministries

- March 5-April 2 - Annual Prayer Initiative (see p. 27)



Call to Convention

It is my pleasure to invite the members and friends of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the United States and Canada to attend our next biennial convention.

It is scheduled to be at the Marriott Hotel in the Denver Tech Center, with evening services at Denver First Church of the Nazarene, July 4-9, 2005.

The convention theme, "Pursuing the Heart of Jesus," will be fleshed out through an array of seminars, plenary sessions, and dynamic messages from a great line-up of speakers. This is a one-of-a-kind event that brings the Church together to worship, fellowship, and conduct its business. I hope and pray you will be there, Lord willing.

Let me mention some reasons you shouldn't miss this special event:

- Visit beautiful Colorado, home of the Conference offices.
- Get a great hotel room rate, with free parking.
- Enjoy a fun-filled day at Six Flags Elitch Gardens on July 4.
- Learn more about the Church you love as its ministries are highlighted.
- Learn and grow through the rich variety of seminars and plenary sessions.
- Be motivated by worship and preaching during the evening services.
- Participate in the business of the Conference.
- Meet fraternal delegates from other organizations and CoG7 delegates from around the world.
- Pastors and their wives will be honored at a special luncheon.
- And much more!

To obtain a registration packet, call 303-452-7973; write P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; e-mail convention@cog7.org; or register online at www.cog7.org.

I look forward to sharing this time with you. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare for convention 2005!

*Because of Calvary,
Whaid G. Rose
Conference President*

Prayers for Stephen

On August 19, 2004, our 15-year-old son was struck by a car while riding his bicycle. We heard the screech . . . and the crash. My wife, Anita, sent our second son, Matthew, to investigate. Soon I heard Anita's wail, "Stephen's been hit!"

When I arrived at the scene, three or four cars had already stopped. Stephen was lying on his left side with legs outstretched. I was shocked by the quantity of blood that had streamed from his scalp. Atop his skull I could see severe trauma. The blood was still flowing.

Bending down and lifting his head, I cried out for the Lord to spare Stephen's life. I applied a blanket to his left temple area, squeezed his hand, tried to comfort him, and prayed again, "Please spare him, oh God!" I felt Stephen's body spasm, and occasionally his right hand squeezed mine in return.

It seemed forever until the ambulance arrived. I asked a woman at the scene to join my prayers while the paramedics worked with Stephen.

At the local hospital, doctors decided to helicopter Stephen to a better-equipped facility. Again I begged the Lord to intervene and spare my son. Back home, Anita and Matthew were calling everyone we knew to pray. I picked up my wife, and we prayed during the 90-minute drive to Hershey.

The neurosurgeon had just finished taking x-rays when we arrived. He said Stephen had a

crushed left temple, fractured nose and cheekbone, severe skull fracture, and trauma to the skull. On top of all that, a blood clot was growing deep in the right hemisphere of the brain. The doctor's concerns were great, as were ours.

Pastors Bruce Chesney and Bob Wertz from Harrisburg were with us as this information was shared. We all held hands and prayed again. I felt a sense of peace that God would use this surgeon.

Two days later, the doctor informed us that, while bleeding had stopped, we should expect at least six months before any significant changes occurred. We were given a booklet to prepare us for the long-term disabilities that accompany such injuries. Anita and I stayed at Stephen's bedside round the clock, reading aloud from the Bible and Lincoln's early years, and we prayed. Other relatives assisted in the vigil.

Instead of six months, Stephen was released after two weeks! Now, four months later, he is still improving. He walks, talks, and does light work around the house, but tires easily. His right eye is at 60 percent. We continue praying for full recovery.

Why has God shown mercy to us? Is it through many prayers? I think so. Because of the gravity of this situation, I was more bold than I am normally, like asking complete strangers to pray. My boy's life was so important to me that the fear of what others might think meant little.

Does God's mercy have to do with His purpose for Stephen? Maybe. "God shows mercy to whom he chooses."

All power, glory, and praise to the Father and His Son Jesus, who has given us eternal life and more reason to believe.

— Stephen Fedoriw, Sr.
Waynesboro, PA

"Empowered by Prayer"

Annual Prayer Initiative
March 5 - April 2, 2005

*The whole church
praying together
for spiritual empowerment!*

Sponsored by
The General Conference
Church of God (Seventh Day)
P.O. Box 33677
Denver, CO 80233
www.cog7.org
Offices@cog7.org

Prayer guides will be distributed through local churches. If you do not attend but wish to participate, contact the Denver office.





These 19 servant-learners spent two weeks in Mexico December 16-31, with the sixth annual Pioneer Missionary Training team. Participants were Bryan Cleeton (California); Terry Gray (Alabama); Aaron Harris, Amanda Johnston, and Kristin Johnston (Oklahoma); Jon Kent, Titus Merriam, Monico Muffley, and Bethany Noble (Michigan); Amber Schlenker and Mike Shim (Washington); and these LITES team members from Stanberry, Missouri: Andrew Fernandez, Christine Griffey, Phillip Leach, Larry Marrs, Melissa Miller, Caleb Noble, Tim Steinhauser, and Melvin Sweet.

Read personal testimonies from several team members at www.cog7.org/BA.

One Praying Church

Prayer is the key medium through which man communicates to God, a chief means of strength for the church over the years. In the Roosevelt, Long Island, church, a core prayer band of more than a dozen men and women has facilitated this ministry in New York.

The group members pray regularly for those who request it on Sabbaths, along with monthly fasts for community and church. They visit homes, hospitals, prisons, and other churches to pray. People from far away have benefited, and astounding testimonies have been told of prayer's results. People gain jobs and find homes; families are reun-

ed; those with afflictions are delivered; the dead are raised as people come to Christ. Many stories remain untold.

What more can I say? God is moving right here.

— Pastor Dwight Heholt

Hunger Lock-In

National Youth Week and Hunger Lock-In, sponsored by National FYC, centers on ministry and missions. We select a different sister church around the world each year to learn about and support. This becomes the focus of Youth Week, using Culture Night, Bible Study Night, Sabbath worship, and the 24-hour Hunger Lock-In as tools. Lock-In emphasizes the need of those who have less material

goods than we. Here is our chance to give of ourselves, to experience life as they do, to get down and serve with our whole lives.

National Youth Week builds community among young people through the experience of a global worldview. Participants are asked to consider how their contribution, whether great or small, can affect someone in other parts of the world. Incorporated into Youth Week program are skits, songs, object lessons, etc., to provide your group with opportunity to both lead and serve in the local church.

Youth Week facts . . .

- 2005 emphasis: Kenya
- Suggested dates: April 20-23
- An excellent way to get involved in foreign missions, without the travel!
- Event packets can be downloaded: <http://fyc.cog7.org>.
- To learn more, contact the NFYC: nfyc@cog7.org.

— Kurt Lang, Director
National FYC

Tsunami Disaster Relief

The purpose of CoG7's Disaster Relief Fund is to respond to the needs of our brethren in natural or man-made disasters around the world. Reports from the Church in India indicate that no one of our conference or extended contacts was harmed or killed in the recent disaster. Because needs in that region extend well beyond the reach of our limited manpower, we are forwarding all offer-

ings for "Tsunami Relief" through one of the many international relief agencies. Your Disaster Relief Fund invites offerings from those willing to respond unitedly, as the Lord leads.

— Bill Hicks, Director
G. C. Missions Ministries

Summer Instruction

Ministries Training System announces its instructional staff for intensive mobile classrooms of the early summer season:

Dallas, TX (May 29-June 2):
Bill Hicks, Ramon Ruiz, and Raul Lopez

Owosso, MI (May 29-June 2): Dr. James DeFrancisco, Max Morrow, Whaid Rose, Dick Wiedenheft, and Calvin Burrell

Denver, CO (July 5-8):
Robert Coulter, Dr. Richard Cress, Dale Lawson, and Whaid Rose

Late summer classrooms are scheduled for La Puente, California, and near Cave Junction, Oregon.

Space in these intensive mobile classrooms is reserved especially for those men who sense God's calling and who wish to prepare themselves for pastoral service and possible ordination. If you fit this description, please contact MTS: 303-452-7973 (English); 713-674-5978 (Spanish); or training@cog7.org.

Bible Studies for Adults

Straight Talk on Christian Stewardship is the theme for the second quarter Bible Studies for Adults. This series discusses vitally important matters for everyone.

The Bible contains more verses about money and material possessions than nearly any other subject. This volume of information indicates that it's important to God for His people to know about these matters. Our attitude toward and use of material possessions reflect our relationship with God and Christ.

Contact the Bible Advocate Press for information about ordering (see p. 3).

Other Events

March 12 - Pacific NW Super Sabbath, Jefferson, OR

March 25-27 - Oklahoma Men's Retreat (and Dover workday)

April 22 - Annual Lord's Supper Service

April 29-May 1 — Southeast Women's Retreat, Pell City, AL (772-468-0860 or 704-878-0042; jllara2@aol.com)

May 5 - National Day of Prayer in the U.S.

May 27-29 - Graduation weekend at Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI

June 12-18 - Dover Family Camp, Kingfisher, OK

Golden Couples

Know anyone in the Church celebrating 50 years of marriage in 2005? Please send their names, hometowns, and wedding dates to the Editor, and the BA will publish these golden couples in our June issue. Ervin and Clara Decker of Boonville, Indiana, celebrated their 50th anniversary on February 26. Congratulations, good friends!

Canadian Correction

In our July-August 2004 issue (p. 13), we printed Jean Chrétien as prime minister of Canada. That was about six months after he was replaced by a new PM, Paul Martin. We regret this error.



The Melbourne St. church in Dallas, Texas, hosted a Super Sabbath on December 4, with the theme "Staying Faithful." Speakers included Abel Salazar, Anselmo Davila, and Ramiro Vazquez, while Priscilla Vazquez addressed the women and Abraham Garcia the youth. Jasmine and Kelvin Lucero won first place in a children's singing contest. Total attendance: 485.

International Tour

Kenya and East Africa

Our first contact with believers in Kenya occurred in 1975. These brethren had obtained a copy of the *Bible Advocate* magazine and other literature from us. After a brief fellowship with other Sabbatharians, they began working with the Church of God (Seventh Day).

Elder Robert Coulter, director of Missions Abroad, went to Kenya for the first time in 1984 and visited congregations in the districts of Kisii, Kericho, Narok, and South Nyanza, west of the Great Rift Valley — churches comprising a few hundred members. In 1985 Missions Abroad employed three Kenyans — George Babu Nyatangi, Alexander Chepkwony, and Joel Kirir — to serve the Church there.

In 1990 the Kenyan church became a member of the International Ministerial Congress at the meeting of the congress in Oaxtepec, Morelos, Mexico.

Recent progress

Encouraged and assisted by Missions Abroad, the Kenyan Conference reorganized completely in 2001, and offices were established in Nakuru. From there, an elected board and chairman serve the growing conference, provide training for regional leadership, and carry out projects across eastern Africa. The ordained ministers take care of churches in their areas, allowing for growth and the opening of new churches in areas hitherto unreached. The Church is represented in twelve districts in Kenya, with 54 congregations. The church is materially poor but spiritually rich.

Last fall the Kenyan Conference conducted elections as required by the constitution. The new chairman, James Onyinkwa Opio, reports: “The handing

over was accomplished on the 28th December 2004 by our respected and faithful servant of God, Pastor John Njogu. Our mission is to proceed and complete the work started by the outgoing national board under Pastor Njogu, who has also pledged continued support, cooperation, and advice to the new board. We will always seek advice from him as our senior pastor and elder.”

In addition to Pastor Opio, other new officers of the conference include these pastors/elders: Francis Kibe Njoroge, vice-chairman; Abrahams Odongo, secretary; Leonard Koech, vice-secretary; Vincent Morusoi, treasurer; Julius Olenkume, assistant treasurer; George Nyatangi and Patrick Kirimi, missions coordinator and assistant, respectively.

African outreach

The East African church continues to branch out due to the grace of our Lord and the good work of the Kenyan Conference. Last summer delegates from the Democratic Republic of the Congo met with CoG7 representatives in Zambia to discuss Church doctrine and structure. The Church is now officially planted in DR Congo with ten parishes in one province and the hope to extend to other provinces. DR Congo is the third largest country on this great continent.

Those being served from the office in Nakuru, Kenya, are Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, the Congo, and Kenya. Also, a new group in Ethiopia is now requesting that a pastor be sent for baptisms and training for a church developing there. Please pray the Lord for resources to serve this region and that He will send laborers into these harvest fields, growing every day.



“Thanks to Missions Abroad for concern during the drought and famine that affected brethren in most of our country. When we requested you to assist our hungry people, you immediately sent relief funds to buy and distribute foods [shown here]. We not only gave to Church members but even to neighbors, which has created a very good impact. Let those who willingly donated these funds learn that we appreciated what they did for us.” – John Njogu, pastor, Nakuru, Kenya

Truth Marches On

What would the world be like without the teachings of the Bible and the influence of Christianity? In his book *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* D. James Kennedy highlights Christ's impact on the world and on various aspects of life, such as science, medicine, music, the arts, education, and economics. Add the effect of Jesus on morality, the value of human life, the abolition of slavery, civil liberties, compassion for the poor, and the advance of democracy. The negative impacts of Christianity noted in history are far outweighed by its many positive contributions.

The global impact of our faith continues. By voting in the last presidential election, millions of evangelical Christians in the U.S. made a statement for biblical values. In addition, I am told that 70,000 converts come to Christ every day worldwide, with 14,000 of these on the African continent alone. For those opposed to Christianity, this causes concern and explains why 470 Christians are martyred daily around the world, mostly in Muslim and communist strongholds. The number killed by the recent tsunami in Southern Asia is far less than the number of Christians who've died for their faith in that part of the world in recent decades. Yet the global response to this natural disaster, for which I am grateful, is in stark contrast to the virtual silence regarding the persecution of Christians.

The largest evangelical church in Europe is in Ukraine. Its pastor, Sunday Adolijah from Nigeria, is one of many Africans recruited with scholarships to study in the former Soviet Union with hopes of advancing communism by taking its ideology back to their country.

But while there, Adolijah was converted to Christ and remained, in God's providence, to start a church in his apartment in Kiev, Ukraine's capital city. Twelve years later, this church numbers more than 20,000 members. During the same period, the number of evangelical Christians in Ukraine has grown from 250,000 to 3 million, evidence of Christianity's impact in what used to be a communist stronghold.

During a recent visit to the United States, Pastor Adolijah shared insight about the national election in Ukraine that received worldwide media attention during the last weeks of 2004. At the heart of the controversy, according to Adolijah, is the impact of Christianity. Christians are creating businesses, building orphanages, and influencing political leaders, including born-again Christian Victor Yushenko, the presidential candidate who was poisoned with dioxin. Though communism has fallen, many of the "old guard" are still part of the political landscape and are determined to stop the spread of Christianity.

Atheism, Darwinism, and communism are related ideologies that offer anti-God explanations for the existence of man and the universe. One approach to weighing their worth is to consider the impact of these ideologies upon our world, compared to Christianity's. Jesus Christ is the greatest life ever lived, and His influence on the world continues today through those who bear His name.

In today's anti-Christian culture, the fact of Christianity's positive global effect should encourage believers and warn those trying to stop it. The truth of the gospel is unstoppable. A first century Roman authority observed, "The more Christians we kill, the more there are." Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." And Paul wrote, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8).

Many of those coming to Christ do not hold my doctrinal distinctives, but I rejoice that they are turning from the darkness of sin to the light of the gospel. As the truth marches on, I pray that those of us who hold to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will take our place in the procession.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President



Publications

Publications staff (L to R): Sherri Langton (associate editor), Linda Michalak (clerical), Allan Stroupe (printing), Calvin Burrell (editor), Sylvia Corral (translation), Keith Michalak (director of publications), Hope Dais (proofing), LeRoy Dais (curriculum editor)



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