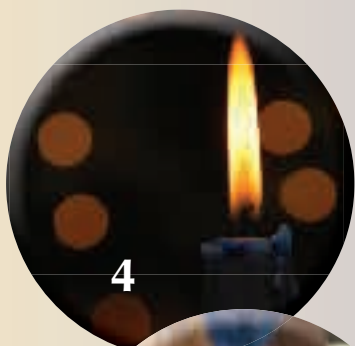


January-February 2010



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Coming in the March-April BA: more grace and truth; fall of mystery Babylon; Christ's suffering

In the January and February issues of *Now What?*: dealing with cancer; a personal look at suicide (<http://nowwhat.cog7.org>)

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## Church of Grace and Truth



On the first day of year one, God made light. Let's "reflect" on what this means for us, while days are short and darkness dominates in early 2010. What positive steps will we take this year to drain some night from our world, our lives?

Someone wrote that the local church is the hope of the world — a bold thought. We're nearer the Bible if we say the church is the *light* of the world — by reflection, of course. Our Lord's light shining through His followers in thousands of congregations around the globe is the best hope that billions can have for a spiritual lift now and for eternity to come (Matthew 5:14, 16; John 1:9; 8:12).

What if the church's light turns to darkness? Join us, please, on a 2010 journey of challenge and discipline, starting with the church of God (1 Peter 4:17). Ask Christ to turn His light full bright on the path ahead, helping us see and correct what's amiss — personally and corporately. Look for the "churchIGNITE" tag on each BA feature that unpacks how we can be a real church for Jesus.

Start the new year's journey by checking the greatest challenges fifty CoG7 ministers said we're facing here and now (p. 14). Mix this sobering appraisal of our current status with lots of hope (p. 4), trusting prayer (p. 20), and positive choices (pp. 8, 10, 12). This could be a Year of Jubilee (p. 21) for all God's people, by His grace!

In following a Christ of grace and truth (John 1:14, 17), we must aim for a church that exemplifies these two terrific qualities. Let's join our hands and hearts with His until congregations 'round the world reflect what was fully revealed in our Lord and Savior.

We invite your assistance on this journey. Send your questions ("Q & A"); write your viewpoint ("We Ask" and "Mailbag"); share your experience ("My Journey"); study the Bible with us ("In the Word"), and report church successes ("Local Snapshot"). Your insight on how all Christians can embrace and dispense fuller grace and truth, starting with CoG7, is welcome here!

Six issues of the BA will arrive in your home via postal service in 2010, compared to eight issues in recent years. We pledge the same level of inspiration and instruction via paper and ink that you have come to expect from us, even as we turn more of our staff effort toward the electronic side of this ministry ([www.cog7.org/BA](http://www.cog7.org/BA)).

— Calvin Burrell





# Realistic Hope in Pessimistic Times

Taking up residence in  
the house of faith.  
by Jan Johnson

Mike and Gina were disappointed. They'd planned to buy their "dream house," but their loan fell through. They continued to search and found a home, but it was nothing like their first choice. They decided to make the best of it and see what happened.

Shortly after they moved in, Mike and Gina discovered several advantages this "rebound home" had over their first choice. With the financial decline, the other house would have lost a lot of its worth and the payments would have been too steep. Mike and Gina were actually grateful

their original plan did not work out. They could change their attitude quickly because they didn't let their expectations ruin the idea that God can bring good through anything.

This steadiness of purpose is difficult to attain. Instead it's easier to choose either bleak despair ("Nothing works for me") or blind optimism ("I know everything will work out"). Often we shift back and forth between the two extremes.

But how do we move away from riding that seesaw of despair/idealism to maintaining an outlook that sees beyond our day-to-day circumstances and roller-coaster emotions? How do we move from living in the house of fear to the house of faith? Here are some ways to begin.

## Moving to faith

### Expect problems to occur.

Accepting and even expecting life to be full of challenges keeps us from sliding into despair when trouble strikes. Often it's the sting of the surprise that stuns us. Peter warned the early Christians, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12). When we're surprised by problems, it intensifies our pain. We're caught off guard by good friends who reject us, marriages that fail, and trusted leaders who lose their tempers. Our naiveté causes our high expectations to undo us.

Sometimes in an effort to witness, Christians promise people an unrealistically happy life if

they trust Christ. We talk about the fruit of the Spirit as if it's a package that arrives on the day of their conversion. This isn't what God promises; God promises to walk with us through the dark valleys, not eliminate them.

**Consider the merits of change.** We find change threatening. Even positive changes, such as marriage or purchasing a new home, increase stress.

The life of Ruth would have scored high on any stress test. After her husband died, she followed her Hebrew mother-in-law to faraway Judah. Before the move, Ruth had weighed the positive and negative aspects of her leave-taking. She watched her sister-in-law Orpah decide to stay in Moab, but she seems to have asked herself why that would be any better. If Ruth went with Naomi, she'd face many challenges, but at least she'd have Naomi's companionship and ideals: "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16b).

Because of her openness to change, Ruth adjusted relatively well to life in Judah. She gleaned in the fields with the poor and then followed Naomi's advice in winning the admiration of Boaz, who later became her husband (2:2, 3; 3:1-18).

Considering the positive and negative aspects of a specific change can give us the fresh perspective we need to continue. What is the upside of the supposed wrong decision? Why might the supposed good decision not be so great after all? We could even see how the change might be good and might open

opportunities we would otherwise miss.

**Adopt a spirit of determination.** A favorite Bible verse that people quote is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NKJV). Usually it's quoted to justify wearing ourselves out and avoiding proper rest, which ignores the context.

From a dirty prison cell, the jailed scholar Paul summarized his approach to life:

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through [Christ] who gives me strength (vv. 12, 13).

Paul's determination to preach the Christian faith to the Roman world was not dampened by the fact that he was chained to a Roman guard. Other people may have thought that his work was on hold while he sat in jail, but Paul seemed to conclude that he was simply preaching to a new audience of Roman soldiers.

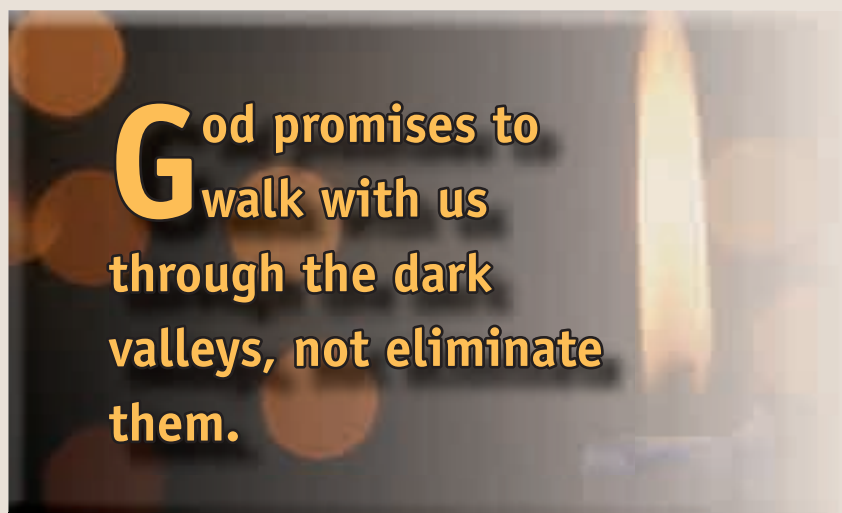
**Feed on positive thoughts.** Another astounding mindset of Paul was a focus on what was

wise and good and lovely. Again, from his prison cell, he encouraged the Philippians to fill their minds by meditating "on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious — the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse" (v. 8, *The Message*).

Paul wasn't proposing an unrealistic "Don't worry — be happy" approach. In the same letter he mentioned problems caused by a dispute between two people (v. 2). He acknowledged problems and suggested solutions, but advised us to focus on the best things around us.

To maintain a positive focus, I keep what a friend calls my "foot warmer" file. It includes congratulatory cards, thank you notes, and words of encouragement that celebrate how God can work through an ordinary person like me. They warm my spirit just as thick socks warm my feet on a cold night.

One of my "foot warmers" is the impressive business card of a young man I taught in Bible school many years ago. Then he was a shy, disinterested high school student on the fringes of



gang activity. All those encouraging words, pats on the back, and sluggish conversations over the years eventually paid off. When I need to focus on positive aspects of my ministry, I look at this card.

**Stay open to the unknown factor.** Circumstances may cause us to make comments such as “That friend ignored me” or “I just need to change jobs.” But later we discover that our friend

didn’t even see us and that our overbearing boss is being replaced. There’s so much we don’t know. Even when we think we know, God might be working behind the scenes. Just as “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12), there is often a way that seems wrong to a person, but its end is the way of life. A lot of what we do is guesses and hunches. We do

better when we humbly move ahead a step at a time, listening for guidance and being open to things we have no knowledge or understanding about.

Depending on God runs counter to our culture that trains us to manage time, form goals, and map out strategies. While organizing our lives is good, we can keep our minds open that God “leads me in the paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:3, NKJV) – not necessarily telling us the destination, but inviting us to follow along and usually helping us see only the next step.

## ***Things to Do While Waiting for Life to Get Better***

*[The importance of family life during uncertain times.]*

***Take the children to school.***

***Listen while their conversation fills the car  
with laughter – and troubles.***

***Blow bubble gum with the kids.***

***Pick the kind that makes my jaw sore  
and explodes in my nostrils. Laugh with them.***

***Cook meat loaf and baked potatoes with cherry pie.***

***Remind the children they must share.***

***Ask their father how his day went.***

***Snuggle between the brood and watch flames lick  
firewood***

***while reading *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*.***

***Hope they develop a love for literature.***

***Pray together. Prayer strengthens faith in God’s  
provision,***

***intertwines hope with daily effort,***

***reinforces the cord that binds our family to His heart.***

***Be grateful for each day, a home, a warm bed,  
and the man beside me when evening turns to night.***

***We can wait for life to get better together.***

***Laurel J. Becker***

## **Realism and optimism**

All these attitudes support each other. When we face challenges, it’s time to feed on positive thoughts. When a change seems untimely, we rely on the unknown factor.

Jesus alluded to this combined approach by saying, “Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). Armed with this shrewd realism and innocent optimism, we will neither ignore problems nor become consumed by them. We may even decide they were just what we needed to move forward. **BA**

### **Jan Johnson**

writes from Simi, CA. All Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.



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# Church in the Bible by Calvin Burrell

**Synonyms.** The English word *church* does not occur in the Old Testament (KJV), where its closest synonyms might be *assembly* or *congregation*. Instead, *church* is introduced and developed in the New Testament.

**Significance.** All but one of the 115 uses of *church* in the New Testament (KJV) are translated from the Greek word *ecclesia*, or “calling out.” It can refer to any public or religious meeting of “called out” ones. In the Christian sense, *church* may be defined as an assembly of persons who have been called out of the world by the doctrine of the gospel to worship the true God in Jesus Christ, according to His Word.

**Surprise?** Only three times does the word *church* (*ecclesia*) appear on the lips of Jesus Christ, all in the first Gospel.

1. “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church,” says Jesus, speaking to Simon Peter (Matt. 16:18). In this verse we hear the church compared to a building, an analogy we will meet later in the Epistles. And we learn that Christ himself is the church’s builder; it belongs to Him. Less clear is the identity of the “rock” Jesus builds His church on. Medieval Rome claimed Simon Peter as the rock that church was built on. Protestants usually associate *rock* in this text with Peter’s confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16) — the touchstone of our faith.
- 2., 3. Two chapters later, Jesus instructs His disciples about settling grievances. First, go to your brother alone. If that fails, take two or three and plead again. Finally, “If he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the

church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (18:17). Beyond disputes, this passage conveys Jesus’ mind that His universal church (as in 16:18) would have localized expressions to which His disciples may appeal for support. Then He assures them of His presence with gathered Christians. Even the smallest group of them constitutes His church in that place (18:20).

**Spectacular!** The church’s birthday is on the Day of Pentecost. Before the book of Acts, we have mere previews and predictions of the church. In Acts 2 we see the real thing explode into existence by God’s grace, via the gospel of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit — scandalously superb!

## **Results? Let the reader respond:**

- What was Peter’s core message the day the New Testament church was birthed (vv. 36-40)? This message announced the “keys to the kingdom” Jesus promised to Peter (Matt. 16:19)
- How many persons responded faithfully to the message? With what response (Acts 2:41, 42)? What activities in your church continue those begun in verse 42?
- Verse 43 speaks of the awe-inspiring God among His people, seen in changed lives and felt in humbled hearts. What of your church experiences might be described with words like *godly fear* or *awesome*?
- What are we doing to share our abundance with others in need, both inside and outside the church (vv. 44, 45)?
- Large group and house-church meetings, often with food and always with joyful praise: This is a picture of the first Christian church (vv. 46, 47). It attracted others, whom the Lord was pleased to save by His grace.



# Building the Church

Lindsey Jones—Dreamstime.com

A stirring Old Testament report can help us get going again. **by Paulo Coelho and Wayne Hrenyk**

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify [build up] another (Romans 14:19).

**A**ll over the world, we live in turbulent times. The coming of our Lord is near, and Satan will do everything to break apart and destroy the people of God (Revelation 12:12). The spread of secularism and materialism in modern society renders the task of spreading the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ ever more difficult. These “isms” affect the church as well.

God’s church is faced with

problems that threaten its mission and, if it were possible, undermine its very existence. In the face of these powerful external forces, let us meditate about our own behavior as spiritual stones of this building called the church.

Our weaknesses and difficulties often come from inappropriate and selfish attitudes. Do we care more about our own position and less for the collective spirit of the church? Are our words and attitudes positive regarding the work of God and His body? Or does our behavior — what we do or don’t do — tear down what God wants to build up?

## Lessons from Nehemiah

The second chapter of Nehemiah is an extraordinary appeal for believers to be builders of this divine work called the church. How do we do this?

For one thing, we can be more like Nehemiah. Knowing that Jerusalem, the city of his fathers, was in a state of great degradation, Nehemiah could not find peace. The Hebrew people had greatly neglected their faith, resulting in their captivity and the destruction of their homeland by Babylonian invasion (2:1-3).

Nehemiah’s concern over Jerusalem can be paralleled with the concern that God’s people should have for the weakness and weariness of His church today. Knowing our personal and collective imperfections, we must be concerned over the condition of the church of God — not just at home but in other parts of the world. When we become more aware of the difficulties Christians face all over the globe, we will pray to the church’s head, Jesus Christ.

This too is like Nehemiah. Before he began his great effort in Jerusalem, he directed his thoughts to God (2:4b). He received the inspiration for a plan that would guide his actions, and presented it to King Artaxerxes (vv. 5-9). Prayer, then, is key in our work as spiritual stones.

While prayer was crucial for Nehemiah in seeking the king’s permission to return to Jerusalem, it was even more critical when the enemy opposed his efforts to rebuild. In constructing or renovating God’s church, opposition will always be present — both inside and outside the body (vv. 10, 19). This comes not only



from our own selfish motives but also from the carnal interests of others. But as He did with Nehemiah, God will prosper the work of His people when their motives become pure and aligned with the moving of His Spirit (v. 20).

Despite opposition and few workers, Nehemiah was not deterred from his building project. The work was great and complex, but the God who directed Nehemiah to this venture was greater still (vv. 11-16)! He is in our day as well.

A major need of Christ's church today is in the appeal of God's servant back then: to see the current distress and commit to building (v. 17). We need men and women as devoted servants — people dedicated to rejuvenating the body of Christ, people standing steadfastly against powers that seek to weaken our resolve, people committed to purity in doctrine and holiness.

Such servants of God not only have this vision but also recognize the need to bring others to the same mission of building. These men and women do not consider themselves owners of the church but servants of Jesus Christ, not relying on themselves but on the power of God.

If we act like Nehemiah, if our attitude and vision edify the work of God, the Lord will open the hearts of many who feel caught by the Spirit of God to join us as builders. The challenge ahead is not easy; the church of God suffers the effects of internal and external turbulence typical of our times. Each of us must respond as did the companions of Nehemiah: Let us rise up and build (v. 18)!

### Three D's

The church of God must not be moved by carnal convulsions derived from selfishness, conflicts, power games, material interests, doctrinal arrogance, and insensitivity. We must not be deterred by . . .

*Deception:* not understanding the concern or seeing the need for rebuilding in the local church. This gets nothing done.

*Distraction:* believing we don't have the time, can't make the effort, or won't realize a gain from what we build. This postpones growth projects until they fall into the lack-of-interest file.

*Destruction:* thinking all is well in the church and spending time on other busy-ness and priorities. This destroys the church.

Read the words of Haggai, a contemporary of Nehemiah's:

"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes." Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! Go up to

the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the Lord. "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house" (Haggai 1:4-9).

### The call

Are we working to greater glory for God, or could we be a stumbling block to His church? We need to examine our lives and work in our churches.

The Lord Jesus wants His building to glorify the Father, whether that entails renovating or starting a new work from ground level. The Spirit of God calls each of us to be like Nehemiah — a builder of the church of God, our spiritual home. **BA**

**Paulo Jorge Coelho** and **Wayne Hrenyk** both serve as pastors in the Church of God — the former near Lisbon, Portugal, and the latter in San Antonio, TX.



**We need men and women as devoted servants — people dedicated to rejuvenating the body of Christ.**



Lindsey Jones—Dreamstime.com

# Seeing Jesus

The heart of ministry to the “least of these.” by Israel Steinmetz

**T**he Kansas City CoG7, where I have the privilege of serving as pastor, is similar to many of your congregations. Very few of our members live in the community where our facility is located; most of them drive in from surrounding cities and towns. With commutes of anywhere from ten to one hundred miles, this makes us the typical “destination church.”

Each member represents a unique community spread across a metroplex of 1.5 million people, so it’s easy to see why few of our members feel a natural

connection to the part of town where our building is located. Add to this the reality that most of our members are Caucasians over fifty and live in suburban and rural areas, and that our facility is in a predominantly young, black urban area. You can understand why it would take intentional effort to build a bridge to the community that surrounds our building.

Despite the obvious obstacles we face, our congregation has made a commitment that we will either reach the people who share a neighborhood with our

facility or move somewhere where we will have an impact.

## Outreach energy

With this in mind, we’ve begun to reach out to a local elementary school to find creative ways of ministering to the children. For starters, we’re in our second year of partnering with Harvesters in the Backsnack Program (check it out at [www.harvesters.org](http://www.harvesters.org)), and I’m an active member of a drug and alcohol prevention coalition targeted at the youth in our community.



We're also considering an after-school tutoring program. All of this energy is devoted toward answering Jesus' call to "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them . . ." (Matthew 19:14).

As I write, we're in the middle of our second Bottle Drive for a local ministry that reaches out to young women in crisis pregnancies. By working with them, we're saving the lives of babies and sharing the abundant life of Jesus Christ with bewildered and hopeless teenagers in our community. This is the justice and true religion that God desires.

This past August we celebrated the one-year anniversary of our Give-A-Way program. After potluck each month, we open our doors to the community for them to receive food, clothing, shoes, toys, linens, and Bibles. Like Moses building the tabernacle, I have had to turn away donations because we've received too much, despite the fact that after fifteen months our little congregation of fifty has served over eleven hundred people! We are answering the call of John the Baptist for those who have extra clothing and food to share with those who do not (Luke 3:11).

### Keeping a focus

These efforts have begun to bring the tangible presence of the kingdom of God to the community where our facility is located. And they've challenged our congregation to be focused on the mission of the kingdom rather than on themselves. This is not always a pleasant process.

There are those who abuse our generosity or use us for a handout when they have no in-

terest in addressing their spiritual needs. It is difficult to look on them with compassion, ministering to them even when we know that they're coming for the food, not because they desire to know God. Sometimes we grow weary of reaching out and not seeing it translate into salvation, baptisms, and increased attendance. In these moments we're reminded of the inherent value of showing kindness, sharing, loving, and serving, even when the results aren't what we desire.

### Challenge

Most important, we have been challenged to see Jesus in "the least of these." It is one thing to reach out and serve the needy; it is another to do it with a genuine love that recognizes Jesus in the recipient of that love. In our flesh we are tempted to look on others with pride, contempt, and condemnation. We are tempted to justify our cold hearts, evil eyes, and greedy hands with empty excuses. But no matter what excuse or justification we use, there is still that nagging passage where Jesus says that when He sits on the throne of judgment, we will be divided for all eternity on the basis of how we treated the hungry, the thirsty,

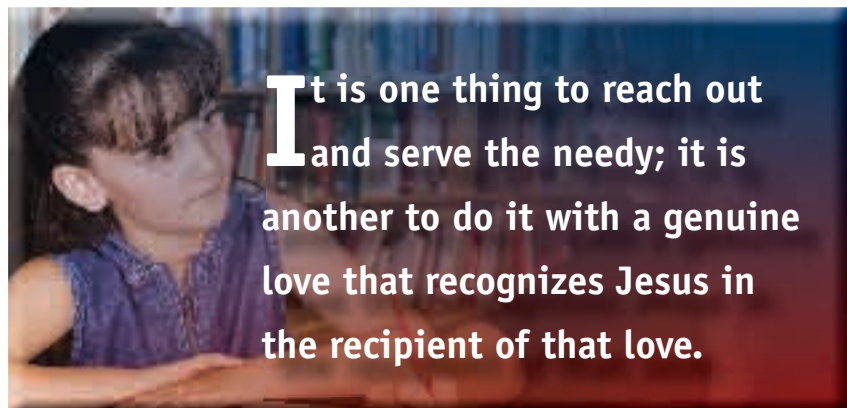
the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-46).

Jesus' heart of compassion is so moved by the plight of the marginalized that He identifies Himself with them. He says, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (v. 40). We cannot truthfully claim to love Jesus and not demonstrate love to those He loves. To love Jesus is to love the world He died to save.

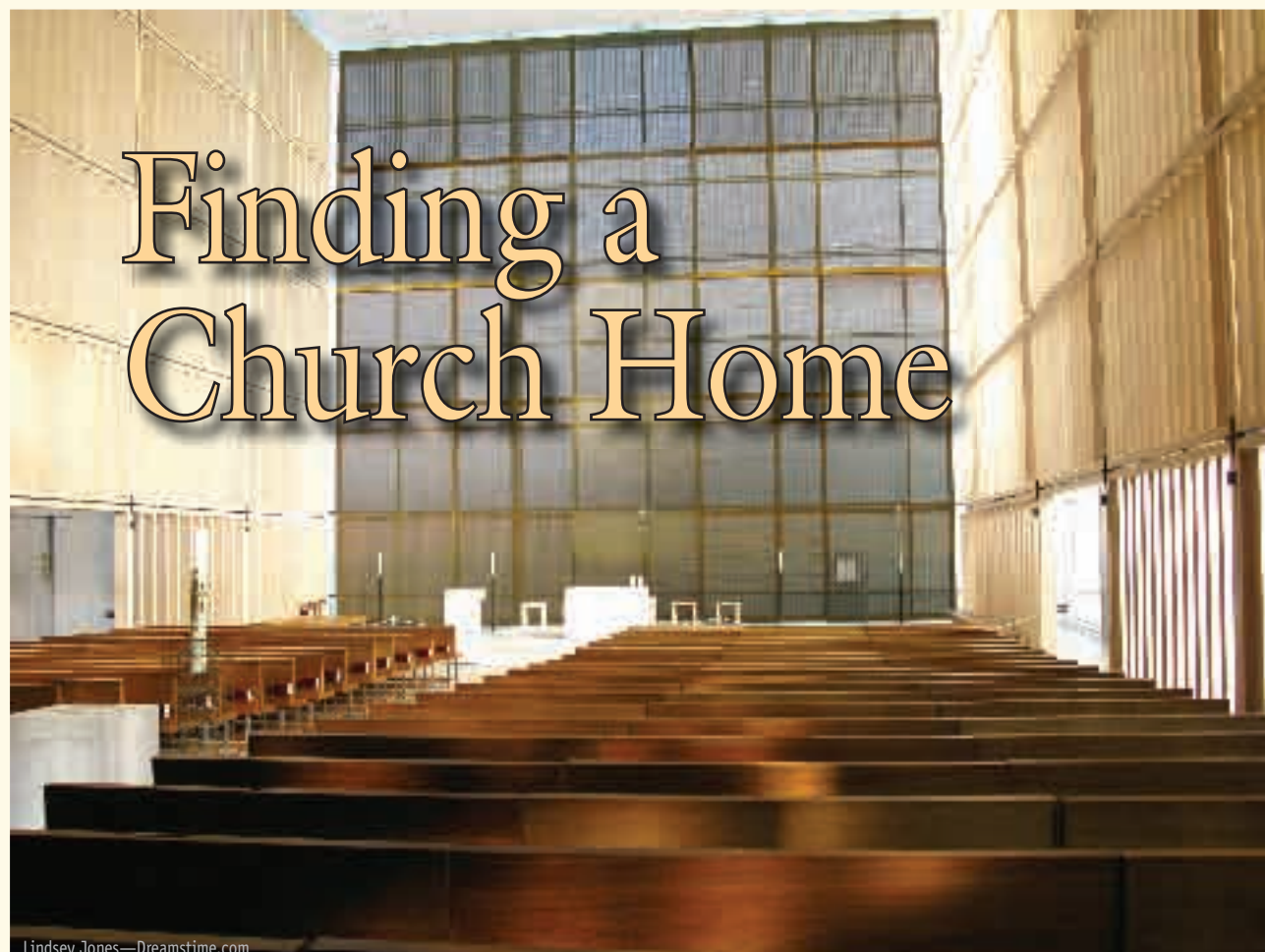
This reality is causing us to ask ourselves some hard questions. Do we see Jesus in the eyes of the hungry, the sick, the poor, and the outcast? Do we treat them with the love, respect, affection, and acceptance that we would afford the Lord if He walked the earth again today? We here in Kansas City are learning that we show love to Jesus by loving those He loves. Join us, won't you, in learning to see and love Jesus in "the least of these."

BA

**Israel Steinmetz,**  
his wife, Anna,  
and four children  
live in Kansas City,  
MO.







Lindsey Jones—Dreamstime.com

**A good fit means we serve better and stay longer.**

**by John Klassek**

Joe was a regular family man. He loved his wife and adored their three children. He was good at his work and respected in his community.

Growing up in the suburbs, Joe attended the local high school and played soccer for the local team. He met Sally in their fourth year of college, and they married the following January.

Joe hadn't attended church regularly, but he came to understand that there must be a God — someone incredibly powerful

and creative. In Joe's thinking, scientific hypothesis still couldn't adequately answer life's big questions — like, for example, when his eight-year-old daughter, Sarah, recently asked, "How do I know if heaven is real or not?"

Joe and Sally agreed it might be time to start attending church; it would be good for the kids anyway. But then, to them, the next step seemed more imposing than ever. "Which church should we go to?" asked Sally.

On the following weekend, Joe, Sally, and their three children visited the biggest church in town. It was a huge, heritage-listed sandstone building with gothic-shaped stained glass windows. Inside were wooden seats, burn-

ing candles, religious statues, and a rich layer of liturgical practice. Songs were sung, people came forward to receive a bread wafer, a priest waved a smoke censor. And throughout that service Joe and his family felt as if they were in unfamiliar territory.

The next weekend, Joe decided on something more modern. This time church was in a warehouse in a business precinct. The people (thousands of them) were casually dressed and looked relaxed. The reception area looked bright and breezy, and the auditorium featured three large projector screens.

But, oh, how different that service was. The music was loud — I mean very loud — with lots of

young people crowding close to the front to be near, for all intents and purposes, a rock band. The preacher seemed nice and his message friendly and light. As soon as the service finished, the thousands of worshippers quickly vacated – to make way for the next service. Despite the noise and activity and people, Joe and Sally couldn't ignore their inner disquiet.

The experience was again different on another visit to yet another church. The preacher (whose reputation had preceded him via the media) explained a moral from a recent movie. Among other things, he said that the Ten Commandments were done away with and that Jesus didn't really walk on water – beliefs that to Joe didn't compute with what his grandmother had taught him many years ago.

Finding a church home may not be an issue for some, but for many within the Christian community, a stable church can sometimes seem remote.

The facts speak for themselves. Churches are great at moving people around within the Christian community, when the greatest growth ought to come instead from those who don't yet know God and whom God may be calling. This is a reality that must be faced.

### Considerations

So, if you're looking for a church home, you may want to consider three important areas:

1. Can you generally agree on the basic theological tenets – that is, is what is spoken and taught based on the Bible alone?

2. Can you genuinely worship there?

3. Does your participation in church life allow you to effectively serve?

If you can say yes to each of these three, then you've found your church home. Give it your best and in humility thank God for a place of nurture, growth, and service.

But if you cannot see eye to eye on core theological underpinnings – if a church's doctrines and practice fall short of God's Word – then over time this will probably impede your ability to worship or effectively serve.

If your worship of God is hindered, either by form or setting, then think deeply whether the spiritual distraction is worth it. In sincere prayer, ask God to guide you.

If you cannot effectively serve or share your gifts for whatever reasons, be they culture or authoritarianism, then you may just have to find a place where you can serve.

Unfortunately these realities do exist. The three criteria may, however, help you in your walk with God.

### Community in Christ

Remember, there are no healthy "solo" Christians; we all need community in Christ. And,

of course, in becoming an active member of any church fellowship, you naturally sacrifice some sovereignty. You are no longer your own; you are now Christ's.

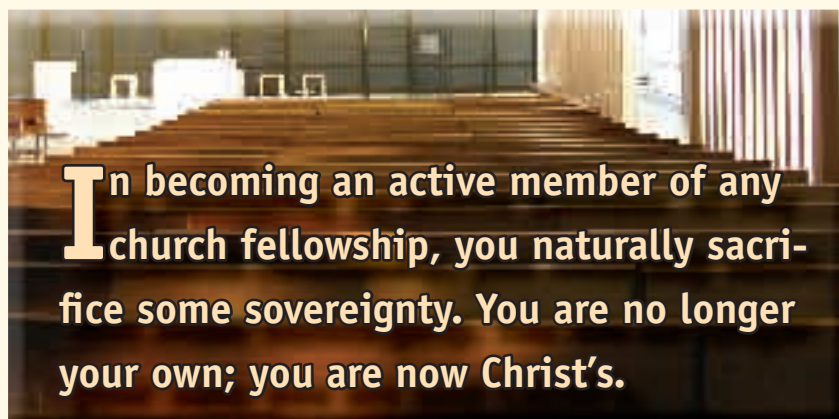
One last tip: There's no such thing as the perfect church. Rather than excluding those who fail in their struggle against sin, churches will cater to the genuinely repentant who seek healing, help, and community.

The story for Joe, Sally, and their children does have a "happily ever after" ending. They're now attending a small, faithful community church whose motto is to "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

And daughter Sarah not only knows that the kingdom of heaven exists but also tells her school friends that Jesus is truly the Son of God – and that they too can come to know Him. **BA**

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**John Klassek**  
produces short  
gospel films for  
television ([www.  
message7.org](http://www.message7.org))  
from his home in  
Perth, Western  
Australia.



# What the Church Needs

*BA asked dozens of CoG7 ministers two questions to help us shape the magazine for 2010 and beyond. Read their answers here.*

## What are the great challenges this church faces in the next decade?

- One overlooked factor is the peculiar effects of our nation killing off our next generation, while the Muslim world and a few others procreate at full speed.



**We are challenged to train pastors and congregations in how to keep our youth in the Church and in their faith.**

- Retaining youth as committed members. They will be urged to see Christianity as mostly the same product, with differing flavors. Distinctives must be presented as important enough to stay for, instead of leaving for a convenient church down the street.
- Will this people, called by God's name, grow up so that others see His love in all we do? How can we be the arms of Jesus to a world so out of control? How can I overcome the world's influence on me, my preferences, my convenience?
- Our greatest need will be to use resources wisely to minister among our two primary cultures: Hispanic and Anglo. Should these groups be blended into an integrated whole, or should they be served differently? If so, how?
- The Church needs to recognize how permissive we've become, how seduced by the world. Our children and we live in compromise.
- We need to be relevant and realistic in an increasingly anti-Christian society.
- We need a systematic approach toward independent groups, with literature that espouses the CoG7 mission and the need for unity.
- Strengthening the family by providing meaningful ministry opportunities to and for every age group.
- Being tolerant without losing our doctrinal footprint; remaining united and morally pure.
- Defining our identity in the light of Christ's pre-eminence and the conviction of salvation by grace through faith.
- Pursuing unity by defining where it is required and where diversity is allowed.
- Understanding and sharing Jesus Christ with the world around us. Defining what the gospel is and isn't; integrating our other various beliefs within the gospel's priority.



# Now

- Focus on preaching the gospel. Jesus is coming soon, and we'd better be ready. Understanding prophecies is secondary.
- Providing pathways for a new generation of leaders and ministers to rise up and serve.
- How it looks to be a people filled with the Holy Spirit, exhibiting both the Spirit's fruits and gifts.
- Improve worship. Many confuse it with long periods of singing, with no time to experience Scripture and silence, reverence and awe, and nothing close to a mystical experience before the throne of grace.
- Elevate preaching. Programs are packed with other activities before the preacher gets his limited "filler" time. God's Word is not emphasized enough.
- Expose the apathy that exists in the Church.
- Keeping youth in the Church after high school.
- Lack of love and commitment to the Lord.
- Transmit the right vision and beliefs, because some still preach doctrines we've put behind, like salvation by law and the non-deity of Jesus.
- Members need to take ownership of what they believe, holding fast to the truth of the Word.
- Building marriage and family.
- Getting our young men to answer their call to pastoral ministry, with a training system that gets the job done and gets them serving.
- Training pastors and congregations in how to keep our youth in the Church and in their faith.
- CoG7 needs more instruction on living in this age and culture, addressing subjects that contradict our beliefs, like evolution, age of the earth, God's existence, etc. Train youth to handle finances lifelong, to be sanctified in our crazy world.

*continued on page 23*



## How can BA help address those needs and challenges in every congregation?

- By printing articles that call Christians to be the biblically defined children of God and bride of Christ, creatures of both grace and law, faith and works, sentiment and substance, properly tensioned between the sovereignty of God and the appropriate free-will response of humanity; realizing salvation by what God has done, is doing, and will do; growing spiritually by applying what God has entrusted to us all.
- By bringing to mind the importance of Church and by staying the course, thus producing unity and identity.
- By providing Scripture-based content that can be integrated into our weekly and special gatherings. Such material, carefully written and edited, can help preachers and teachers illustrate their points and nourish listeners with sound insights.
- By printing relevant and effective articles for the unchurched.
- By embracing evangelistic focus so that the magazine becomes an outreach tool.
- By presenting Bible basics. The unchurched under age 35 know little or nothing of the Bible, and people of all ages have never really studied it.
- By dealing with church issues we all face, and offering solutions. We are not the only congregation that has problems.
- By leading the Church through change.

*The BA appreciates this counsel and trusts that the 2010 issues will address these needs, with good effect. — Editor.*

# LIVING FREE



by Michael Mancha

## 2010.

That sounds strange — almost futuristic, like something out of a movie. But as strange as it may sound the first few times you say it, 2010 is here. We are now a decade into the twenty-first century.

Looking ahead this year, I'm overwhelmed. God blessed me so much in 2009 — my church, my family, my job. I can't imagine what's in store for 2010.

For some, heading into a new year isn't that exciting. Maybe it'll be just another year of struggle, pain, abuse, or confusion; of feeling alone, left out, angry, or anxious. Many youth just like you are won-

dering how long they'll wait before things improve. They're wondering how much longer they must struggle before something changes.

Maybe you're one of them.

In the Bible, the author of Hebrews says there isn't anything we could endure that Jesus doesn't understand. Nothing. He carried the weight of the whole world — past, present, and future — so that when you're upset about school or another situation in life, you can call to Him and He'll understand.

No one on Earth can understand you like Jesus. And it's wonderful that He longs to talk to you, listen to you, and have friendship with you.

The apostle Paul gives some very encouraging advice in Philippians 4:6, 7:

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life (*The Message*).\*

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine a life without worry? I don't mean just not worrying about some things; I mean not worrying about *anything*.

This is what Jesus wants. He wants us to lay everything on Him. He wants us to take all our troubles, all our worries, and all our sins and

# BEAUTIFUL OR SEXY?

Beauty brings out who you are;  
sexy hides everything great about you.

Beauty draws people to your heart;  
sexy draws them to your body.

Beauty leaves someone awestruck;  
sexy leaves him lustful.

Beauty makes people mystified;  
sexy makes them imagine.

Beauty takes their breath away;  
sexy takes away their good judgment.

Beauty is both inside and outside;  
sexy only goes skin deep.

Beauty makes them think about the person;  
sexy makes them think only of the body.

Beauty makes people think about your heart, your  
dreams, your goals;  
sexy makes them think about you without clothes.

Beauty is innocent and pure;  
sexy screams "experience."

Beauty makes them think about who you'll be someday;  
sexy makes them think about what you  
can give them right now.

Beauty makes people notice God's hand;  
sexy makes them forget why He created us.

Beauty gives glory to our Creator;  
sexy takes away from who He is.

Beauty reflects the love of Jesus;  
sexy hides what His amazing love and salvation can do.

Which do you choose to pursue?

lay them before Him. When we do,  
He'll replace all those things with  
peace. God will fill all the holes in  
your heart.

I know what you're thinking:  
That's easier said than done, right?  
Well, yes, it is. But my challenge to  
you is just try it. See if Jesus doesn't  
do exactly what He says He'll do.  
Sincerely ask Him to remove the  
burden from you and replace it  
with His joy and peace, and He will.  
He has done it in my life, and the  
Bible is full of stories where He's  
done it before.

Let Christ be the center of your  
life, and it'll be an awesome year!

\* Scripture taken from The Message.  
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Monica Schlenker, 20  
North Dakota





# Saved From Fire

by Shanda Miller as told to  
Linda M. Freemyer

Driving in January down the wintry hill to a stop sign, I plan what work to accomplish at the church this morning. Buckets of paints and materials are ready for refreshing spirits with a new wall mural of Jesus. My children are inside the blue Skylark with me.

In seconds, an uncontrollable scream slides with the car across Highway 59, and we plunge twenty feet into a creek. After hitting a fencepost and tree, the car rests on its driver's side. My three-year-old, Anna, begins yelling, "Why didn't you stop?! Why didn't you stop?!"

Sara, five, dangling in her car seat on the passenger's side — now topside — yells too. Smoke or fumes fill the Skylark. *A fire!* shrieks my mind. I shut the motor off with effort. My car seat buckle wants to imprison me with my weight upon it. With rapid effort, I am loose.

As I try to move so I can release the girls, the car begins to move. I look at the water. *I hate water!* My only view besides water is weeds and the sky. *Bad plan. Where will we land if it moves? We need help! Where is my cell phone?*

Praying aloud helps bring calm to us, but not heat; we are rapidly becoming cold. I find my cell phone and pray for coverage.

"Joy, we won't be in today," I cheerfully say to my mother-in-law, then hang up. *Good. No explanation to alarm her. My thoughts race. Now if I can just get help. How do I call the state patrol?*

I quickly punch in my husband's number. "Andrew, how do you call the state patrol? I went through the stop sign at the highway; we're down in a creek bed. All I can see is water and weeds. I can't get the girls out of the car seats because the car is up on its side and it starts moving!"

"Call \*55," says Andrew. He immediately races from his job in St. Joseph to the accident scene, south of Fillmore.

Dialing \*55, I tell the Missouri Highway Patrol our predicament and location. Meanwhile, a man in a plow truck stops at the embankment and spots the wreck. His face peers through the back window and turns white. *Oh no. She's dead!* he thinks. He yells down, "Are you all right?"

"I can't get the children out!" I yell back. Panic is under control because of prayer, my morning devotion, and my nurse's experience. Alarmed, he calls the sheriff, then waits worriedly. At least someone is near. A few more cars collect, but I cannot see them.

As I sit on the cold driver's window, waiting, Isaiah 43 is suddenly on my mind. It was my morning devotion.

My Journey

# and Flood

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee (Isaiah 43:2, KJV).

I try to calm myself. *So far, the car isn't burning. I was able to shut it off. So I trust God's promise the water will stay out.*

"I spy something green," I say to Sara and Anna. I have to keep them busy.

"Sara, can you breathe OK?" I question my daughter. "Are you OK? Do you hurt anywhere?"

"It hurts, Mom," Sara replies, wriggling. The seat belt leaves marks as its imprisoning pinches her skin. There is nothing to do but let her hang helplessly.

Anna's blue eyes are wide at the dirty water; a new fear of water is growing. Yet the car is miraculously sealed so my shivering family is dry.

"What do we want to do the rest of the day?" I question the girls, pretending enthusiasm. "A movie? Lunch?"

Sara and Anna believe a warm lunch plus a movie at our warm home is good enough. A half hour passes with a tearful, fearful child and another extremely uncomfortable one. I have had an innate fear of water since infancy, yet I feel reasonably calm.



*Grateful family (L to R): Anna, Shanda, Sara, and Andrew Miller. Andrew is the Central District area representative for CoG7 in Kansas and Missouri.*

Andrew races to the Fillmore exit, then to the corner, before the Missouri State Patrol gets there. His over six-foot frame pulls the car, teetering, toward the cement wall of the culvert. Assessing its safety, he slips. The car refuses to release its shocked victims, but Andrew forces the back door open. He cuts the seat belt, releasing Sara. Suddenly free, she monkey-wraps herself around her hero dad with mighty strength. Andrew peels her off to freedom. "I have to get Anna out, too. You'll have to get down," he tells his little girl. Andrew leaves her with the strangers atop the embankment.

Andrew leans over the water putting his weight partly on the car. He unbuckles our dazed Anna from the horrible threat of water. The fear remains for months.

I scramble over the console, pulling myself up through the back door. Andrew pulls, completely freeing me from the water vault. We three are all so cold. Later, warming in the van, Sara says, "Mommy, I didn't know grown ups could scream."

Screams, water, and weeds leave their memory within my two innocent, happy preschoolers. In that quick, glimmery slide, they gain fear of traveling without multiple wraps and blankets, and of water. They also gain a true, real-life hero in the large blonde man known as Daddy. The true hero is the One above, who cares enough to protect His children.

That Sabbath, Andrew tells our congregation about the accident. "Daddy's crying!" exclaim my little daughters in the pew. He recounts the experience with amazed gratitude for a God who treasured His children enough to protect them from fire and flood, as His Word says.

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**Linda M. Freemyer** attends the St. Joseph CoG7 and lives in Maryville, MO.



# A God of Motion

by Richard Cress

**L**ike many others, I've pondered this question: "Is God waiting on His church to wake up and move ahead in the world, or is the church waiting on God to move upon a skeptical, sinful world?"

Indications are that God moves in response to the threatening forces of society. Consider this promise: "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19b). God has certainly intervened and moved in behalf of His people before.

In another case, the Lord said He had seen the affliction and heard the cry of His people and had come down to deliver them (Exodus 3:7, 8), suggesting that His people's prayers preceded God's great acts in saving the children of Israel out of Egypt. This is the principle operating in 2 Chronicles 7:14: God will forgive the sins of His people and heal their land *if* they repent of their wicked ways and turn to Him.

These scriptures sound as though it is up to God's people to cry out to the Lord and clean

up their ways. So we will say, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14, KJV). Many Christians agree that the church sleeps today and needs to awaken and cry out to the Lord for deliverance.

Yet in the case of Israel, many years transpired before God's deliverance was complete. He seemed to choose an appropriate time to save them from bondage. They wandered in the wilds for forty years, and they caused it, right? — the unbelief of so many of their generation.

Still, the imposition of that period was decreed by God. He would not "move" them into the Promised Land until the iniquity of the Amorites in that land was complete (Genesis 15:16).

Does our Lord have a certain time when He moves, intervenes, and delivers? That is apparently the case. Abraham and Sarah received a child in God's timing, not theirs. The Lord said that Israel did not often understand God's timing. "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD" (Jeremiah 8:7, KJV).

God does have a schedule.

To reconcile the two puzzles of whether God is waiting on the church or the saints are waiting on God, my answer has become a resounding yes! God moves, puts a burden in the hearts of His people; then they move in repentance, crying out for deliverance. And again God moves in their behalf.

Presently, I am hearing many people quote the great promises of 2 Chronicles 7:14, where God has stated:

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Is it coincidental that so many of our brethren love this verse? Is it the conditions of our society that make us want to turn to God? Or could it be that it is also God's timing as He moves upon the hearts of His people?

Circumstance and culture press in upon God's people; they begin to awaken. As they pray, God heals and delivers. It was God in the first place, placing the burden upon us that we might pray and receive His blessing.

God moves in our behalf to deliver us as we pray for Him to move. **BA**

**Richard Cress** of Muldrow, OK, serves as pastor in Sabbath-observing churches of God in Muskogee, OK, and Ft. Smith, AR.





# Celebrating a Year of Jubilee

by Penny Musco

When the big 5-0 loomed for my friend Cindy, she refused to throw a pity party. Instead she sent invitations to fifty friends who had a part in her walk with Christ. She invited them to celebrate her “Jubilee Year,” based on Leviticus 25:11, which reads, “The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you.”

I was intrigued. What did the Year of Jubilee mentioned in a hard-to-read Old Testament book have to do with a birthday?

Plenty, I found out.

In Leviticus 25 God instructs that the blowing of a ram’s horn on the Day of Atonement would usher in the Year of Jubilee — just as on the Sabbath, God’s people were commanded to rest from their normal activities, such as sowing and planting crops. This rest reminded them that they, as well as everything they owned, belonged to God “because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants” (v. 23). As long as His people obeyed His commands, God would provide all their needs. “I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years” (v. 21). Thus God provided a harvest that would last through the Year of Jubilee and the subsequent planting years.

Shortly before Cindy’s forty-ninth birthday, a friend introduced her to the idea of celebrating a personal jubilee. She decided she would study the themes of Leviticus 25 — release, redemption, and restoration — leading up to her fiftieth birthday.

**Release.** During the Year of Jubilee, the Israelites were to proclaim liberty throughout the land. Israelites who had indentured themselves to others were to be set free. Those who perhaps had never known freedom threw off their shackles.

Cindy identified and shook off the things that had kept her bound — spiritual lies and sinful habits. She also reclaimed her freedom in the Lord. A jubilee birthday reminded her that she is not captive to sin but freed by God’s power (John 8:36; Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1).

**Redemption.** As Cindy reflected on her deliverance from sin and spiritual bondage, she learned that some form of the word *redeem* is used more than twenty times in Leviticus 25. An Israelite who had sold himself to foreigners living in the land could always be bought back (or redeemed) by himself or by a relative during a non-jubilee year. But during the Year of Jubilee, his

freedom was automatic and cost him nothing.

**Restoration.** In the Year of Jubilee, all land sold during the previous forty-nine years reverted to the original owner. This foreshadowed the restoration God would bring to all that has been perverted by humanity’s sin.

Cindy rejoiced that she had been brought back to her rightful Owner through salvation and that her life had been restored by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

While Cindy carried out most of her jubilee observations in private, her birthday party was the culmination of all she had learned. The event honored not only Cindy but also the Lord. We didn’t blow a ram’s horn, but we sure made a lot of noise.

Many who were approaching their fiftieth birthdays changed their attitudes about this momentous year. I can’t wait to see what God will do over the *next* forty-nine years in Cindy’s life. **BA**

**Penny Musco** writes from Montclair, NJ. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



# No Greater Love

**A**s Brandon Rice drove home one night after seeing a romantic drama in a local theater, his creative juices bubbled. Why can't we have romantic Christian drama? he thought. In minutes the core of a story formed in his mind: Boy meets girl. Boy marries girl. Boy and girl clash. Girl leaves boy and their infant son and reappears years later – changed! She's a Christian with new values. What will this boy and girl do now?

Two years after that night, Brandon and his father, Russell Rice (a 1980 graduate of Spring Vale Academy), are set to release the DVD *No Greater Love*, based on Brandon's idea. Through their company, Proverbs Cinema, the film will be shown in local churches around the country on January 17, 2010.

I recently asked Brandon about *No Greater Love* and its potential impact. — Sherri Langton, Associate Editor

## **Why have you opted for church distribution instead of a theater release?**

Through the church, we believe more eyeballs will see the film than through a limited theatrical run. Also, in a church setting we can go deeper into the topics that the film touches on. Our hope is that this film can be used to transform lives.

## **Do you see *No Greater Love* as a tool in revitalizing the church?**

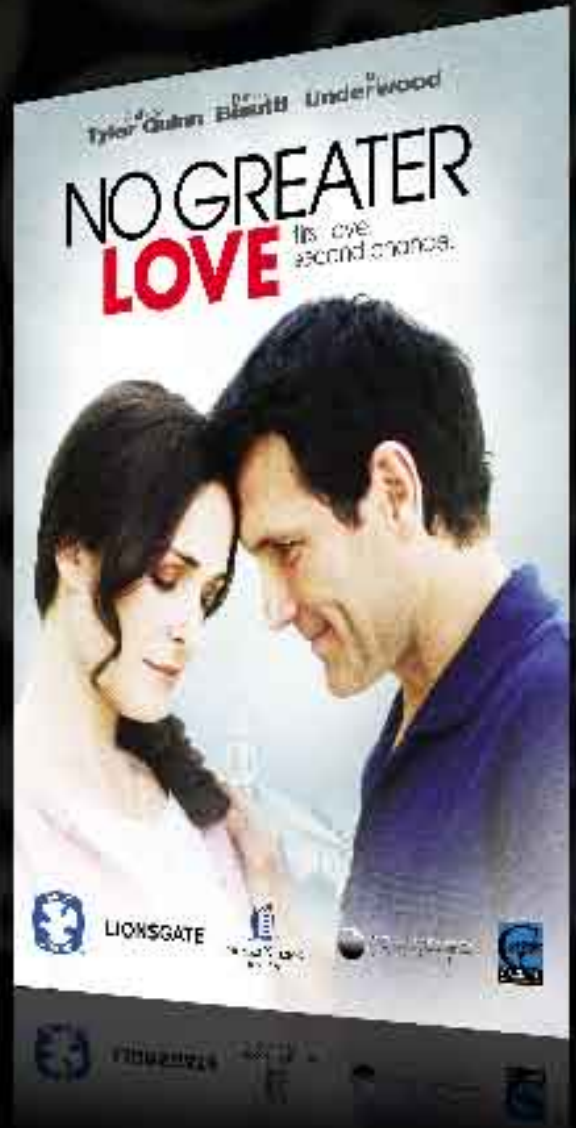
God seems to be positioning the film as a catalyst to bring the church face to face with biblical truths, such as His sovereignty, the marriage covenant, and forgiveness. Major ministries [American Family Association, Focus on the Family's *Plugged In*, *Movieguide*, and others] have endorsed it for strengthening Christian marriages. Unfortunately the divorce rate in the church is not far from the national average.

## **What about using the film as an evangelistic tool?**

Many churches all over the world will use the film to start marriage classes and bring non-believers to salvation. The lessons it portrays are timeless.

## **Why should believers see this film?**

The film calls Christians to understand the permanence and God-ordained view of marriage. Simply put, it will encourage them to keep running the good race, not only at home but also at church. To further help them, we wrote a devotional book — *No Greater Love 90 Day Couples Devotional*, due out in March. It deals with such issues as



the sufficiency of Scripture, dying to self, serving each other, understanding each other's roles within marriage, and sanctification (becoming more like Christ). After showing the film in their churches, pastors can use the study to do a series from the pulpit.

**For more information about *No Greater Love*, visit [www.nogreaterlovethemovie.com](http://www.nogreaterlovethemovie.com) or [www.proverbscinema.com](http://www.proverbscinema.com); phone 800-645-3863 or e-mail [contact@proverbscinema.com](mailto:contact@proverbscinema.com).**

# What the Church Needs Now

*continued from page 15*

- Train and equip pastors. Retain our youth and young adults, helping them find their place in ministry.
- A strong call to right living and holiness that is relevant to today's culture; a Christo-centric approach to salvation, with strong doctrinal teaching.
- Keeping our young people and our doctrinal integrity.
- Evangelism: personal, practical, and proven evangelistic approaches, with emphasis on reaching family first and former Church members.
- Spiritual growth issues; discipleship and evangelism — every family involved.
- The Church needs to be more aggressive in its soul-winning — a paradigm change to reflect the passion of apostle Paul who said, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."
- Find a way to reach our world in a more consistent and practical way with the gospel of Christ!
- The greatest need is for the Church to gain its intended Christ-centered nature instead of the secular societal semblance it has acquired over time. Just as the Israelites never fully grasped all God planned to give them, neither has the Church grasped all that was intended for us.

BA

## September substance

Received the BA yesterday — a great read! The Forum articles on science and the Bible were interesting, with several points of view [p. 8]. "Amen" to "Why We Must Laugh" [p. 11]. Michael Mancha's article about Twitter was amazing and on target [p. 16]. The last paragraph said it all. If we could just look to God as the source of love, acceptance, and forgiveness, our self-worth would be the miracle of miracles. Jesus joining Facebook was also excellent [p. 17]. Robert Coulter's article on Daniel was outstanding [p. 19]. Wonder what he thinks about the "scroll of Daniel" and the "little book" of Revelation?

*R. M.*

*Liberty Center, OH*

Quick note to say how much I enjoyed the BA — the pics, your Sabbath response [p. 7]. Keep up the good work.

*J. O.*

*Jasper, AR*



## Gems in October-November

I loved Ray Straub's article ["In Search of Absolute Truth," p. 9], clearly expressing the relation between logic and faith. A trend in Christianity suggests that they are diametrically opposed and that

# Mail Bag

studies of logic — specifically, science and philosophy — are tools of the Adversary to destroy faith. Some may feel that blind faith is sufficient, even required, to be a Christian and fully trust God. In an earlier age, the church sought to suppress some scientific studies that the papacy viewed as a threat. Faith easily destroyed by logical thought is worth little; robust faith will only be enhanced by the introduction of logic.

God planted both faith and logic in the mind of every human being. As with everything else He created, there is proper and improper use of logic. Used appropriately, it is a faith enhancer! Christians need to lean on God (faith), but they also must use the mental faculties God gave them (logic) to discern the state of this world.

*P. R.*

*Arvada, CO*

The items on forgiveness [pp. 4, 7] really spoke to me. Changing negative comments to positive, looking at things with thanksgiving, and praising the Lord for His goodness — these are very good reminders! Sometimes I have found it next to impossible to forgive, but when I ask for help from the almighty Father who loves us dearly, then it is possible to forgive, love, and pray for that person. Forgiveness is a huge part of our lives!

*A. W.*

*Salem, OR*

Regarding the moose on CoG7's Colorado property [p. 3], I already knew what *vamoose* means. My mother and brother had instructed me to do it many times. *Vamoose* means "skedaddle."

*H. M.*

*Lewes, DE*



Future's glass is dark and dim,  
shadowing my each attempt.  
In wondering what lies ahead,  
the glass is lifeless,  
cold contempt.

The mirror  
of the past I've trod  
is bright and clear, a perfect map,  
of every sin, mistake and fall  
to every worldly trap.

Blind me to the road that lies behind me.  
Lead me down the path that lies ahead.  
So when I reach the end of all my journeys,  
Your Word will be the only map I've read.

Perry Perkins



## Did you know . . .

you can access SWORD a number of places online?

- **Web site:** <http://sword.cog7.org>
- **Facebook group:**  
Church of God (Seventh Day) Young Adults - S.W.O.R.D.
- **MySpace:**  
**West Coast District**  
(Northern Portion): [www.myspace.com/swordnw](http://www.myspace.com/swordnw)  
**West Coast District**  
(Southern California): [www.myspace.com/swordsc](http://www.myspace.com/swordsc)  
**Southwest District**  
[www.myspace.com/swsword](http://www.myspace.com/swsword)



## Connecting Through SWORD

**Christy Lang, Director**

Relationships. We're all in relationships of some kind today. Phones, text messaging, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter — all these expand our opportunities for relating with others.

They do the same for SWORD. Through these social networks, SWORD communicates to young adults and helps them communicate with each other. There are several district SWORD MySpace sites and a national SWORD Facebook site. SWORD also has a Web site and sends e-mails about upcoming events to those signed up for its e-newsletter.

Retreats, rallies, and convention programs are great ways to meet other young adults and form new relationships. If you weren't able to attend any in '09, more such events are coming in 2010! To receive e-mails about them, sign up for the SWORD e-newsletter. Or become a member of the SWORD Facebook site.

SWORD's ultimate goal is to help young adults grow in the most important relationship of their lives: the one with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Are you taking advantage of the opportunities to form deeper relationships with Christ and with others? What else can SWORD do to assist you? Submit your ideas to [sword@cog7.org](mailto:sword@cog7.org).



## SHINE to Visit Jamaica in 2010

The CoG7 Medical and Dental Mission team is gearing up for its April mission in Jamaica. Promotion and fundraising are underway to raise support.

The SHINE team has completed missions in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Now it will venture into a new zone under Missions Abroad. Some wondered why the mission site is being changed. "Why can't we continue in Central America? Most of the team speaks Spanish, and we have proven so effective there."

One response to this is "Remember that we have a new name — SHINE: Serving Him in Nations Everywhere, not just in Latin America."

So with prayer and faith, Jamaica is the next site for the March 30-April 7, 2010, mission.

There is much to be done by then, plans to unfold, monetary support to be raised. Team members from several states and Mexico are completing projects, like a Christian concert and golf tournament.

SHINE is looking for new dentists and doctors to add to the team. Application forms are at <http://cog7shine.org>. Interested individuals should check there periodically for new information.

Ernesto Frausto, team director, lists several hopes for the Jamaica mission: to continue recent improvements the team has made and to reach more people. He mentioned the goal of a permanent organization that could respond to catastrophes all over the world.

## Seeing the Lord Work

by Bev Brenneise

When we let God guide our lives, things happen. The CoG7 SHINE Medical and Dental Mission team definitely knows this.

The team boarded the bus for La Cali and a CoG7 church in the hills outside Tegucigalpa, Honduras. It was April 2009, and blistering hot. We needed to drink water to stay hydrated before beginning the next days' clinics, so we stopped at a market to buy bottled water. But it had sold out.

The bus stopped near a second store, and the driver ran inside while we waited. A pick-up truck pulled to the curb, and a man jumped out. His dirt-streaked arms showed he had been working. He looked up at an open bus window and caught the eye of Daniel Flores, a mission team pastor from Texas.

"Where are you going?" the man asked Daniel in Spanish.

"La Cali," Daniel replied.

"Can I get a ride?"

As he boarded the bus, the man asked why we were going to La Cali. "We're going to a church service," Rudy Valencia answered. "Would you like to join us?"

"What church are you?" he asked.

When we told him, the man looked surprised. "I think that's the church my wife goes to."

Once we got off the bus in La Cali, the man disappeared. Yet ten minutes after the church service began, our friend walked down the aisle, his hands and arms scrubbed clean.



*The church in La Cali, Honduras.*



Why did the first store not have water? What if we had decided against giving the man a ride or not invited him to the church service? Each step of that journey, the Lord guided us.

On our mission trip to Nicaragua in 2008, who would have thought that some of our team members would see their luggage loaded onto the wrong plane? The bags went to Florida. Team members from Sacramento were missing personal clothing and toiletries, plus essential medications and equipment for the clinics in two days.

The luggage did come in the next day but couldn't be claimed, we were told, because the customs office was closed for the weekend. Our group leaders went to the airport anyway, determined to retrieve the suitcases.

As the group strode toward the airport offices, they realized that their demeanor was stiff, angry, and impatient. "We need to pray," they agreed.

What an answer to prayer! The group spoke respectfully to officials, and the luggage was released to them. But one of the Nicaraguan officials later told them that if the group had been demanding when asking for their luggage, no help would have been given.

Why had the luggage been sent to Florida rather than Nicaragua? Was the group being tested? Did we need to learn not only the lesson of sharing but also the lesson of humility?

*Lord, You guide us so well. Thank You. And may You continue guiding us on the mission trip to Jamaica.*



*Debi Crayton and Terri Adame among the suitcases.*



### **Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future**

Pastor Carl Palmer (left) has served in the Spokane, Washington, congregation since 1985. In 2006 Brian Larson (right) joined the church's staff as associate pastor. In a milestone Sabbath service October 24, 2009, Pastor Palmer reviewed the congregation's history and announced that Pastor Larson would replace him as senior pastor while he (Palmer) would assume an associate's role. The congregation is grateful for the wisdom and leadership this team has provided and will provide!

### **Bible Quiz Winner**

After entering and winning the regional contest in San Antonio, Texas, Courtney Belle Minica, 10, went to the first ever National Bible Bee in Washington D.C., November 5-6, 2009.

To prepare, Courtney had four months to memorize 1,200 verses in passages of various lengths, examine six books of the Bible in depth, and learn the answers to 200 Bible fact questions. She set a very rigorous study schedule for herself and never wavered from it. When the national contest was complete, Courtney had won third place in her age group and a \$5,000 prize. Congratulations!

Courtney is the second of seven children of Nelson and Brenda Minica. The family attends Triple Trees CoG7 near



San Antonio, and they homeschool their children. Anyone wishing to know more about National Bible Bee may visit its Web site ([www.biblebee.org](http://www.biblebee.org)) or e-mail Brenda at [brenda.minica@cog7.org](mailto:brenda.minica@cog7.org).

*Editor's note: Outstanding achievements by any CoG7 youth or adult will be considered for publication in BA news.*

### Pastor's Death

Baltazar Wooton, 71, recent past president of the Church in The Philippines, passed away on November 10, 2009. He worked closely with Missions Abroad and served tirelessly in his homeland, although his life had been threatened and a price put on his head.



### Lessons for the Heart

Looking for Bible lessons that will search your heart and strengthen your link with the Lord? We have them in *The Beatitudes*, our first quarter issue of Bible Studies for Adults.

Teacher's guides are available for these studies. Adult student books are \$3.25; the teacher's guide is \$5. Order from Bible Advocate Press, P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; 303-452-7973; or [bap.orders@cog7.org](mailto:bap.orders@cog7.org).

### HANS Mission

The Filadelfia and the Cicero churches in Chicago are working to start a mission (HANS – Divine Gift of God), whose goal is to reach children in extremely impoverished communities in Haiti, Guatemala, and Mexico. We would like to be Jesus to children in the target areas through the gift of a pair of shoes. In those areas, a functioning pair of shoes can be a great asset to prevent sickness and improve a child's overall quality of life. Visit [www.cog7.org/BA](http://www.cog7.org/BA) for more information. [www.cog7.org](http://www.cog7.org)

Contacts: Ronald Rousseau ([ronaldrousseau@me.com](mailto:ronaldrousseau@me.com)) and Evelyn Valle ([evalle@cog7hans.org](mailto:evalle@cog7hans.org))  
Web site: [www.cog7HANS.org](http://www.cog7HANS.org).



### NFYC

**Local youth groups:** Please register your youth with the National Youth Ministry for 2010. Do it now! All registered youth receive a personalized card for savings at youth camps, SVA, and other things. Provide e-mail addresses for *Youth Flash* e-news and a cell # for our text list. Youth workers, please give your youth these advantages and more by signing them up at <http://nfyc.cog7.org/register> – today!

**Gimme Five program groups:** To honor your participation, please send us a summary of your 2009 events by February 15, to be eligible for our awards program. E-mail it to [nfyc@cog7.org](mailto:nfyc@cog7.org) or contact Kurt Lang ([kurt.lang@cog7.org](mailto:kurt.lang@cog7.org)) for other options. Gimme Five 2010 packets will be mailed to youth workers soon. Look for your copy and get ready for an awesome year!

### CoG7 Events: January — June

Sabbath, March 6 - Pacific Northwest Super Sabbath, Jefferson, OR; Pastor Whaid Rose preaching.

Sunday evening, March 28 - annual Lord's Supper service in every congregation. (This is a correction of the date previously published.)

### Golden Anniversary

Congratulations to Juan and Elizabeth Salazar of San Antonio, Texas (Ceralvo St. Church), who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on October 17, 2009. CoG7 couples that reach their golden anniversary in 2010 will be announced in a future BA. Please contact the editor.

### NAMC Meets Next Fall

The biennial meeting of the North American Ministerial Council has been set for October 18-24, 2010, at Glen Eyrie retreat center in the foothills near Colorado Springs. All CoG7 ministers and lay pastors in the U.S. and Canada should plan to attend.



Glen Eyrie



## Grace Sanchez, Director

When I was asked to consider the directorship of this ministry, I was stunned. Why me?

I turned to the words of Paul: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do," followed by seven words defining purpose and reason for me: "do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). This mandate is a continual check on one's ego and motivations.

In the selection process, three questions were asked. Here are portions of my replies that may give insight into the direction I will encourage.

1. Tell us about your service in the Church and your involvement with NAWM.

I have been assigned many positions that keep a church functioning, and many things I just do to take up slack. The service that brought me most satisfaction and blessing was that of Sabbath school teacher.

2. What are the goals and vision you would pursue in this position?

My primary goal is to build a vibrant and productive women's ministry based and focused on biblical truth. I will encourage all planning and programming to be deliberate in proclaiming the Word. We want to create a unique and unified women's mission throughout the Church.

NAWM will be intentional in creating opportunities for women to serve. Women willing to serve on the NAWM board will be encouraged and considered for possible appointment through an inclusive and transparent process.

3. Why would you accept the assignment as NAWM director?

Most of my adult life, I've been told that I have an ability to formulate interesting and innovative ideas. I have come to acknowledge this as my unique gift; it has served me well in my personal and church life, as well as in my secular work.

As I share my vision and goals with you for this most important work, I am excited in the challenge of helping the sisterhood be all that God meant us to be.

Most sincerely,  
Grace L. Sanchez



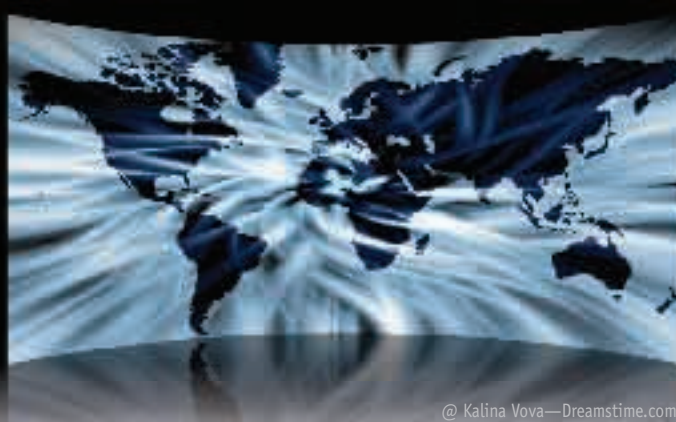
## Heads Up! National Women's Retreat

A national women's retreat is being planned for April 16-18, 2010, in the enchanting city of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The theme: "Savor the Savior."

More information will follow as to price and programming. See you there!



# International Tour



@ Kalina Vova—Dreamstime.com



*IMC officers, left to right: Jacabo Gonzalez and Carlos Ceron (Mexico); William Hicks and Calvin Burrell (U.S.); Henry Harley (Jamaica); Ramon Ruiz (Mexico)*

## U.S., Canada

Canada and the United States, with Greenland, compose the first of seven zones into which the International Ministerial Congress (IMC) is divided for administrative purposes. Currently about ten CoG7 congregations are in Canada, about 200 in the U.S., and none in Greenland (if you live there, let's plant a church!).

Zone 1 residents are often considered among the world's most blest in material prosperity. The "blessing" of materialism may be our downfall, however, as we witness the decline of biblical teaching and moral standards in much of this culture. The Judeo-Christian ethic our society was built on is crumbling in North America. Church growth here is slow, difficult business.

Here is the birthplace of

Church of God (Seventh Day) and its IMC. In 30 years of existence, growth in the global congress has outpaced that of its American motherland. IMC now embraces approximately 300,000 believers in more than 40 countries around the

world. Of that number, nearly three-fourths reside in Brazil, Nigeria, or Mexico.

Speaking of Mexico, six IMC leaders recently met in the city of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, home to 40 CoG7 churches. This three-day meeting was energized by progress reports, exercised by problems and planning, and punctuated by prayers. IMC President Ramon Ruiz and Executive Director Bill Hicks have this task

on their hands: serving the international church to the extent that resources permit.

With its recent growth, IMC is a good example of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Congress Vice President Henry Harley of Jamaica agrees, saying that when we find a good wave, we should ride for all it's worth. Some One beyond us is also with us in this work.

We thank God for the fresh waves of spiritual energy that keep the momentum of our international church moving ahead. Though gospel labor in Zone 1 is daunting because of anti-Christian advances here, let us never be discouraged. The Great Commission remains our task as much as anyone's, and we are not alone in it. What we can contribute to the work here may be just what is needed to move the cause forward at home and abroad — by the grace of God.

— Calvin Burrell  
IMC Vice President

**Cristo Viene (C.V.).** This grassroots CoG7 effort prepares the nations for Christ's return. Its goal is to enlist 5,000 donors (at \$20 per month) to support 500 missionaries, far and wide. Besides Zone 1, C.V. enjoys support from Mexico, Colombia, and elsewhere.

**2012 Congress.** Since 1978, IMC has met every four years, in Mexico or the U.S. In 2012 we will meet for the first time outside North America — in the U.K. Affiliated churches should begin saving to send delegates (one per nation) to England. Exact dates and location to be announced.



### Discipleship Illustrated

“We must hang together, or we’ll hang separately.”

“... ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

“That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

“Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

These statements identify (and in some cases, define) those who spoke them. But no one has ever uttered more impacting words than Jesus Christ, and no statement of Jesus’ more defines His life and what it means to be His disciple than the Sermon on the Mount. It may be the most familiar of Jesus’ teachings, though arguably the least understood and obeyed.

The sermon has been called Christ’s Manifesto – His platform speech outlining the character of those under His kingdom rule. The events that led up to it – His rabbinic training, baptism, wrestling match with Satan, and selection of a cabinet (twelve disciples) – give it the feel of an inaugural address. We speak of a person’s seat in Congress and of a professor’s chair at college, so Matthew’s note that Jesus “sat down” for this sermon is quite significant. This is no small talk. Here Jesus reinterprets the law, redefines spirituality, and calls His followers to a radically different lifestyle in which we love our enemies, turn the other cheek, and offer our coat to the one who steals our cloak.

Before we get too far into the body of the sermon, let’s linger at the introduction: the Beatitudes. There are eight of them, each beginning with the word *blessed*, commonly rendered “happy.” Yes, these two words are related, but Jesus has more in mind than merely feeling good. The Beatitudes were crafted for their shock effect. The kingdom belongs to the poor; the truly joyous are those who mourn; the meek, not the rich and affluent, are the true

owners of the earth’s real estate.

This isn’t a treatise on social ethics, nor the random sayings of a preacher who’s run out of steam. The Beatitudes are the description of a true disciple. If you’d heard of Christian disciples but never met one, here’s the profile. These qualities aren’t optional; every believer will possess each of them in some measure.

The Beatitudes’ sequence is important; each one lays the foundation for the next. Like climbing a mountain with God at the top, our journey toward Him begins with poverty of spirit, declaring spiritual bankruptcy – recognizing that we bring nothing to the table except our sin. Humbled, we weep tears of repentance (mourning). Then we quit calling the shots in our own lives and for others (meekness). Contrary to popular opinion, meekness isn’t weakness but a total surrender to God, illustrated by the two people Scripture calls meek: Moses and Jesus. Humbled, repentant, and surrendered, we hunger and thirst for God himself and His righteousness.

We’re now at the mountain peak where disciples like to camp, but we can’t stay here. We must go back to the valley where life is lived and our discipleship is tested. So the first four beatitudes move us toward God; the last four point us to others. The descent begins with mercy and compassion for those in need. Purity of motive, protecting and preserving our relationships (peacemaking), and rejoicing when persecuted: These are where the rubber meets the road.

General Conference congregations will study the Beatitudes during the winter 2010 Sabbath school quarter. Join the conversation. Matthew (7:28, 29) notes that those who first heard the sermon were amazed. May those who hear it now be radically transformed, becoming a nearer copy of the One whose disciples we are.

— Whaid Guscott Rose  
General Conference President

# SWORD

[Sharing the Word and Offering a Real Difference]



CoG7 young adults are students, nurses, teachers, spouses, parents, and employers. They live in the real world, and the real world hits hard. They draw a spiritual SWORD against the Enemy of our souls. Join them, won't you, in this battle for a lifetime. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31b).

*For Web addresses and more, see page 25 of this issue.*