

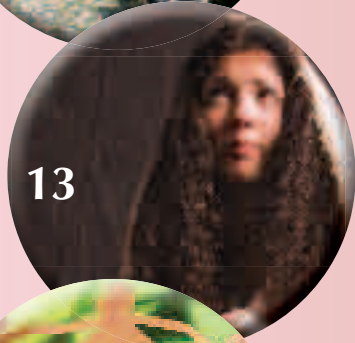


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Coming in the July-August BA: church revitalization; civil authority; church-state matters; more grace

In the May and June issues of *Now What?*: dealing with a mother's depression; heartbreak of a father's drug addiction (<http://nowwhat.cog7.org>)

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## Prayer-Ode for Elders

This BA has a lot to say about, and from,  
 some of our favorite people: mothers.  
 Mine will be 99 this spring (Dad died at  
 86), but loss of mental acuity keeps her from  
 knowing even her family. Let's honor our par-  
 ents while they can still enjoy it.



Did you notice that gorgeous group of grown-ups on our back  
 cover? They make me want to say more about aging and change, as a  
 prayer:

*Lord of the bodies in which we exist, our temples are fading. When  
 we were young, we cheered the changes that brought speed and  
 strength, enthusiasm and vitality. Now we are content – no, deter-  
 mined – to keep moving despite the pain, lest men come and bury us  
 where only silence and stillness remain. Move us, O Christ, with healthy  
 change.*

*Lord of the earth, our created home, our world is changing. Warm-  
 ing or cooling, the struggle saddens us who've thrilled at so much of its  
 beauty; consumed too much of its bounty; and helped to pollute its air,  
 land, and water. Reform us, O Spirit, with healing change.*

*Lord of the homes that shelter our families, our children are chang-  
 ing. For the next generation's godly growth, we humbly thank You. For  
 its faults and the daunting tasks we're leaving to them, we ask grace to  
 speak wisely and patience to hope boldly. Parent us all, O Father, with  
 wholesome change.*

*Lord of national homelands, our country is changing. Only You know  
 if it's for better or worse, but the uproar can be deafening to our souls.  
 This world's only certainties, we were told, are death and taxes. Now  
 political hostility seems another given, unpleasant as the former two.  
 Help our leaders, O God, with happy change.*

*Lord of the people for whom You died, our church is changing.  
 Some of us wish church could be more like we remember it, but the  
 changes bring mostly differences. If we can grow to be filled with grace  
 and truth like You . . . yes, we can! Keep us flexibly faithful, Jesus; visit us  
 with Your holy change.*

*Lord of our futures, thank You for the honor of nearing or exceeding  
 the allotted years of threescore and ten. With the promise of Your con-  
 tinuing presence, we are content.*

*"Change and decay in all around I see: O Thou who changest not,  
 abide with me!"*

– Calvin Burrell

A stone bridge with wooden railings crosses a stream in a lush green landscape. The bridge is made of stone and has a wooden deck in the middle. The railings are made of wood and have a decorative pattern. The stream is small and flows through the center of the bridge. The surrounding area is filled with green grass and trees.

# Ditches Along Grace Way

On the only road to God's  
Forever, beware of dead-  
end detours.

by Calvin Burrell

**H**ow do you picture the practice of God's grace? As travel along a wide, busy boulevard lined with bright lights and action?

If you see it instead as a fine and slender path between two dangerous ditches, you're closer to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. Let's call it Grace Way.

As seen in the last BA (March-April, p. 12), God's grace — His highly favorable provision for sinners who abide in Christ by faith — is amazing! It's another word for God's favors of forgiveness and rescue from fiery judgment to come.

Yet the apostles who embraced Grace Way as the only sure entrance to God's eternal kingdom also issued warnings about its abuse and misuse. Paul, for example, said that God's grace in the gospel can be received in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1). Grace can be perverted in such a way that those who claim to stand in it may fall from it instead (Galatians 1:6, 7; 5:4).

These pitfalls may be better avoided if we visualize them as deadly ditches — legalism and license — on either side of Jesus' straight and narrow way of grace.

## Legalism

On one side of Grace Way lurks the ditch of legalism, waiting to catch the Christian who gets tangled in its thicket of rules and regulations. Legalism is the misuse of God's laws and moral standards by those who attempt to use them for purposes He never intended. The epistle of Romans (7:7, 12) teaches that God's laws are holy, just, and good, but that they were never intended as a means to obtain God's love, acceptance, forgiveness, and eternal life.

The Bible's sternest warnings against the legalism ditch are in Paul's letter to the Galatians. To turn from the grace of Christ to works of the law for right standing before God is to pervert the gospel and bring a curse (1:6-8).

To aim for perfect righteousness through law-keeping or impose Mosaic standards on others is to set God's grace aside (2:16-21; 3:1-3, 10-13). To believe that our personal obedience to the law justifies us before God is to fall from grace (5:1-4).

We pervert the grace of God and flirt with the ditch of legalism when we turn from the true gospel of Christ to believe and teach that salvation is gained or maintained by obedience to the law or by good works. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (5:1).

This "yoke of bondage" to the law is the ditch of legalism.

## License

On the other side of Grace Way lurks the ditch of license,

displaying its many illicit charms to passersby. License suggests that a Christian saved by grace owes nothing to moral standard and is now free to choose his own conduct unrestrained by God's law. Such is false liberty or *libertinism*, sometimes called *antinomianism*.

Those who stray from the way of grace into this ditch often find themselves practicing, even excusing, the same sins for which they once received pardon. Their latter state in license ditch is worse than their first as unredeemed sinners, according to 2 Peter 2:19-22. We pervert the grace of God when we use it as an excuse to live selfishly and disobediently before the Lord.

Strong warnings against this perversion are in Romans 6, where sin-slaves are destined for death though claiming to be under grace, and in Jude 4, where

## Declarations of Freedom

- From bondage to the law as a method to salvation (Romans 3:20, 21), we are free . . .
- From bondage to the letter of the law for any reason (2 Corinthians 3:6), we are free . . .
- From fear of judgment and doubt that we measure up (1 John 4:18), we are free . . .
- From the need to have every doctrine right and nothing wrong (1 Corinthians 8:1), we are free . . .
- From the requirement of flawless obedience before God receives us (1 John 1:8-10), we are free . . .
- From the necessity of being good enough — and better than others — to be saved (Luke 18:9-14), we are free . . .
- From the yoke of rules that neither we nor our fathers could bear (Acts 15:10), we are free . . .

. . . through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 11).

— CAB

those who turn God's grace into lewdness, lasciviousness, and immorality are called out for condemnation. The one who has most to fear from such warnings isn't the struggler who often confesses and clings to Jesus Christ, but the casual Christian who proudly ignores and excuses his sins.

Granted, we are saved by God's grace in Christ and not by our works of righteousness or obedience to the law. May we conclude, then, that obedience and good works serve no purpose for God's people? By no means! To argue in that fashion does not express the true grace of God but cheap, imitation grace instead.

Granted, we'll share God's final glory with a great and diverse multitude of believers, by His grace, and we should never claim to be His based on unique doctrines. May we con-

clude, then, that one church is as nearly correct as another, one teaching as true as another, one lifestyle as legitimate as another, or one ecclesiastical practice as proper as any other? Never! To exchange clear Bible teaching for the lowest common denominator of faith and practice, and claim God's grace for our authority: This is not grace but *disgrace* to the Word and Spirit of God in Christ!

### Law and grace

Legalism and license are equal and opposite errors, both related to God's law. Knowing the link between God's grace and His law helps avoid both these ditches.

Grace, and the truth about it, came through our Lord Jesus, just as the law came through Moses (John 1:14b, 17). God's law is good, if we use it lawfully (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Biblically, grace and law work in perfect harmony, not as opposing combatants. Each depends on the other for its full and proper function.

The major role of law is to define sin and identify it in our lives (Romans 3:20b; 7:7). It was never intended to forgive us our sins or to empower us for required obedience.

The major role of grace is to provide for us sinners what we could never provide for ourselves: acceptance, forgiveness, and eternal salvation. God alone gives these through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is grace.

Without the law of God, we'd have no knowledge of sin and no need for a Savior or His grace.

Without the grace of God, we'd be hopelessly condemned by our transgressions of the law. Our only hope for forgiveness of sins and a new life is in God's grace through Christ, not in the law.

*No law? No sin! No sin? No need for grace! No grace? No salvation!*

From its first mention (Genesis 6:8) until its last (Revelation 22:21), the Bible gives unified testimony to one thing necessary to stand before God: His grace.

Grace is the essence of the Christian gospel: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. It generates faith in us, grants us forgiveness, teaches us godliness in harmony with His law, and guarantees us a favorable verdict at judgment to come.

Treasure grace. And take care not to abuse or misuse it! **BA**

## Day of Grace

The weekly Sabbath is God's Creation memorial and gift to man (Genesis 2:1-3; Mark 2:27). It reposes in the heart of His moral law (Exodus 20:8-11).

In the new covenant of grace, Sabbath takes on even greater significance. Still remembered by rest from routine labor, it mirrors the salvation wherein we lay down our works and rest-trust in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

Sabbath is a symbol of grace, not its source. Both Sabbath and the gospel are celebrated, not by working but by resting (trusting) in the gracious One who said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Celebrate Sabbath and grace!

— CAB

**Q** What does the Bible teach about God's sovereignty (predestination) and human freewill? Can you shed any light on the TULIP theory?

**A** The Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and the freewill of persons, even if harmonizing the two is beyond our grasp.

**Sovereignty** is God's unlimited authority and power over His creation. As supreme ruler of the universe, God controls all its entities and events, even the Devil and his angels (1 Chron. 29:11, 12; Ps. 135:6; Dan. 4:34, 35; Rom. 11:33-36; Rev. 19:6).

God's sovereign control does not require that He predetermine every entity and event. Nor do the Bible's wonderful predestination texts (Rom. 8:28, 29; Eph. 1:3-6, 11) insist that God has pre-decreed all things that come to pass.

**Freewill** is the limited authority and power of people to choose their personal path in life. God intends that our dominion over the created order be freely exercised in cooperation with other humans and in submission to His revealed will (Gen. 1:28; 2:16, 17; Ex. 32:26; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21; John 6:67; Rev. 22:17).

Human freewill is restricted by the complex factors of heredity, environment, and previous choices so that we are never fully free, as God is, to do what we want or ought. Still, our moral responsibility is genuine, not a facade.

The myriad of daily happenings in the universe and in human lives may be attributable to both human choice and divine providence. Man has freedom to plan, choose, and act; but ultimately, God's sovereign will is done!

The fifteenth century Protestant theologian John Calvin stressed the divine side of this mysterious equation. The acrostic TULIP was later applied to his teachings:

**T** - Total depravity: All men fell in Adam, leaving them dead in sins and incapable of responding positively to God.

**U** - Unconditional election: From eternity past, God chose certain men to be saved by His grace, without regard to any merit foreseen in them.

**L** - Limited atonement: God sent His Son to make full and effective payment only for the sins of the elect, those He had predestined for salvation.

**I** - Irresistible grace: Those God elected to salvation and for whom Christ died He effectively calls by regeneration from spiritual death, thus rendering them capable of expressing saving faith.

**P** - Perseverance of saints: Those God elected in Christ, called in regeneration, and justified by faith He continually quickens so they will never fall from His grace but only enter eternal glory.

This emphasis on God's sovereignty, predestination, and election of some to salvation (thus, others are predestined to damnation) is commonly called Calvinism. It is heard most often in churches of the Reformed persuasion, along with some Presbyterian and Baptist groups. Calvinists do not deny that man has a modicum of free will; they see it as some of the means by which God carries out His eternal decrees.

Those of us who resist one or more of the TULIP points above do not deny the control of God over human history. But we believe that, in matters of trusting Jesus and persevering in faith, God enables the free will of man and yields to it.

Like other disputes, several Bible texts may be listed in support of either side of this classic discussion. Each position champions truths that should help to shape and inform the other. As one wise man remarked when asked how he would resolve the debate between God's sovereignty and human freedom, "I never try to reconcile friends."

— Elder Calvin Burrell

*Have a question for the editor? Send it to [bibleadvocate@cog7.org](mailto:bibleadvocate@cog7.org) or P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.*



# Marion Moms

## BA Interview with Oregon mothers of youngsters.

Somebody's doing something right with young families in a rural church served by Pastor Dale and Ethel Lawson, just outside the village of Marion (population 297). In addition to their husbands, these young mothers give credit to their women's fellowship and small-group studies for what's happening in their homes, where every day is Mothers' Day. Let's meet the households:

The Cernavas: Joram (self-employed) and Jill (not employed; volunteers at school, hospital, etc.), married 16 years; Anna, 7; Clara, 4

The Gjesdals: Shane (ob/gyn

M.D.) and Julie (homemaker); Louise, 12; Kelsey, 10; Matthew, 8; Hannah, 6

The Hawkinses: Craig (physical therapist) and Debra (works part-time for family P.T. business); Makaela, 12; Danielle, 8; Josiah Jamal, 2

The Hises: Travis (works temporarily for a solar company after recent layoff from a 21-year job) and Cinda (at home full time); Wyatt, 14; Luke, 11; William, 18 months

The Sheffields: Travis (electrical estimator at Benton Electric) and Terri (full time at home); Sidney, 7; Skylar, 5; and Spencer, 6 months

The Stuckers: Loren (biologist for private firm) and Jennifer (full-time homemaker); Nicole, 4; Jeremiah, 1

The Stuckers: Matthew (State

of Oregon bridge engineer) and Johanna (CoG7 West Coast District treasurer), married ten years; Daniel, 6; Kyland, 3

### What are your home priorities, and how have they changed?

**Jill:** To live as a Christian example; meet our children's emotional needs; help them discover, develop, and use their talents for God's honor, not financial gain; and show them God's world through books, travel, interaction with others, etc.

---

*Photo (L to R): Julie and Shane Gjesdal, Jennifer and Loren Stucker, Jill and Joram Cernava, Johanna and Matthew Stucker, Debra and Craig Hawkins. Not pictured: Cinda and Travis Hise, Terri and Travis Sheffield.*

*Photo by Lucy Lawson*



**Julie:** A home of joy and peace — God’s peace. The ways I reach for these goals have changed as I learn more of His will and way. Realizing the areas I need to grow in usually points to similar needs in our children. All four have accepted Christ as Savior and been baptized, allowing me to focus on their growth as we journey together in faith.

**Terri:** My priorities have changed tremendously the last year. Not at peace with my role, my marriage, or my children’s behavior, I began praying for our marriage (mostly for Travis’ spiritual walk!) and for parenting wisdom and patience. It wasn’t until I began looking at what God expected of me that I began to see the layers of neglect in my own walk. I was not enjoying my gifts (husband, children) because I wasn’t obediently and joyfully carrying out my responsibilities (teaching, training, disciplining, loving, respecting). Now I look for teachable moments to train the kids’ hearts and minds toward God.

With higher expectations, I am more consistent and careful in the videos, toys, and books they are exposed to. We’ve changed extra-curricular activities from gymnastics (individual, self-absorbing, costly) to piano and Awana (glory to God, not self). And I’ve been on a slow journey to figure out what submission and respect to my husband is supposed to look like. My struggles have brought more victorious days than discouraging ones, more joy and contentment in serving my husband and children. With God working in my heart, I have come to live more sacrificially, peacefully, contentedly.

**Jennifer:** To be my husband’s helper, train our children in the Lord’s ways, and help create a peaceful and loving home to all who enter. With a corporate America career but a feeling of non-fulfillment (I wanted to reach many people for God), three years ago I came to a crossroad. We decided I would quit my job and stay home with our daughter. Right away, our family life improved. The Lord showed me that my family is my ministry focus, where I can make the greatest impact for His glory by helping raise up the next generation of godly families (Titus 2:3-5; Deuteronomy 6:5-9).

**Debra:** To help my husband accomplish his goals and fulfill his responsibilities. I want my children to see that I love their daddy and enjoy my role and that the Lord does great things through those who live by Bible standards. I’ve read several books in the past two years that challenged me to be a true woman of God. Trying to sort what’s cultural from what’s biblical, I now strive to be intentionally biblical in my attitudes and behaviors, not just normal and comfortable. The wonder-

ful rewards have come in a stronger and more joyous marriage and in seeing our children reach new spiritual levels.

**Cinda:** To have a home where my husband enjoys his role and our children learn God’s truth and want to serve Him. My priorities had slipped, until the Lord turned us in a different direction through a pregnancy that shouldn’t have lasted and gave us another blessing in little William. We were, and are, humbled.

**Johanna:** My number one priority is to love and serve my family. This has been reinforced through recent study (with other women) of the Bible and other resources. In a closer look at what Scripture teaches about wives’ and mothers’ roles, I’m finding that I need to grow in loving and serving my family *with joy*.

### Homeschooling, anyone?

**Jill:** Our oldest attends public school, and I know the teachers and students through volunteering there. Formal education is



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## Recommended Books

*Created to be His Help Meet*, by Debi Pearl

*Disciplines of a Godly Woman*, by Barbara Hughes

*Family Driven Faith*, by Voddie T. Baucham, Jr.

*Have a New Kid by Friday*, by Dr. Kevin Leman

*Passionate Housewives Desperate for God*, by Jennie Chancey and Stacy McDonald

*The Power of a Praying Wife*, by Stormie Omartian

*Priceless Investments*, by Drs. James and Cynthia Gorton

*Sacred Marriage*, by Gary Thomas

*What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*, by Dr. James Dobson

my responsibility, just as religious education.

**Julie:** Five years ago living overseas, we chose to homeschool, thinking it would be temporary. But God has so richly blessed the effort that we have continued teaching our children, not having them indoctrinated with the world's lack in marriage, creation, sanctity of life, etc.

**Terri:** We've made the choice to homeschool our second grader this spring. I'm so thank-

ful we didn't rush this decision but waited while God worked in both our hearts. Travis is now 100 percent on board, a big difference from where I would have felt like I needed to prove to him that this was the right choice.

**Jennifer:** Attending Christian school as a child, I learned to value that God and education go hand in hand, that the Bible and character development are incorporated in daily learning. We want to give our children the same privilege. We want to play an active role in our children's education, and appreciate the freedom of a homeschooling option.

**Debra:** Feeling it is imperative that we remain the primary influencers of our children and unwilling to yield that role to others,

we've homeschooled all along and plan to continue through high school.

**Cinda:** Pregnant with our first, we decided that we couldn't justify putting a small child in a hostile, public environment. I had no desire to teach at home, but after reading *Dare to Discipline* by Dr. Dobson (and prayer), I was encouraged to give it a try. Watching our boys learn and experiencing the closeness of the relationship, I know that this was the correct choice for all of us.

**Johanna:** To take advantage of every opportunity to shape our children's worldview and frame their education with Scripture, Matthew and I have made a commitment to homeschool.

### What's happening at your house with family devotions?

**Jill:** We read a children's Bible story at bedtime and discuss it, then work on memory verses. Both girls request a story and race to see who can say their verses first. The shortened version of Bible verses that come home from Sabbath school curriculum disappointed us, so we look them up in the Bible to make sure our girls learn the entire verses.

**Julie:** We do our best to have family devotions each evening after dinner while still at the table. On Friday evenings we have a special devotion with a fun, activity-based lesson. The children enjoy both kinds.

**Terri:** We started having evening devotions but haven't done a great job protecting the time. Low energy or other activities reduce our devotions to one to two times per week. We never seem to find the





groove of it being an enjoyable, relaxing family activity. I think we need to step back, pray, and plan a format that's more fun and decide how to handle behavior issues.

**Jennifer:** Typically we have family devotion time every evening, using variety such as Bible-reading with questions; memorizing verses; sharing what we learned from Sabbath class, Awana, or Bible Study Fellowship; singing, playing instruments, walking and talking about God's creation and the good things He has done, and sharing thanksgivings. We end our day with family prayer.

**Debra:** We have four to five family worships per week. Craig leads; the kids read from the Bible, then Craig reads and quizzes the kids on what they heard. This helps engage them in listening to the story, and they love the exchange. We sing, with the kids selecting the songs and often dancing. Then we pray, each one praying for the person beside him or her.

**Cinda:** They've been sporadic, I'm afraid, since we brought the baby home. We have read books by Brother Andrew, like *God's Smuggler* and *Secret Believers*. Usually they want to hear another chapter. After reading, we talk about the trials of Christians around the world. Then we finish

up with a prayer circle.

**Johanna:** Typically we engage in family worship four nights per week. Matthew reads from the Bible and a bedtime story, followed by singing, sharing a thanksgiving/request, and prayer time. The boys respond enthusiastically; Daniel runs and opens the books to the right pages, and Kylend is always ready with a song request!

**Moms and Dads must fight for their families against a dominant culture that threatens to sweep them all up in its evil grip. Agreed? Comments?**

**Jill:** Yes, as a parent you feel as though you or your child is constantly under attack by our culture. Example: I purchased a Golden Book titled *Jesus* that I felt would be safe for my children, so they looked at it awhile before I read it to them. I was shocked when I read the last line in the book: "Jesus died." End of the story! I threw the book away and learned that even "religious" books need to be previewed.

**Julie:** Yes, we are concerned. Our children are God's precious gift, but special interest groups dominate our society and

## Ministries

Awana

Bible Study Fellowship  
(two programs available for families)

Vision Forum Ministries

Answers in Genesis (My Creation Bible and video series on parenting, etc.)

Focus on the Family (The Singing Bible for kids)

No Greater Joy DVD ministry by Michael and Debi Pearl

Love and Respect Ministries (marriage DVD's)

indoctrinate our children. Our rights to influence their education are being diminished; no longer are there moral absolutes. God says otherwise.

**Jennifer:** Lots of temptation and deception is "out there" in regard to the so-called American dream, and the culture is so absorbed in self-gratification. Satan has caused great confusion in the roles of husband and wife, causing a downward spiral in society. We need to put on the armor of God and prepare our children to fight this spiritual battle alongside us.

**Debra:** Absolutely! Our children are being assimilated into





unbiblical and anti-Christian mainstream America at an alarming rate. Of those who remain, not many hold a biblical worldview or are passionate about their faith. Let's be on the offensive by fighting for our children's souls, actively training them in His ways.

**Cinda:** I agree wholeheartedly. From the time they are small, our children are bombarded with worldly propaganda. From clothing to food/drink to the glitz and "fun" of holidays, they are told that they should have whatever they want. "What's the harm?" We must stay on our toes lest Satan use even little openings and soon the door is opened wide for him.

**Johanna:** While I can agree with this sentiment, I would express concern by asking if what we (the church and parents) have been doing to train our children as followers of Christ is really working. We young adults have the advantage of looking back on what has not worked. So many of our peers have turned

away from Christ! Observing the many ways families have been compromised, let's endeavor to train and disciple our children as God commands.

#### **What support systems have you found to help parents accomplish God-given roles?**

**Jill:** I have read several books, but I'm still looking for anything that I would consider great. My husband and I subsist on a strong Christian upbringing, but know it will get tougher as our children grow.

**Julie:** We've used materials from Vision Forum, Ken Ham, and Focus on the Family.

**Terri:** The Love and Respect conference at our church was instrumental in improving our marriage. Small group discussions on Sabbath morn-

ing and talking with other women and couples in our church have been key in supporting our sometimes shaky steps forward.

**Jennifer:** The Church can help by providing classes and sermons on family living; by teaching us what the Bible says for husbands, wives, parents, and others; and by promoting a family-togetherness environment. Our church library is helpful, too.

**Debra:** The Church could offer training on biblical manhood and womanhood, biblical worldview, and how to pass on a godly legacy.

For us, more family-centered activity with the Church, rather than separating families by age groupings, would be a wonderful blessing.

**Johanna:** The most influential support for me has been our women's Sabbath school class, where we have studied this topic. It is important for the Church to be intentional in teaching/training husbands and wives in fulfilling these God-given roles.



**M**y heart is learning peace now. I have struggled to entrust her to God the Father, and what more can I do?

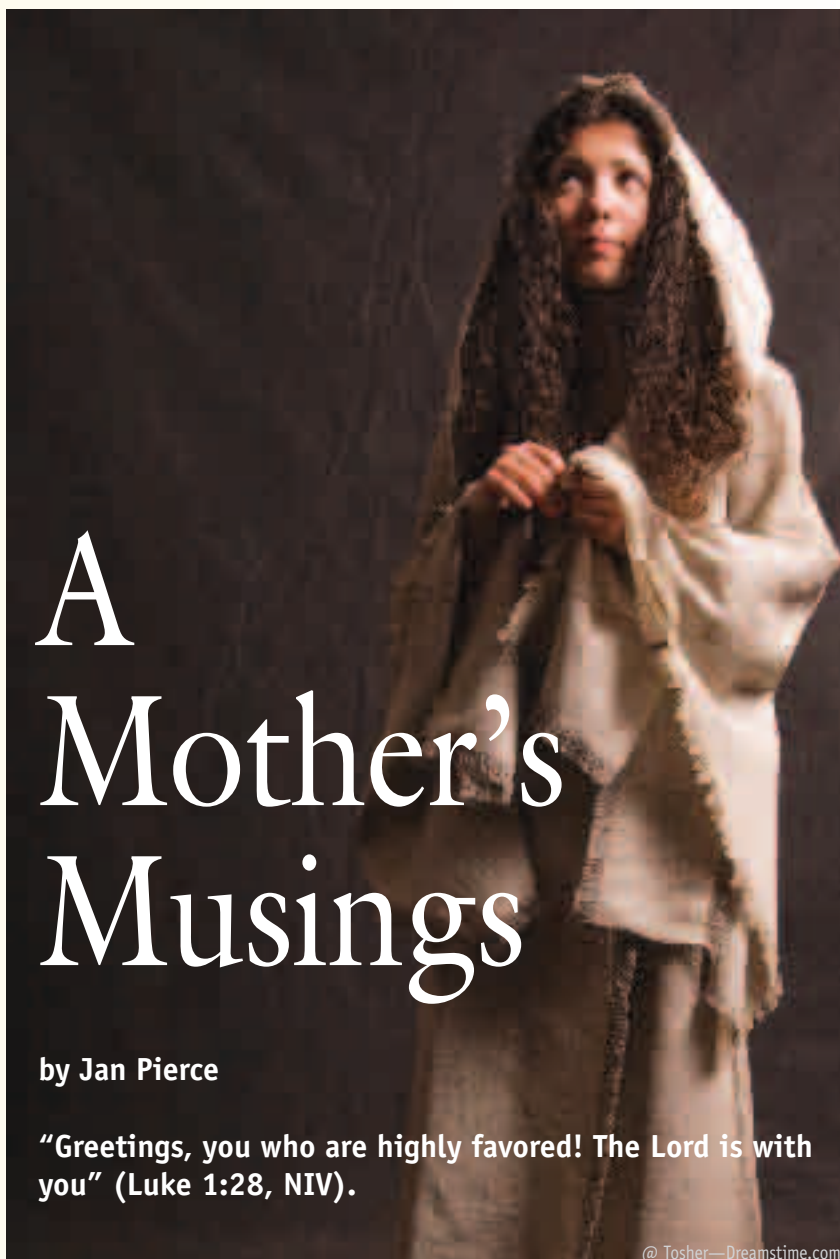
There is a pain in childbearing that doesn't end with the birth of the baby. I feel that pain piercing through my chest now as I think of the road ahead for my little girl, so pure and innocent. I am both glad for that and apprehensive as well. Can she stand in the face of the things to come? Can she bear the pain that will yet come to her and her alone?

Would that I could hold her in my arms and protect her as I did those few years back. Would that I could take the pain for her; but no, that is not given to me. Each of us must drink from the cup we are given.

She has been betrothed to Joseph since she was just a child. Such a joyful one she has always been, bringing only goodness into our home from the day of her birth. My breath catches in my throat remembering Gabriel's words to my daughter. She has found favor with God!

In her innocence she hasn't yet grasped the enormity of this call. Who could? It is too much to believe, and yet it is true. It is too painful, and yet it must be endured. It is too grand, this plan of old, and yet it has fallen to my teenage girl to play her role in its fulfillment.

I will send her away to Elizabeth in the hills; she will be both protected and loved there. She will find peace during these months of preparation. You should hear her sing her song. Yes, she is fearful and overwhelmed at times, but she is also full of adoration for God. At times her face radiates with a controlled emotion that I can



only guess is fervent love — and joy.

She will not only obey but also embrace this trial. Who could ask for more in a daughter? But who *wouldn't* wish it might have fallen to another? Forgive me, Father; I am only made of flesh.

My little one will know more suffering than most. She will also experience more joy and fulfillment as the prophecies unfold,

yet her heart will be pierced as mine is now, over and over.

As she has yielded, so I yield. Go now, my daughter, child of my own flesh, into the destiny given you by the holy Father. **BA**

**Jan Pierce** writes from Vancouver, WA.





# Secrets of the

No woman should go it alone. by Marilyn R. Current

**E**ver met an ideal woman, like the one described in Proverbs 31:10-31? She's a highly valued, trusted wife — the secret of her husband's success. She's talented — an accomplished seamstress and crafts woman. She's graceful and dignified, a smart dresser who rises early and retires late. She's an organized household manager and interior decorator, a super-shopper bargain hunter and real estate savvy. She's a gardener and chef, a vigorous, untiring worker. She's a successful, self-employed businesswoman and an attentive employer. She's generous and kind, optimistic and lighthearted — a wise teacher, dependable counselor, and respected, beloved mother. Deserving of every good thing, she's Super-woman, Super-mom, and Super-wife!

When I attended Spring Vale Academy years ago, our girls club was asked to memorize this passage. I never quite accomplished that. A friend told me that when she reads this chapter, she gets irritated: "Who can be that perfect?!"

Actually, I believe Solomon was describing a composite woman. As individuals we won't be all things to all people, but in community we *can* be.

## Look of community

What does that community look like? Paul tells us in Titus 2:

Teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (vv. 3-5).

When I was young, our family was active in the rural Tillinghast Church of God (Seventh Day) near New Auburn, Wisconsin. One woman there, in particular, took me under her wing and mentored me.

This older friend had no daughter, so she channeled her desire for a mother-daughter relationship into the young women of the church. She was my mother's age but became my friend. As a dairy farmer's wife, she didn't have an easy life: just a tiny home with no bathroom but an outhouse! She heated water on the stove for bathing and dishes. These inconveniences did not hinder her from opening her home to guests.

My friend invited me over for a few days, and we talked while working on projects. Sometimes we assembled gift bags of toiletry items for underprivileged families in the community. Or we picked blackberries on her back property. She bought flannel for me to make my own nightgown and cap and taught me to use her treadle sewing machine to put it together.

While we worked, we talked about God and the joy of being in relationship with Him. She challenged me to apply Scripture, to read life-changing books, to grow in knowledge and love for Him. She invited our family to special services at her friends' churches to hear a missionary or other speakers she believed would open our eyes to God's work beyond our denomination. When I think of women who portray Paul's description in Titus 2, I think of this dear mentor and friend.

## Titus 2 training

We all need Titus 2 women in our lives, and we should strive to *be* one in someone else's life. Local women's ministries would do well to organize Titus 2 classes to facilitate this mentoring process.

The congregation I attend recently implemented such a program, passing out surveys to find what skills women would like to learn or help teach. Once a month we choose a pair of subjects to present, beginning the session with a devotion. Some subjects are presented in lecture format, others as

# Sisterhood

workshop. Experts from local businesses or county extension offices can be invited to teach certain classes. We present each class twice – evening and morning sessions – so as many women as possible can participate.

A program like this accomplishes several things. First, it brings women together to know each other better (community). Second, it provides a vehicle for sharing knowledge and skills (mentoring). Third, it encourages us to grow in commitment to God and to the tasks He has given us as women of God, wives, and mothers (accountability).

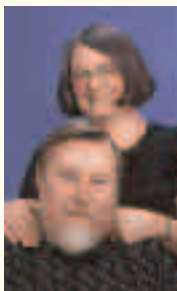
## Community power

Community means showing responsibility to our sisters in Christ, sharpening each other as iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17). We “spur one another on toward love and good deeds,” continuing to meet and encourage each other (Hebrews 10:24, 25). What the Teacher wrote centuries ago applies to the need for women to connect today: “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, [her] friend can help [her] up. But pity the [woman] who falls and has no one to help [her] up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10).

Alone, our flames accomplish little and will likely flicker and die. Together in active community, Titus 2 women are the Proverbs 31 woman, becoming all God intended us to be! **BA**

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**Dan and Marilyn Current** (daughter of Elder Paul and Virginia Heavilin) live in Shelbyville, IN. Their three children serve Christian ministries in Argentina, South Korea, and Shelbyville.



## Mothers Gap

Titus 2:3-5 teaches that the church’s elder women are to be godly examples to the younger women. Unfortunately, younger women today are too often influenced to remain selfish, to care more about how they appeal physically to the opposite sex, to dress immodestly and buy the latest fashions. Instead of admonishing younger women to really love their families and make their homes a godly haven, older women applaud them for their employment and social life, even though they may be neglecting home and family.

Titus 2 calls on all women of the church to bridge the great divide between older and younger. If you are in your sixties, you can take us younger women under your wing by giving godly advice. Please don’t be shy or too discreet about your experiences and your walk with the Lord. Satan isn’t shy about attacking us, so we need you to speak the heart of God to us. Even the younger women can minister to the young girls in their congregation by just being a friend. It may be that the home they live in is not a godly environment. We could be the key in leading them to Christ!

Older women may fail to act on Titus 2 because of fear. Their generation was taught to keep silent about secret sins and hurtful pasts. An older woman may have been through an abusive marriage and divorce. By staying silent, she contributes to the pain of young women in the congregation who may be facing the same situation. Younger women need to hear what God has brought older women through. We need to be reminded to be chaste and discreet. We need encouragement and reminding that we aren’t alone in our battles.

Jesus is speaking to you, my older sister, to be a spiritual mama to younger women of your congregation. If there has ever been a time for older women to step up to this calling, it is now.

— *Jacqueline Marquez-Melgoza*

# HEARTSPEAK

[FOR YOUTH]

by Michael Mancho

THE  
DAY  
I THOUGHT  
I DIED



## The first time I ever saw the ocean was the first and only time I've been near death. Or at least I thought I was.

The summer after I graduated high school some of my classmates and I were on Bradenton Island on the Gulf Coast of Florida. Eager to swim in water that wasn't still or contained or chlorinated, I couldn't wait to dive headlong into the crest of the waves and immerse myself in water so thick with salt that I'd puff up like a blowfish if I swam for long.

Some friends decided to swim to a sandbar about 40 yards offshore. I didn't want to look like a rookie, so I went along. I made it to the sandbar OK, but after a few minutes, my friends decided to swim farther out. Unsure if I'd make it, I chose to swim back toward the shore alone.

As I swam, I could feel the waves carrying me forward and my body rising and falling as though I were lying on the chest of a giant in deep sleep. I swam peacefully until one wave pushed me forward, then immediately pulled me under. Caught off guard, I panicked, sucked in a mouthful of saltwater, and immediately felt sick. My heart began to pound as I rose to the surface, paddling frantically.

I swam hard until I was worn out, but wasn't getting anywhere. I felt stuck. As I took in more saltwater, my stomach tightened, my heart thumped in my chest, and I swam harder with little gain. I could see my friend Anna sitting on the shore, waving both arms slowly above her head as though she were signaling my destination.

Evidently I'd been over confident of my ability and underestimated the ocean. I wasn't drowning — not technically. But I couldn't help wonder if those who drowned had started out like me: panicking.

After a long fight with the current, I made it to shore, exhausted and sick. Had I gone under, been rescued and revived, you could have called that a near-death experience. I suppose mine was only a near, near-death experience, but it was still frightening.

The prophet Isaiah had a near, near-death experience: a vision of the Lord on a throne (chapter 6). He said the Lord's robe filled the smoke-filled temple and angels with six wings were flying around the throne saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty" (v. 3, NIV). Their voices rang with such power that the temple

threshold and doorposts shook to their foundations.

Can you imagine such a scene? Having witnessed all of this, Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined!" (v. 5, NIV). I love the way *The Message* puts it: "Doom! It's Doomsday! I'm as good as dead!"

The vision was so overwhelming that Isaiah cried out, expecting death. He was sure he'd just seen God, and he was humbled to the max.

Most of us will never see something like what Isaiah saw. Maybe you've never had a humbling experience, either near-death or something close to it. Is that why we sometimes act so arrogantly before God? Our generation has developed a strong sense of self-entitlement: free downloads of music, movies, games, and other entertainment from the Internet. We deserve it.

The bad thing is, we carry that attitude into our Christian lives. We act as though we deserve blessing and grace from God.

You want to know what the Bible says we deserve? A big fat NOTHING! In fact, our sins murdered Jesus, and for that we deserve death. What Isaiah felt is exactly what we should feel: that our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). This means that our good deeds are just garbage when compared to God's holiness. Wow!

Here's the good news. After Isaiah fell to his knees expecting death, the Lord's angel came, touched his lips with a piece of hot coal from the altar, and said his guilt was removed and his sin atoned for (6:7).

The truth is, we are nothing and deserve nothing from God. But God has given us His Son. He has touched our lips, removed our guilt, and atoned for our sin. Only by His Son, God has counted us worthy. When we begin to see ourselves for who we are, we will never see Christ's salvation the same way again.

I didn't die that day on a Florida beach. But when I met Christ for the first time and took Him into my heart, I died and was buried for good:

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20, NIV).

Scripture verses noted *The Message* taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

## What's Happening

@Jung Anna—Dreamstime.com

### Refuge in the Rockies Youth Camp

June 23-27

Contact: Colorado Springs CoG7  
office@cscog7.org

### West Coast District Conference

July 6-10

Salem, OR (Phoenix Grand Hotel)  
Contact: Greg Haffner, DYC  
haffnerg@earthlink.net

### Michigan Youth Camp

Junior and Senior campers

July 18-25

Hopkins, MI (Camp Mel Trotter)  
Contact: Rex Miller, camp director  
kingmerex@aol.com

### Dakotas Youth Retreat

July 23-25

Lakewood Bible Camp, Devils Lake, ND  
Contact: Steve Kyner  
tohiswork1@msn.com

### SIS-Q Meadows Youth Camp (ages 13-18)

July 25 - August 1

Cave Junction, OR  
Contact: Vona Ogren  
hogren@msn.com

### Central California (Jr. and Sr.) Camp

July 26 - August 1

Capital Mountain in Weimar, CA  
Contact: Jorge Perez, DYC  
nazaritemex@hotmail.com

### Southeast District Youth Camp

August 1-8

Camp Laphio, Umstead State Park,  
Raleigh, NC  
Contact: Sandy Jones, DYC  
june.bug810@gmail.com



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# Laziness: Drug of Choice

by Amos Ballesteros

Today it's become so easy to roll over in bed and decide that this morning is better spent under the covers, away from the hard work that "ruins" a good day. Our culture has taught us to make an idiot of the person who goes the extra mile and doesn't milk a break time for all it's worth. But society is wrong!

Proverbs 6:6-11 is a sharp sword that cuts our conscience regarding this. Seeing the word *sluggard*, you know that the living Word is talking directly to you. King Solomon's wise words in this passage fly in the face of what's acceptable today. Society says, "Waste the day away." God says, "Be wise and work diligently." With God's inspired words, just say "no" to the drug of laziness.

The Bible says that both poverty (Proverbs 6:11) and shame (2 Thessalonians 3:14) follow those who succumb to laziness. Although laziness may seem easy to avoid, it creeps into our daily lives and convinces us that obstacles aren't worth the effort

to get over. From there we slowly sink deeper into a false sense of comfort that's more and more difficult to get rid of.

Jesus leads us by His perfect example. Weary and hoping to rest from the droves of people that came for healing, He was met with even more people. Instead of turning them away or leaving, He pressed on and helped them anyway (Mark 6:31-34).

Our perception of always being in control of our time can also evolve into laziness. "I need ME time," we may say. But if we're not careful, such time can turn into a material possession that takes first place over what we should be doing for God and others.

When selfishness is allowed, what's right hardly puts up a fight. When confronted with the choice of either being productive or doing what's convenient, I naturally lean toward excuses like "I'll have time to do it later" or "Now is the perfect time for a nap."

I'm not saying that you never

need a break or that you don't need alone time with God. What I am saying is that today, working like the ant seems impossible because we are so used to having convenience readily available.

God wants us to be diligent — not for His sake but for ours. He tells us that by being productive and by following the pattern of our diligent ancestors, we may inherit the promises left to them (Hebrews 6:12). God doesn't want us to be poverty stricken and shamed by allowing laziness to take over our lives. He wants His children to be blessed with His promises through adhering to His Word.

So the next time you find yourself with a little extra time on your hands, go through that checklist of things that you could be doing right now and get to work. **BA**

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**Amos Ballesteros, 20**, lives in Austin, TX, and attends the Just As I Am church, where he participates in the worship team.

## Tested Church in a Wicked World by Calvin Burrell

The letter we call 1 Corinthians, written by Paul to early Christians in the Greek city of Corinth, presents this vivid contrast: Chockfull of church problems, it's also packed with great advice and the good assurance of grace.

**Church test #1: contentions and quarrels.** Prominent among those in Corinth was their partiality to favorite personalities, like Peter or Apollos or Paul (1:11, 12; 3:3, 4). Paul's counsel to this carnality was that Christ is not divided and that God, not man, should be honored for bestowing all benefits to the church (chs. 1, 3).

- What causes discord where you worship, and what can you do to relieve it?

**Church test #2: moral issues.** One member lived in open incest (5:1, 2), and the prevailing ethic in Corinth regarded sexual immorality as the societal norm and thus no big deal (6:9, 10; 7:2a). Paul urged them to a higher standard of moral conduct (6:11-20; ch. 7), including the will to confront and restore those who chose a blatantly sinful lifestyle (5:3-13).

- How can our church resist today's rising tide of immorality, while still expressing Jesus' love and grace to both sinner and saint?

**Church test #3: material support.** Corinthian Christians were slow to provide for their apostles, evangelists, and pastors. Paul boldly appealed for them to follow both natural and biblical law by supporting those who preached the gospel to them (9:1-14).

- Does your church exceed the national average of a 3 percent tithe to support the church? Do you?

**Church test #4: disputed practices and teachings.** A laundry list of debated topics kept this church in

turmoil. Among them were meat offered to idols (ch. 8), spiritual gifts (ch. 12), and resurrection of the dead (ch. 15). Paul urged the Corinthians to emphasize love as the one essential in Christian practice (8:1b; 12:31; ch. 13) and Christ's resurrection among the core truths of church doctrine (ch. 15).

- Do we practice unity in the essentials, liberty in non-essentials, and charity in all things?

**Church test #5: corporate worship.** The services of the church of God in Corinth were often disrupted over the participation and appearance of women (11:1-16), over the conduct of the Lord's Supper service (11:17-34), and over the relative merits of prophecy and tongues-speaking (ch. 14). To bring peace to this troubled group, Paul appealed for mutual submission and quiet, instead of contentious exchanges (11:3, 16; 14:34, 35); for humble inward examination and "others respect," instead of selfish behavior (11:28, 31, 33); and for primacy of the prophetic gift (i.e., preaching) over the gift of unknown tongues (ch. 14).

- Have you personally resolved the "worship wars" (traditional vs. contemporary) that have plagued churches in this generation?

Comparing church problems in Corinth with today's internal struggles, moral failures, sub-standard giving, doctrinal differences, and worship wars, we may agree with the wise man who wrote, "There is nothing new under the sun." Because the same medicine Paul prescribed for that troubled group in the first century can still be effective today, modern churches do well to study all of 1 Corinthians, especially the love prescriptions of chapter 13.

- Why not read all of 1 Corinthians (60-90 minutes needed) on a Friday evening or Sabbath soon?



# Forum: The Fruitful Church



## Body Building

by David Kidd  
Adelaide, South Australia

What's wrong with the church today? Many things. We often lack courageous, joyful hearts. We don't sacrifice for God's cause; our love for truth is shallow, our prayers weak. We hide our sins rather than confess them. Some members don't much like the church; they feel neglected. The congregation does little to relieve the poor and downtrodden. There's not much growth among us, and there are precious few plans to change.

If this bleak picture resembles your life or church, read on: God-designed strength is readily available and within your grasp. The strength needed to overcome problems and achieve goals

comes through a truly united church.

When we join the words *unity* and *church*, we may think of a group free of conflict. Instead of agreeing on everything, we are usually satisfied if harmony among members prevails in spite of differences. While this is important in a church, it isn't sufficient to fuel the greater strength we need.

That greater strength may be better seen as the unity of a body. This is how Paul explained it:

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. . . . If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye,

I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased (1 Corinthians 12:12, 15-18).

This concept of interconnectedness, fully embraced by members and lived out in their relationships, would result in amazing strength for the body of Christ and help it fulfill God's intended purpose. It would help many members realize that their personal role is significant and that their misconduct can hurt the church. One failed performance can have catastrophic results on the rest, as when the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded in 1986, caused by the failure of one small O-ring.\*

In the failure of our physical bodies, heart disease, cancer, and strokes account for far more deaths than do external causes like murder or accidents. It's the same with churches: It's not opposition from without that stunts the church but problems from within.\*

Paul writes further of the strength from interconnectedness in a spiritual body, "from whom [Christ] the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

What are the marvelous results of being "joined and knit together" and every part doing its share? Growth and love! Such are within our grasp, if we will

receive the greater strength available through working together as a church body.

God prepared the church for mutual support. Think of the different talents among your members. Some people are exceptionally loving and generous. Others have great wisdom and understanding to impart. Still others are gifted in comfort and encouragement, while a few possess artistic and musical gifts to brighten our worship.

Just imagine if your church became a community in which everyone anticipated coming together to contribute time, talent, and treasure for up-building all. Imagine it as a place where if one member suffers, all suffer; if one member rejoices, all rejoice; where no one lacks, because those who have an abundance share with others. What a great source of strength we'd have. Imagine that!

Well, we don't have to imagine; we can have this unity today. Once we all have this desire, the greater strength is quickly available as we commit to what God has commanded: to love each other: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). The love Jesus had in mind was the same that He had shown His disciples (vv. 1-16). It was genuine love, not superficial; warm, not formal; committed, not casual; sacrificial, not comfortable.

Let's come together as a team or army does. What successful team meets only once a week for a game? What soldier says to his fellows, "I'll see you at the battlefield next Saturday morning"?

To begin receiving the God-ordained strength available

through the loving unity of the body, share this concept, or this article, with your church. Encourage others in a time of consecration where they choose Jesus love and united togetherness in fellowship and service.

The Head of the body, Jesus Christ, will surely bless in even greater ways than described here.

\* McHenry's *Stories for the Soul*, by Ramond McHenry, pp. 43-44



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## Crisis or Christ?

by Jeff Endecott  
Farmville, North Carolina

You speak of the "the crisis facing us," and your efforts are meant to offer good and godly medicine for what ails the church. I believe your assessment is correct.

Despite the problems in our world and church, we *should not be a people who traffic in pessimism*. Let's change our perspective: The crisis facing us is

far less important than the Christ before us. The promise of Jesus to us is that the gates of hell will not stand against the kingdom of God.

Indeed there are giants in the land; the land is full of them. But as Caleb said, “Let us go up at once . . . for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30). Oh God, please let that spirit and Spirit blow through our church.

I am not speaking here of a man-centered fixation on human potential. God forbid! But we are (or need to be) intoxicated with God’s power and potential.

May God make us a people whose vision is fixed on Jesus — not just as a theoretical concept but with biblically derived truths. The name of Christ is not a talisman without an objective referent. The power of His name comes from knowing about, believing in, and fixating on what He did, why He did it, what He’s doing now, and why He does it.

To traffic in pessimism is to fixate on the crisis and forget the Christ. Let us strive to build a church culture that sees unparalleled opportunity and potential for the proclamation of the kingdom.

## Brighter Burn

by James McBride  
Lincolnshire, England

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). This statement by Jesus is fundamental to our faith. It is normally applied to individuals, but it is also collective and refers to

the church gathered. Wherever Christians assemble, they are the lampstand Jesus has set in that location.

Our ultimate purpose is surely to “glorify your Father in heaven.” Jesus says that the way this is achieved is for men to see our good works, and this requires energy. When a local assembly is filled with the Spirit, energy flows and unusual things happen through the hands and tongues of mortals, as reported in the book of Acts.

The local church is like a city on a hill. By illuminating the darkness that has settled into their part of the world, a highly visible body of believers radiates the glory of the Son all around.

The apostle Paul highlights this function for congregations: “He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11, 12).

Each local assembly, then, may become a center of excellence

wherein the brethren are brought to Christian maturity through the equipping ministry of those more established in faith and more skilled in service.

Jesus imparts spiritual gifts to those who trust Him. The responsibility of church leadership is to nourish these gifts so that all can employ them in the service of Christ. This was a pattern established by the prophet Samuel. Countering the spiritual darkness of his time, Samuel either established or developed seminaries of sorts to train groups of prophets in the law, music, prayer, and other functions for worship (1 Samuel 10:5; 19:20). These schools were a spiritual light and positive influence on those around.

Elijah (then Elisha) carried on these training schools — the “sons of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:15). They were overseen by God’s established prophets, who were like fathers to them.

Paul himself was often accompanied by several trainees (Acts 20:4) and instructed them by means of his personal letters (Timothy, Titus). He too likened himself to a father of the church and of those he mentored (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:1).

Each local assembly of Christian believers may become such a school. Brethren are there to be nourished from newborn babes to maturity in Christ so that they become lights shining in a dark place.

Increasingly we are urged to use energy-saving bulbs and dimmer switches in our homes. Is the intensity of light shed by our local assembly being dimmed by our desire to save personal energy?



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## Needed: Third-Class Passengers

by Joe Corrales  
San Antonio, Texas

In the days of the stagecoach, a man undertook a journey. He was informed that there were first-, second-, and third-class passengers. All the seats on the coach looked alike to him, so he purchased a third-class ticket.

Things went well for a time, and the man congratulated himself upon saving some money. When they came to the foot of a steep hill, the driver stopped the horses and shouted, “First-class passengers, keep your seats; second-class, get out and walk; third-class, get out and push.”

How appropriate for the church today! What we need in the church’s work is third-class passengers — those who will push. Not first-class, who are content to sit and look on while others work. Not second-class, who walk away when the hard work comes. But third-class passengers who are willing to bear the burden in the heat of the day.

BA



### Precious memories

I always enjoy the BA and was surprised to see the Linotype photo [March-April ‘10, p. 26] — it brought back nice memories. I was introduced to printing in high school, got a job as a Linotype operator at 21, and was happy at the prospect of an entire career there. That didn’t happen. I went from hot metal to Compugraphics, etc., owned a printing company, and followed the progression of technology so as not to be left behind — but never enjoyed it as much. I liked it much better when it was a hands-on craft and typography was an art form. I retired from printing after 2007 — over 45 years in the trade.

R. K.

Thornton, WA

### Graphics: pro and con

I was surprised to see the cover picture with leavened bread displayed as an emblem of the Lord’s Supper. In light of our belief in the emblems being “unleavened,” I consider it inappropriate. A picture is worth a thousand words in teaching Bible truth.

D. K.

Sacramento, CA

The graphics and artwork [were some of the best] I’ve seen. “Stories of Scars” was a moving experience.

Well done, Donna. Regarding the “Q & A” about the mark of the beast, man’s self-righteousness is the beast [and] the “mark” is believing that “our belief system” is the best and not open for discussion.

B. M.

Liberty Center, OH

### In the Word

The book of Acts is how we should forever respond to the gospel [p. 11]. Acts 28:31 is not the last work; this is the book that never ends. New chapters and verses are written every day by Christians around the world. Its norms should direct our actions regarding the gospel in every way.

Name withheld

Nampa, ID

### BA blessings

God bless you richly for the magazines you’ve sent me free of charge over the years. Your articles have been helpful and stimulating, even as a retired pastor . . . . Because I have Internet, I choose to access *BA Online* rather than receive the printed version.

P. M.

E-mail

I found an issue of BA. Thumbing through it, I experienced an unusually joyful and peaceful mind, which led me to confess my rejection of God’s love [and] to repent from disobeying God’s commandments. Now is the best part of my life.

G. F. (inmate)

Corcoran, CA

*Editor’s note: We have recently received encouraging notes from many readers around the world requesting to be retained on the subscription list. Thanks for writing!*



**Just seconds ago, from this transit bus I'm riding,  
the houses were caked with greyed dreams and soot.  
The rain-dulled sky threw a basin of tears,  
a storm of worries onto pounding pavement,  
furling the faces of those  
who ride the bus at two in the afternoon.**

**But in a millisecond, Gentle Spirit  
cut a wide-reaching swath of memory:**

**Outside the Sabbath school window,  
banana seat bikes lay under the secure fragrance of lilacs,  
calico cat bats tiger lilies and  
peonies lean, worry-free, dropping petals  
onto a sidewalk banner chalked in orange, yellow, and green:  
"Consider how the lilies grow. . . ."**

**Carol L. MacKay  
From Luke 12:22-31**



## Did you know . . .

- the NFYC Web page has a new look and you can be on it? Send a quick summary of what your group's been doing, with some cool pics! Just click over to <http://nfyc.cog7.org> and you'll find our event calendar, downloadable programs, and lots more. And you can begin the Gimme Five 2010 journey today by going to the new site and clicking on Programs.
- that several youth leaders won awards? High Five: Kristin Gonzalez (Claremore, OK) and Theresa Scott (Midland, TX). Participation Awards: Brenda Cox (Eugene, OR), Karen Curran (Harrisburg, OR), Jason and Rose Rodriguez (Conroe, TX), and Pancie Payton (Port St. Lucie, FL).
- that Midland, TX, won the Jacob Solis Community Service Award?

# CoG7 Ministries



'09 NFYC mission team paints "Thirst No More" building in Yakima, WA.

## National Youth Ministry

### Kurt Lang, Director

A major emphasis of what we do from the National Youth office is service. In a world dominated by the "me" mentality, we want to encourage the development of a servant's heart in young believers.

It won't be the first time you've heard how Christians spell joy: **J**esus first, **O**thers next, and **Y**ou last. But what a refreshing change if we all put it into daily practice!

Consider how a heart of joyful service might be encouraged in your local youth by their participation in our Hunger Lock-In weekend or in other NFYC projects. Serving Jesus, motivating your church, meeting the needs of others, and growing a selfless attitude all at the same time!

More at <http://nfyc.cog7.org>.

## Personnel Notices

The CoG7 offices welcomed two new workers in April. Abe Endecott came from Wellman, Iowa, to serve as personal assistant to G. C. President Whaid Rose, and Rick Frye of Denver as an Information Technology specialist to serve the entire Conference office.

Ministerial licenses for three men have been approved by the License and Credentials Committee:

- Ivan Burrell of Coweta, Oklahoma (serving Claremore church)
- Simon Melendez of Houston, Texas (serving Spring Branch church)
- Oscar Mata of Sioux Falls, South Dakota (serving the church plant there)

Long-time lay leader and member of the Southwestern District board, Elroy Gold (74) died February 19 in San Antonio, Texas. Condolences to his wife, Joyce, to their three children, and to their families.

## Calendar of Events

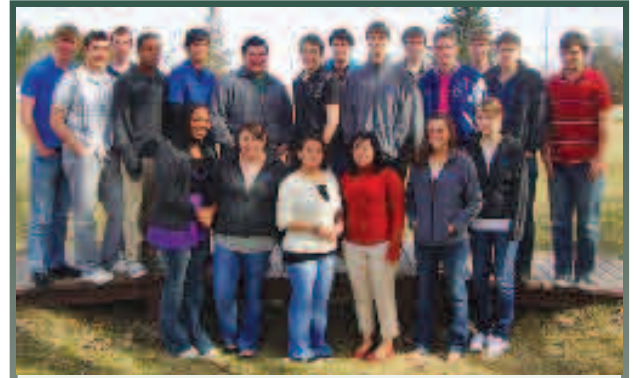
Dover Family Camp at Camp Cimarron near Kingfisher, OK, June 13-19; contact 918-864-5589; [jeradd.ullrich@pelcostructural.com](mailto:jeradd.ullrich@pelcostructural.com)

Marion, Iowa, congregation will celebrate 150 years of CoG7 history there on Sabbath, June 26.

LifeSpring School of Ministry Summer Session, Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI, June 6-17; this event is limited to pre-registered students and ministers ([www.LifeSpringSchool.org](http://www.LifeSpringSchool.org))



*Come visit beautiful Salem, Oregon, and attend the West Coast District Family Conference at Salem Conference Center and Phoenix Grand Hotel.  
Contact [zman52@msn.com](mailto:zman52@msn.com).*



**Spring Vale Academy seniors:** Nineteen students will complete their high school careers in weekend activities (May 29-30) at the Owosso, MI, campus. (Bottom, L to R): Tabitha Weekes (Inola, OK), Carissa Carbajal (Maplewood, MN), Miriam Ynostrosa (Thornton, CO), Gema Gonzalez (Houston, TX), Kathryn Brann (Huntsville, TX), Jessica Caswell (Owosso, MI). (Top, L to R): Alex Rincker (Claremore, OK), Joshua Avalos (Toppenish, WA), Clint Bishop (Shawnee, OK), Cameron Goodwin (Topeka, KS), Douglas Klopfenstein (Corpus Christi, TX), Oscar Davila (Austin, TX), Edmund Peterson (Owosso, MI), Timothy Pierce (Lawton, MI), James Edwards (Lansing, MI), Brendon Noble (Owosso, MI), Joshua Smith (Augusta, MI), Gabriel Molinar (Owosso, MI), Cameron Moore (Cameron, MO).

North American Ministerial Council at Glen Eyrie, Colorado Springs, October 18-23; ministers should register by June 30 for best rates; contact [NAMC@cog7.org](mailto:NAMC@cog7.org) or 303-452-7973

## About Your Will . . .

Have you prepared your Last Will or Testament? Everyone should have a legally written document that expresses how he or she wants the estate to be distributed – eventually.

Have you included support for the Lord's work in your will? Consider designating a tithe of your estate to support the gospel. If your children are grown and well, you may wish to increase that percentage.

You might designate a portion of your estate for the use of current CoG7 ministries. Or to provide long-term income for the Church's future, consider our Pooled Endowment Fund.

For more information, contact the Office of Planned Giving, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; [plannedgiving@cog7.org](mailto:plannedgiving@cog7.org).

## Georgia Super Sabbath

by Heber Vega

On Friday p.m., February 12, snow began falling in Atlanta, with a forecast of unusual amounts. A guest speaker, I suggested canceling evening service, but too many people were on their way. I'm glad; we had a great time that night. Pastor Walter Apen forecast that the snow would be melted by Sabbath morning.

With Sabbath a.m. temperatures at 25 degrees, the melting snow turned to ice. Accidents were everywhere. TV stations asked people to stay home except for emergencies. Many CoG7 folks had driven in wintry conditions from as far as Virginia and North Carolina, so the Super Sabbath would go on, even if later than planned. My church-appointed chauffeur needed two hours, rather than twenty minutes, to drive the icy roads to pick me up at the hotel!

At the rented church facility, I was surprised to see how many people were already there. Local leaders informed me of a one-hour delay; the service would start at 10:00 a.m. instead of 9:00. And it did. Everything was in place and ready to go: ushers, musicians, teachers, PowerPoint, and sound – even lunch. The Atlanta congregation did an outstanding job of hosting and organizing this event. They looked like an ant colony – cheerful, excited, and energetic. It was contagious!

We had morning service, a delicious lunch, and a particularly uplifting afternoon service, with children's church downstairs. Congregational singing was wonderful, with hymns that everyone knew. Special music represented the congregations present, with talented singers and musicians.

For my sermons I experimented. I introduced the subject, stressing the benefits of studying such topics in our Sabbath school quarterlies and *Bible Advocate* issues. I illustrated my sermon points by reading from the BA, with articles projected on the screen as I read with emphasis and dramatic inflections here and there.

The well-written and edited BA articles say a lot in a concise and understandable manner. They flow well and keep the readers' attention. Regardless of the language worshipers read on screen, they still get the emphasis and passion from the voice inflections (either language) on top of what they process with their eyes. I trust that many went home excited about God's Word and that they



pulled out their *Bible Advocate* magazines to learn what they've been missing.

Seeing how these brothers and sisters weren't intimidated or bothered by adverse weather conditions blessed me greatly. They had planned to get together for Super Sabbath, and nothing stopped them. Adversities en route to church were shared during the day as testimonies of thanksgiving and praise for God's care and protection and for the many angels sent their way. It was powerful!

### A Member's View

by Steve Krome

From our home in Chattanooga all the way to Atlanta, my wife and I wondered if the Super Sabbath would even happen. It had snowed the night before. Anyone who knows this area knows 1) we don't get snow and 2) if we do, everything shuts down.

Arriving, we realized that this fear was unfounded. Members of the Lilburn church were directing guests to an over-flowing parking lot. Members from three states had braved the weather to attend, bringing together 250 folks to enjoy fellowship, music, and Spirit-filled messages from Heber Vega. We don't speak Spanish, but Pastor Vega's sermons were delivered in both languages. As always, someone is willing to help us understand what's going on. When all else fails, there are plenty of smiles and warm hugs to go around. What else could we ask for?

Heading back to Chattanooga that evening, we were filled with the joy that God had allowed us to share with our Hispanic friends in a Super Sabbath!



**Marion, Iowa — 150 Years**  
**June 25-27, 2010**

Join us in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the oldest active CoG7 congregation. We'll have a great weekend together:

Music by Gordon Kuryluk  
Spoken word by Robert Coulter, Jeff Endecott, Whaid Rose  
Recognition of former pastors

Contact Abe Endecott: 319-377-8505;  
[abe@cog7.org](mailto:abe@cog7.org)

### **BA Then and Now**

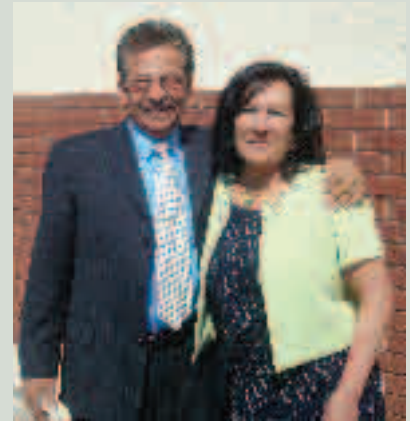
The *Bible Advocate* is celebrating forty years this spring since its switch to being subscription-free.

LeRoy Dais, BAP staffer since 1956, recalls the change. Early in 1970 the Publications agency proposed, and Church leaders promptly adopted, a plan for making the BA free for anyone who would personally request it. The plan included four sources of support: the Publications agency, General Conference office, districts in the U.S. and Canada, and BA readers and friends. The July 1970 issue was the first without a subscription price. The last-mentioned group has been a most significant force in keeping the magazine alive and well.

Since that bold decision, we have relied on the freewill offerings of members and other readers, plus the basic support of our church, to send the magazine wherever it is requested and welcomed. We give thanks to God for keeping our needs supplied during this forty-year adventure of faith. And we thank all our friends God has used to express His generosity to this ministry.

Look for our annual promotional letter in May.

*Pastor Lazaro and Maria Gutierrez, who have served the Central Church in El Paso, TX, for nearly 20 years.*



*Alfonsa Cabrera and her husband, Adolfo, were baptized by Pastor Antonio Gonzalez of the Dundee, FL, church prior to the Lord's Supper.*



*Back in the winter, baptism of a new convert in the Salt Lake City, UT, church was assisted by Minister Ramon Ruiz of Mexico (right). Brrrrrr!*

# Missions Ministries

**William (Bill) C. Hicks, Director**

Dear Faithful Supporters in the Harvest:

Greetings in the name of Jesus! I'd like to tell you about what's happening in Missions Ministries around the world. Because of the volume of news, here are some briefs. I encourage you to visit [www.cog7missions.org](http://www.cog7missions.org) for the details.

**Home Missions and Church Planting.** Dr. Tom Cheyney, the resource team leader of the Church Planting Group of the Southern Baptist Convention, will be our guest speaker on Thursday, Friday, and Sabbath afternoon sessions (October 21-23) at the North American Ministerial Council in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He will share "The Skill Sets Necessary to Lead in Church Revitalization." Starting new churches and trying to revitalize existing ones are challenges to all denominations in North America, where thousands of congregations close every year. Please pray that the Lord will bless our time together and help our ministry answer the challenges that face us.

**Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) efforts in Haiti.** Ongoing support is provided for various groups in Haiti as they work to rebuild their lives and property.

**Orphans and Widows Ministries,** supported in Nicaragua, have sent us photos of the Garden of Eden child-feeding project updates. The orphan sponsorship continues in Kenya, Zambia, and Sierra Leone as well.

**Cristo Viene.** As of early 2010, this missionary support fund of the International Ministerial Congress provides sponsorship to some 107 evangelists in 16 countries. Many of you contribute \$20 per month so that we can tell the world "Christ is coming!"

**India.** Visit our site to learn of our South India Projects, Khammam district efforts, as well as the first women's vocational training graduates sponsored by your Orphans and Widows Fund.

**Africa.** The work on this great continent is growing in many areas because of your faithful support of Missions Ministries. Online you will find the recent report from Malawi, the Zambian project reports, and your invitation to a CoG7 conference in Kenya this December.

**Southeast Asia.** Online read of Disaster Relief Fund efforts in the Philippines and the recent mission of the Australian church to New Zealand.

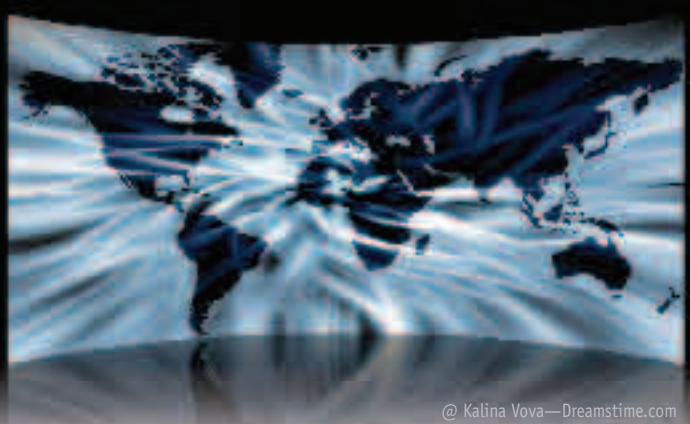
**Pakistan.** A SHINE mobile medical dispensary is being planned for the CoG7 in this country. This outreach will be manned by our missionary Pastor Shamas Pervais, a healthcare provider. He read in our literature about the SHINE medical and dental missions and asked to use the name for their effort as well.

All these missions are sponsored by offerings to Missions Abroad and Cristo Viene, DRF, and other projects. Thank you for supporting Ministries Ministries!

Your co-worker in the harvest,  
William (Bill) C. Hicks  
[www.cog7missions.org](http://www.cog7missions.org)

Missions Ministries is making a world of difference . . .

# International Tour



@ Kalina Vova—Dreamstime.com

## South America

**T**he Church of God (Seventh Day) in South America embraces a scattered but growing fellowship of brethren in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Of these, the largest is in Brazil, where the Adventist Church of Promise (IMC member since 1982) alone serves more than 1,000 congregations. The newest missions are in Chile and Peru, and the Zone 3 representative is Jorge Gillig of Argentina.

**Iquique, Chile.** Our first visit to the new church in Chile was in August by Jorge Gillig of Argentina. In the photo above, the congregation's leader, Enrique Vega, performs the first baptism in the church there since they recently affiliated with CoG7. We pray for God's blessings for Brother Vega, as well as for our new sister in Christ, Claudia Ramos, and for our new brother in Christ, John Perez. Claudia is a psychologist who works with youth, and John is a member of the Chilean Air Force. We have great hopes that their efforts will serve to further develop our church in Chile.



**Lima, Peru.** Recently evangelist Waldo Frick from Argentina visited Pastor Ruben Cruz and the congregation in Lima. The photo below was taken during his visit there. We are truly thankful for the cooperation of our brethren in Argentina in helping with the Peruvian mission.

These new efforts in Chile and Peru, and others around this great continent, are being supported by your faithful offerings to Cristo Viene, the missionary support fund of our International Ministerial Congress and of Missions Abroad.





## Sidetracked?

The story of Israel's wilderness wanderings is a fascinating account of divine love

against the backdrop of human depravity. The journey from Goshen to Canaan could have taken only a few weeks, but sidetracked, it took forty years!

Discouraged by inconveniences of the desert, the Israelites now considered Egyptian bondage better than Canaan's promise. Each step forward was followed by two backward, and survival was their chief goal — classic signs of sidetracked believers. Another serious sign: Things they saw and felt were easier to grasp than faith.

There's no better example than the dramatic incident in which many Israelites were bitten by venomous snakes (because of their rebellion) and died. God responded to their plea for mercy in an intriguing way: "So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived" (Numbers 21:9, NIV). This served as a means of immediate deliverance and an object lesson of salvation to come through faith in Christ. By the simple act of "looking," the Israelites were saved from the snake's venom, just as by simply believing (in Christ) we are freed from sin's curse. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jesus used this incident to illustrate faith and the new birth: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15, NIV).

Sadly, however, that symbol of salvation became an object of idolatry. Some four hundred years later, the account of King Hezekiah's reign began like this: "He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been

burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)" (2 Kings 18:4, NIV).

The symbol meant more to them than the reality it pointed to. So they not only kept the snake around for centuries but also worshipped it. *Nehushtan*, translated, is "foolishness." That puts it mildly.

Because Christians are prone to the same folly, Paul counsels us to learn from Israel's mistakes (1 Corinthians 10) and later warns, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3, NIV). The subtlety of the serpent was in distracting Eve's gaze from God. In the same way, Satan distracts our gaze from Christ. Our goal of conformity to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) happens naturally as we fix our gaze on Him (2 Corinthians 3:16-18) in pure devotion.

Faith in Christ is not a leap in the dark; there's plenty of evidence that the Galilean Carpenter really lived, died, and rose again. But faith is the heart confidence of things we cannot see and prove (Hebrews 11:1). It is the basis of justification by which Christ's righteousness is credited to sinners. The Reformers saw this faith-thread running through Scripture as the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.

So if you're sidetracked, if it's easier for you to embrace symbol than reality, or if you're frustrated by complicated Christianity, hear these lines from W. A. Ogden's fine gospel song:

I've a message from the Lord, Hallelujah!  
The message unto you I'll give;  
'Tis recorded in His Word, Hallelujah!  
It is only that you "look and live."

Fixing our gaze upon Christ changes us into His image and turns duty to delight.

— Whaid Guscott Rose  
General Conference President



You shall rise [to give honor] before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD (Lev. 19:32).

## CoG7 Appreciates Seniors!

Thanks to the Ontario, California, church, which recently held an Elders Appreciation Sabbath for senior adults, shown here. BA extends this honor to all those servants of the Lord whose silver hair is, according to Proverbs 16:31, a crown of glory.

Back row (L to R): Fernando Mendez, Mary Straub, Malou and Sesong Yap, Tom and Ruthann Sertick, Laura and Ruben Zaragoza, Jr. (pastor). Middle row (L to R): Ruben Zaragoza, Sr., Andy and Donna Carpenter, Lawanna Adams, Donna Dailey-Alvarez, Pearl and Mike Buchanan, Joan Harvey. Front row (L to R): Monica Zaragoza, Evelyn Mercer, Bertha and Alvia York, Irene and Tom Robinson, Felipe Escalante, Maria Baca.