

# BA

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## Love's Long Journey

- A husband's heart (p. 4)
- Long-distance love (p. 6)
- Times of refreshing (p. 18)



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## 2013: Year of the Spirit's Fruit

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*Our mistake: On page 17 of the March-April BA ("My Journey") that's Mike Wallace's daughter, not his son, ahead of Mike in the photo.*

### Scripture quotations

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**Calvin Burrell:** Editor

**Sherri Langton:** Associate Editor

**Keith Michalak:** Director of Publications,  
graphics

**Sylvia Corral, Raul González:** Translation,  
proofing

**LeRoy and Hope Dais, Linda Michalak:**  
Correspondence, proofing, clerical

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## Partly Personal

If you've read this column much the past fifteen years, you may recall that I'm big on April through August. It's family season for us — lots of birthdays and anniversaries. The first of our seven grand-girls graduates from high school in May, and our eight grand-boys like their summer hikes and walks (some in strollers) with Papa.

I hope you'll browse our varied items on love, sex, and marriage (pp. 4-10). Find something to share with your family on a restful Friday evening or after Sabbath lunch. Investing the best of time and affection with your spouse, your children, and your extended family pays "up" dividends, regardless of which way the market and culture are headed.

On page 27 you'll find an announcement of my new ministry assignment with the Church. I've been saying that the BA needs someone under three-score and ten at the helm, so a search is underway for an editor to lead the magazine into 2014 and beyond. Meanwhile, we carry on this work we've enjoyed since '97.

The most valuable words in this issue may be a sentence or paragraph in "Spiritual Stimulus: The Church and Its Spirit-Helper" (pp. 18-22). The questions we posed to a couple dozen fellows in February are about the current levels of faith, hope, and love among us — and how the Holy Spirit might grow the Church up this year. Now you can read their answers and write your own.

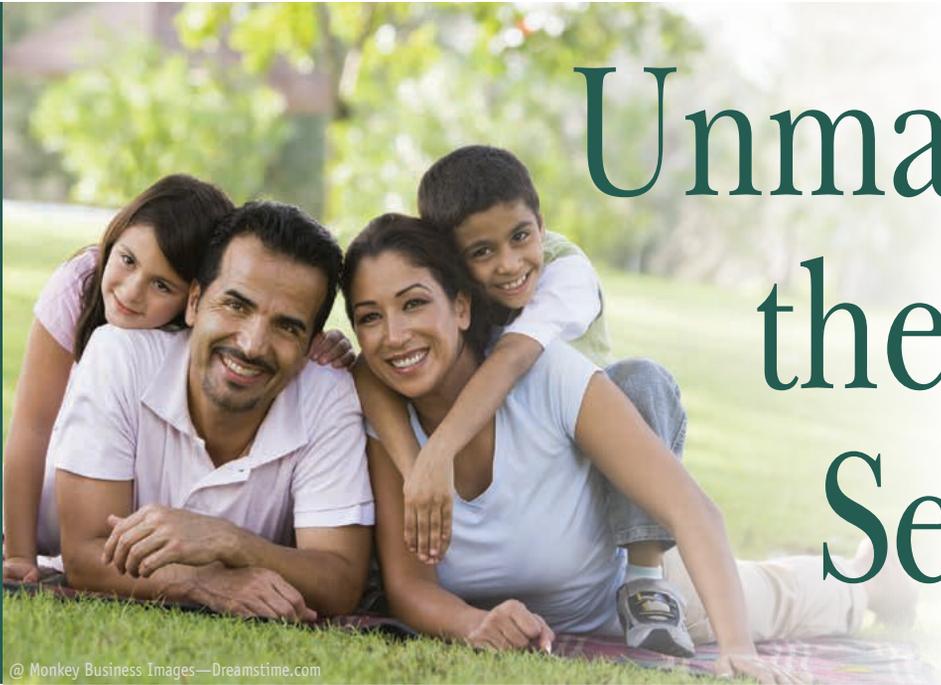
For readers who were aware of directional differences among G. C. men in Pheasant Run, Illinois (2011), my hope and prayer is that this printed exchange will signal the intent of most or all of us to put the residual stress of that skirmish behind us. For those who remain mostly unaware of it, please continue in prayer for us.

In most squabbles that so easily beset our homes, our workplaces, and, yes, our churches, which do you think is more important: for one of us to be right, or for all of us to unite?

We hope to see you in Omaha, July 1-6, especially at our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary BA bash on Friday morning! To register and reserve a room, see page 27.

— Elder Calvin Burrell





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# Unmasking the True Servant

Learning the connection between Christ and a Christian family man.  
by **Brian Franks**

**A**s a teenager, I considered myself a great servant for God and His people. I thought I had it all figured out, with nothing left to learn.

When I became engaged, I kept this attitude. I thought I could handle being a husband and then a father. No problem. But I hadn't realized the difference between being a good helper for a few hours on weekends and being a true husband of a 24/7 wife.

Just as I started getting the husband role down, the kids came along and it was back to square one. In the process I found that I had no idea what being a real servant means. I had learned only to don that mask a little when I wanted to. Marriage and fatherhood, though, were drastically higher callings.

## Flawed assumption

A most important passage on marriage is Ephesians 5:22-32. Sadly, my understanding of what it meant to love my wife as Christ loved the church was greatly flawed. I thought I needed to self-sacrifice about the same amount of time I wore the servant mask at church. I thought I could be distant and unhelpful, mostly doing my own thing, and that would be marriage.

This was no personal mission statement, crafted over several hours, then printed and hung on a wall. It was an unspoken, largely unacknowledged assumption tucked away in my head. It took me two years of marriage just to figure out that I had this assumption.

Then I discovered Ephesians 5. What did it really mean for Christ to die for the church? What did it mean that the husband needs to give his life for his wife?

We can rely on our sinful nature to be self-seeking to a fault.

We can rely on ourselves to seek our own good first and then, if we feel like it, help others.

In God's Spirit and Word, however, this need not be so. This human attribute of selfishness is to be substituted with real servanthood. With our old man dead in Christ and buried at baptism, we are to take up our cross daily. This gospel truth directly applies: If the man doesn't lay his life down for his bride and bear her burdens with his, the model of a godly marriage is slighted; the mark is missed.

## Dying to self

Relating this to the physical, we understand that the man will use the money he makes to support his family, renouncing the desire to spend it all on "manly" things. Family needs come first. We may see this in sharing possessions we've accumulated, but what about sharing time with our wives and children? What about

sharing our mental and emotional selves with our families?

I'm not saying men should go touchy-feely or "get in touch with their feminine sides" or be emasculated in this process. Rather, we need to die to ourselves and live for Christ – the highest form of manhood. This is tough for most men. It would be a lot easier not to put in this kind of effort.

My sinful nature would rather go to the sports bar and grille and watch every football game. It would rather come home and surf the Internet or just watch TV. In the world, this is not so bad. But God has much higher standards.

Consulting the Word, I need to give myself for my wife, to make her holy and cleanse her by the washing of water and the Word, to love her as I love myself (Ephesians 5:25-32). These are impossible callings without God. In His design there is little room in marriage for all that sports watching, web surfing, and doing my own thing. I am to spend myself in service to my wife.

Am I bound, then, to anything my wife says, without question? I am to be like Christ, the leader of His bride. His leadership was rooted in God, and so must mine be. I lead my wife as God leads me each day (1 Corinthians 11:3).

I know what my wife wants; she told me so! She doesn't want an absent-minded husband, and she doesn't want an emasculated one. She needs me to die to my worldly selfishness and be fully present. In so doing, I am daily sanctified with her through the work of Christ in us. We are not distracted and distant from each other – or from God.

## Wounding self

Beyond the marriage relationship, I need to serve my children with sacrifice. I need to train them in righteousness, passing on what God has done in my life. Another familiar passage drives more nails in the coffin of self: "These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7).

Why do these verses wound selfishness so much? Because passing on the faith and the commands of God is to happen *all the time*. Deuteronomy doesn't say, "Impress these things on your children by getting them to Sabbath school each week." The teaching responsibility goes to the best folks for the job: parents who are with their kids the most in their most formative years.

If I'm out conquering the world in my job or doing what I want after work, I can't keep this command very well. There's not much room for self here. I don't have time to train my children *and* satisfy my worldly desires. I can do both poorly, or I can do one very well.

## Lasting fruit

A man is asked to give up a lot to do this family thing right. Is it worth the sacrifice?

For me, the fruit of what God has sown in the death of my self-centeredness can already be tasted. My wife and sons give witness to the changes they've seen in me. I've mostly abandoned the self-centeredness they knew in my earlier addictions to football, channel surfing, and web browsing. The price has not been too steep. It's quite a bargain because of the harvest God has already given us. I can't even fathom how great the rest of this journey will be.

As a teenager, I thought I knew what it was to serve, but it was a mask. When I became a husband and father, the mask wouldn't work anymore. I had to actually become a servant, rather than just look like one. God is sanctifying me to that end, and it's a beautiful ride. **BA**

**Brian Franks** pastors the church in Walla Walla, WA. He and his wife, Jessica, have two children. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



I am to be like Christ, the leader of His bride. His leadership was rooted in God, and so must mine be.

# Going the Distance



Marriage . . . twenty minutes after they first saw each other. by Ernie Klassek

In 1956 I worked as a storeman for a private railway company in Burnie, Tasmania. During lunch break one sunny day, I looked out the door that opened to the railway tracks. Some Yugoslav railway workers were going back to work. A Greek who had sat by himself also got up and dropped a magazine as he walked away.

When I called out to him, he turned and said, "You take." It was a Greek magazine whose title in English meant "Treasure," and on the back page was a lonely hearts column. I wrote to the magazine office in Athens just for fun, with a few details about myself.

Within a few weeks I received a flood of letters. I opened one at random and saw, along with a short letter in halting English, a small passport-type photo of a stunning young lady.

## Correspondence and courtship

Then something happened I never thought would happen to me: I fell in love. I looked at that photo and read the letter repeatedly.

I was sharing a house with Karl, a fellow Austrian, at the time. When he returned home after work one day, I held a few envelopes out to him like a hand of cards. He laughed, took one, and opened it. It too had a photo of a young lady and a letter in very good English. We both began to correspond with our girls, soon proposed, and considered ourselves engaged.

After a year, Karl had saved enough money for an airline

ticket for his Stella. They met for the first time at the Melbourne airport and were married at a Greek Orthodox church the following day. On their return to Tasmania, they settled down and lived happily ever after. They are blissfully married to this day and blessed with a son, two daughters, and grandchildren.

Domna's and my story was a different one altogether. I had no money. I had paid cash for a little weatherboard cottage on a three-quarter acre block in the bush, and my parents had come out from Austria to live in Tasmania — a dream come true in their twilight years.

Another year later, Domna went to the World Council of Churches in Thessaloniki, which then contacted its office in Melbourne. The council offered to bring Domna to Australia on a migrant ship and accepted my deposit of £6 and monthly repayments of a similar amount to cover the cost of her voyage.

Domna boarded the Italian ship *Flaminia* in early October 1958. I went to the Registrar of Births, Deaths, and Marriages near the little airport at Wynyard to register our intention to marry. Domna received her copy in the mail when her ship tied up in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

## Meeting and marriage

I had also paid for her flight from Melbourne to Wynyard. When Domna stepped off that Trans-Australia Airlines plane on the morning of November 4, 1958, I walked across the tarmac to greet her. As we looked each other in the eyes for the first

time, I kissed her on the forehead and both cheeks. Don't ask me what we said to each other. Neither of us remembers.

Karl, with the biggest smile I have ever seen, waited for us to get Domna's suitcase off that antique wrought iron luggage trolley with a wooden tray. (They were still using it in 2001 when Domna and I went on a nostalgic visit back to Tasmania.) He showed us to his beaten-up old car and drove to the little registry office just up the road. Though I didn't time it, it wouldn't have been more than twenty minutes from the moment we met until the registrar pronounced us husband and wife.

Back at the little weatherboard cottage in the bush (with neither electricity nor running water), my mum awaited us with a lovely meal and my dad with a flagon of red wine.

What about our honeymoon? Well, when we got up the next morning, Domna asked what she could do. When I told her I wanted to finish the paling fence for a windbreak, she was more than happy to help me line up the palings as I nailed them to the rails.

Karl and Stella, well pregnant, took us to the Latrobe agricultural show on the weekend and, sometime later, to the romantic Cradle Mountain Reserve. After that, I had to go back to work.

## Clue to companionship

Considering that we came from totally different cultures and had limited communication (part Greek, part English), I suppose many a marriage counselor

would have given our marriage little or no chance of success. But they would have been wrong because Domna and I were always sure that we were meant for each other. God had brought us together. We had several clues for that, but I'll just relate one.

Not long after she sent her first letter to me, Domna was resting on a hot summer's afternoon in her parents' mud brick cottage when her sister brought her some mail delivered earlier. Enclosed with the letter addressed to her she found a photo of a young man. As she looked at it, she called out to her sister, "That's the one I saw in my dream just then — a young man handing me a kitchen knife, and I took it!"

Along "down under" lines, the fourth of November 1958 fell on a Tuesday. As the first Tuesday in November is the day for the Melbourne Cup — the race that stops the nation for about half an hour every year — people who got to know Domna always assured me that I had backed a winner.

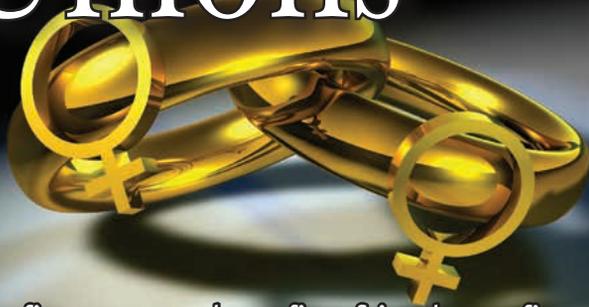
The Lord blessed us with two boys and three girls, and as time went by, He added sixteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren to the Klassek clan.

Well, that's about it from my memory lane. **BA**

**Ernie Klassek's wife, Domna,** passed away in 2009. The couple is pictured (left) when they first met November 4, 1958, at the Wynyard airport.



# Strange Unions



Like fire, sex can be a fine friend or a fierce foe. by James McBride

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Human relationships, it is claimed, are a kaleidoscope where any mix goes: any man with any woman, or man with man, or woman with woman, or man with child. Even, perish the thought, with animals. (Germany is proposing a law against this growing menace.)

Doubtless, sex is at the heart of the human condition, a built-in urge to propagate the race. When perverted at the individual level, the urge corrupts global culture.

## Divine appointment

Although the sexual relationship among humans is now confused, it was not always so. In the beginning, the Creator defined it as the union of one man and one woman for life, a blueprint for all humanity throughout time.

This pattern has been taken up by all nations, with few maverick exceptions. It was what we call

marriage — the union between a man and a woman, publicly recognized as a basic social unit.

Deviation from that pattern has adverse consequences. We are familiar with the effects of promiscuity: disease, disruption of family life by adultery and divorce, the social impact of homosexuality and pornography. On top is the huge social and financial burden of broken and dysfunctional families: legal costs, welfare, etc.

## One flesh

The lifetime union of a man and woman produces stability through family environment, based on the principle of mutual support through every trial of life. The breakdown of family life, with its social consequences, bears witness to this principle. And throughout the Scriptures the sexual relationship is protected, sacrosanct.

The foundation principle is “a man [shall] leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave [attach himself] unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). It applies universally — an equal partnership with distinct physical and psychological roles.

## Grand design

The creation of man is no accident — not a “divine experiment.” It is the initial step in God’s grand design, His planned family. Writes Malachi: “Did not he make one? . . . And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed” (2:15).

God created one pair, united them as one flesh in marriage with the ultimate purpose of raising up, through millennia, His one family — a race of immortal, spiritual beings in His image (1 Corinthians 15:42ff; Ephesians 3:14-16; 4:20-24; 5:31, 32).

The God-defined purpose of such a closed union is frustrated by any deviation from the blueprint. (Some deviations are identified in Leviticus 20.) The sole form of sexual union instituted by God is between one man and one woman united in marriage — for life. It’s a union that reflects the divine purpose. And it’s undermined in hearts hardened by rejection of God (Romans 8:7). **BA**

**James McBride**, from Lincolnshire, England, edits *New Horizon* magazine of the Churches of God Outreach Ministries (Tulsa, OK). Scripture quotations were taken from the King James Version.



# Walking in Purity: The Road Less Traveled



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When and where did you first \_\_\_\_\_? by **Danette Fields**

A few summers ago I was working as a trail guide at a horse ranch. The other wranglers and I spent the afternoons in a hot barn cleaning out horse stalls. Between the heat and the repetitive labor we'd pass the time by asking questions about each other's lives. One day, as we were tossing horse manure into the truck bed, one girl asked, "Where did you first have sex?"

All the wranglers started telling their "firsts" and finally turned to me.

"Danette," they insisted, "where did you first have sex?"

"Ummm. . . I haven't yet."

"Ever?"

"Ever."

My co-workers were left completely flabbergasted when they found out I was still a virgin. With jaws dropped, their immediate question was "Why?" quickly followed by, "Who do you say Jesus is?"

That day I had an amazing opportunity to talk about my faith with nearly all my co-workers. None of them could believe I

hadn't ever had sex, and they were desperate to know "why." They knew I had graduated from Bible college, knew I didn't swear, and knew I didn't party. But this was different! Not having sex in our culture today is radical. It made me stand out, and therefore made Christ stand out in me.

I began to realize that when Christians do have sex outside of marriage, non-believers look at them and say, "You do not even take your God seriously enough to follow, so why would I want

that?" However, when we follow God's plan for our sexuality, we become a blazing light for the gospel that cannot be snuffed out. This is the message that needs to be understood when it comes to purity. **BA**

**Danette Fields** is an educational presenter with Life Choices ([www.lifechoices.org](http://www.lifechoices.org)). This article was excerpted from Life Choices newsletter, Spring 2012. Reprinted by permission.

## Stats and Stunners

- Eighty percent of evangelical Christians admit to having sex before marriage. *National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy*
- The number of unmarried, cohabiting couples in America increased more than seventeen-fold since 1960.\*
- More than 60 percent of first marriages are now preceded by living together, compared to virtually none 50 years ago.\*
- Cohabitation is more common among lower educational and income levels. More than 40 percent of cohabiting couples are currently raising children.\*

\* Source: Thriving Pastor - Pulse Check, March 4, 2013



A check-up on parental priorities. **by Abiel Martinez**

If you are a parent and if God allowed you to keep one thing among all you have, which of His earthly blessings would you choose? Maybe you just bought the house you hoped to buy for so long, or an automobile you've always wanted. Or perhaps you love to read and your study is full of books.

If God allowed us to choose among all our blessings, I believe children should be first on the list — our heritage and reward from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). We worry about them having good nutrition when they're young and a good vocation when they're grown.

But there are more important matters than material things. The

question nagging me lately is this: Are my children believers? Are their hearts converted to Christ?

As a pastor, I desire with all my heart to present the gospel of Christ in each message and to emphasize to each congregant the need for faith to be cemented in Christ alone. Only those who are converted to Christ are truly saved and will be safe at His coming. My concern is, are my children among this group? Are they too receiving the gospel?

My father labored faithfully in the Church more than forty years, loving the Lord and doing His work. He died believing in Christ, but his faithfulness and dedication do not ensure my salvation. Being born in the church and raised in a Christian family does not mean I was already converted. Christ had to

change my heart and show me His mercy.

So I ask the Lord to have mercy upon my children. I don't assume that they are true believers and that it's a done deal just because they attend services and play an instrument in the worship team. They also need to know and accept the Lord.

I hope this concern of my heart is yours as well. May we assist our children to do well in life continually. But most important, may we lift these young ones, our greatest earthly possession, to God until their faith is assured in Christ (1 Timothy 5:8). **BA**

**Abiel Martinez** is a family man and serves the Potter's House in San Antonio, TX, as pastor.



# Questions & Answers

**Since** you don't believe in eternal torment of the wicked, please explain Jesus' thrice-repeated words about being cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched, "where 'Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched'" (Mark 9:43-48).

**For** many, the word *hell* quickly conjures up images of a dark yet burning underworld where those who reject Christ suffer endlessly for their sins. This is *not* likely the image that those who heard Jesus speak these words or who recorded them in the Gospels would have understood.

The word *hell* in Mark 9 (also Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Luke 12:5) is translated from the Greek *Gehenna* and refers to the Valley of Hinnom south of old Jerusalem, where garbage and dead bodies (animals, vagabonds, criminals, etc.) were cast. A perpetual fire burned there to consume this putrefying matter, and worms thrived on carcasses around its edges. The work of neither fire nor worm was fully done as long as new material was added to the pit.

In Christ's day, the fire and worm of this *Gehenna* were common images for the place into which it was anticipated that those unfit for eternal life would be cast to their destruction. The "unquenchable" nature of *Gehenna* shows that nothing extinguished the fire or worms as long as anything remained there to be consumed (see Matt. 3:12b; Jer. 17:27b).

Both fire and worm could cease their work, however, and did — when the Valley of Hinnom ceased to serve that darksome purpose. The language of *Gehenna*, well known to the Jews of that day, was the language Jesus chose to warn His hearers against the end result of sin — apart from the remedy of God's grace (see also Rev. 20:14, 15).

— Elder Calvin Burrell

**Please** help me with 1 John 3:9: "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God" (also 5:18).

**This** difficult text must be understood in a way that harmonizes with the Bible's overall message. Let's look at two possible explanations that fail in this regard.

The first wrong interpretation redefines the new birth like this: Since no one always does the right thing and never sins (1 Kings 8:46; Rom. 3:23), then "born of God" mentioned in 1 John 3:9 must be at the future resurrection, not a present experience for Christians. This solves the problem of our war against sin by saying that we lose some battles because we're not yet born again.

But this explanation opposes the many texts that speak of being born again *now* by the Spirit of God (John 1:13; 3:3-8; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 4:7; 5:1).

The second wrong slant on 1 John 3:9 is that of "sinless perfection": Because true Christians have God's Spirit (like Jesus had), they don't sin. If they do sin, they show themselves to be "of the devil" (vv. 8, 10) and must repent and be reborn all over again.

This same epistle refutes the idea of sinless perfection now: "If we say that we have [present tense verb] no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1:8).

First John 3:9 speaks of the general practice of God's children. One who has been born of God cannot go on sinning continuously (present tense). We are capable of sin, and do sin, but we have no permission from the Spirit (seed) of God in us to choose that path. This is the tenor of 1 John 3:8-10, and all of Scripture.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



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# What Do You Want?

Bible believer's guide to all things desirable. **by R. Herbert**

A wise man once said that the first things we do in life are to map our world and want what we don't have. By nature, we are all creatures of desire and lust — our wants.

In the story of the first man and woman, Adam named everything in his world. The Bible shows he and Eve already pretty much had it all: a beautiful home, good job, access to the Tree of Life, with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil also present. But humanity's first parents learned the hard way that we can jump the tracks by wanting wrong things, or even right things in the wrong way.

The Garden of Eden story identifies more than one type of wanting. Eve saw that the forbidden Tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil was "good for food . . . pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise . . ." (Genesis 3:6), so she and her husband ate from it. The three forms of wanting here correlate with our physical needs (good for food), our emotional needs (pleasant to the eyes), and our deeper psychological aspirations (to make one wise).

None of these human desires is wrong if properly guided and controlled, but the story shows that when we look to forbidden sources to fulfill even healthy desires, the result is dangerous — even deadly.

## Dissatisfied attitudes

Ancient Israel found this to be true. During their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites focused

on their physical needs and comforts, while complaining about what God gave them. The manna narrative in Exodus 16 illustrates this, and Psalm 106:15 tells us that although God gave them their requests, He sent leanness into their soul (see also Psalm 81:10-12).

Do you live with a dissatisfied mind? Just as the Israelites did not find happiness in the fulfillment of their desires, we learn by sad experience that getting our wants doesn't always make us happy.

Rather than being content with our possessions as Scripture teaches (Hebrews 13:5), we tend to envy those who have things we want: a more expensive car, nicer home, bigger TV, latest iGadget, or any other physical

thing. What item is at the top of your personal “want list” in life?

Overcoming envious and shortsighted desires comes to some through learning that the quest for bigger and better things is endless and can never be satisfied. By God’s grace, contentment can come quickly to those who cultivate gratitude for what they have and understand that God offers everything truly important if we seek it with a right attitude according to His will.

### Right fulfillment

Whether being expelled from Eden or dying in the wilderness, the story of unguided and immoral wanting ends the same. Psalm 37 reminds us of the fate of those who try to obtain their wants in wrong ways (vv. 1, 2). In this psalm, David also points up the potential for fulfillment of all our right desires.

First, he discusses our physical needs: “Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture” (v. 3, NIV). Here, a life combining faith and good works puts us in position for God to care for our basic needs. Though economic hardship sometimes happens to His people, God does supply the needs of those who walk with Him (v. 25).

Next, the psalmist covers emotional needs for those whose devotion to God goes past the minimum level of obedience: “Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (v. 4). As our perspectives change and we begin to “want” rightly and unselfishly in all areas of life — especially our relationships with others — it becomes normal and

natural that our deepest desires will be granted.

Then, David points to a total giving-over to God: “Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun” (vv. 5, 6, NIV).

*Commit* here does not mean any weak statement of life-purpose. The word is a form of the Hebrew *gol*, used for the concept of “rolling,” as in a large, heavy stone (e.g., Genesis 29:3, 8). It implies a fully energetic moving or thrusting of our will — an all-out effort toward God’s way. This kind of commitment, David proclaims, results in eventual fulfillment of even our highest spiritual goals.

In this psalm, we see the fulfillment of everything we really want in this life and beyond: physical needs, emotional desires, and ultimately our spiritual aspirations. This is no selfish investment program of giving more to get more, but rather the development of our dedication to God and the resulting fulfillment of our needs and desires that He longs to meet.

### Wanting the best

While fulfilled desires according to God’s plan is good, it still falls short of the greatest things we can desire: God’s own attributes, especially His love (1 Corinthians 12:31–13:3). The gift of love is itself composed of many aspects (vv. 4-7). We may know these verses, but do we place qualities like patience, forgiveness, lack of envy, humility, and kindness atop our “want list” — the very gifts that God longs to give us through His Spirit?

To truly fill our lives, these aspects of God’s nature are, Paul wrote, the things we should yearn for above all else. We may want and receive a fuller, higher quality of love if we believe God wants to give that along with other things we rightly desire in life. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights . . .” (James 1:17).

Why not make up a want list of truly important things — with love at the top — and ask for those gifts? **BA**

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**R. Herbert** (a pseudonym) served as an elder in a Sabbathkeeping church for years.

### Evil Desires

Consistently, Scripture describes sinful men and women as victims of their evil desires (Proverbs 21:10; 1 Corinthians 10:6; 1 John 2:15). Sample these:

- The “intense craving” of the children of Israel for meat (Numbers 11:4)
- All “desires of the flesh and of the mind” by children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)
- The world’s friends lust, murder, covet, fight, and ask for pleasures (James 4:2-4)

# The Spirit

## ... according to Jesus in John's Gospel

by Calvin Burrell

God's Spirit is introduced early in the Bible (Genesis 1:2), before His Son (1:26; 3:15). Both the Spirit and Messiah-Son have a vital presence in the Old Scriptures, but not with the focus and frequency that come in the New.

Crossing the divide from Malachi to Matthew, we are immediately in a setting where Jesus is the pre-eminent Personage, a role that He retains through Revelation. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, remains a lesser figure in the drama of the four Gospels, until He bursts powerfully upon the church scene at Pentecost.

A page or so prior to the Acts 2 report of that awesome Day, Apostle John completes his well-loved account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. In this fourth Gospel more than the first three, we find promises and prescriptions of the Spirit's arrival, of His work in the church and the world from the apostles until the end of the age.

John's Holy Spirit report fits seven points:

1. Christ received the Spirit fully and baptized with the Spirit freely (1:32, 33; 3:34).
2. When our spirit is reborn of God's Spirit, we enter His spiritual kingdom (3:3-8).

**The** role of God's Son in redemption — reported in the Gospels and elaborated in the Epistles — is historical, non-repeatable, fundamental, and crucial!

The role of God's Spirit — previewed in John and elaborated in Acts and the Epistles — is contemporary, progressive, complementary, and dynamic!

3. Spirit is the essence of God. With truth, it's the essential character of our worship (4:23, 24).
4. Through the words of Christ, the Spirit gives life to every believer (6:63).
5. As "rivers of living water," Jesus anticipated the Spirit's fuller work (7:37-39; 4:7-14).
6. After the Last Supper, Jesus enfolded several "Spirit" teachings into His striking Upper Room Discourse (chapters 13–17).
  - Calling the Spirit "another Helper," Jesus promised that the Spirit would teach the disciples, remind them of Christ's words, and remain with them forever (14:16-18, 25, 26).
  - Jesus said He would send the Helper (i.e., "the Spirit of Truth") from the Father and that the Helper would testify of the Christ (15:26).
  - Christ assured the disciples it was better if He departed and the Spirit came to convict the world and guide them into all truth, which they could not then receive. The Spirit's role would not be to speak of the Spirit but to speak "what He hears," glorify the Son, and guide His disciples into all truth (16:7-15).

Jesus' favorite term for Holy Spirit in the upper room was *paraclete*, meaning "one called alongside to assist." This Greek word is translated variously as "Comforter," "Helper," "Advocate," "Counselor," and "Friend." A delightful find in John 14–16 is the link between the Holy Spirit's coming and the spiritual fruit of love, joy, and peace — the first three on Paul's famous list (14:15, 21, 23, 27; 15:9-13; 16:33; Galatians 5:22a).

7. The first day after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His fearful disciples and gave them His peace. He breathed on them, said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and sent them to preach the forgiveness of sins (20:21-23). **BA**



# Fight Club Creed

- I will shamelessly stand for Jesus Christ in word and action.
- I will fight to hell and back for my family and home.
- I will lead and be led. In the absence of orders I will take the lead to accomplish the mission. I will not leave any teammate behind.
- I will never quit or run from my enemy or my responsibilities. If knocked down I will get back up . . . there will always be fight left in me until I die.
- I will work harder than anyone else to be stronger physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- My word is my bond — with honor, character, compassion, strength and courage I will follow through.
- As a tender warrior I will keep my soul refreshed, fully alive, and balanced.
- I will battle injustice in our world defending the helpless, overlooked, and abused, so that freedom can reign.
- My training is never complete — I commit to a life-long pursuit of excellence, creativity, innovation and godliness.
- I will bravely and relentlessly carry the name of Jesus Christ and the proud tradition of the heroes of my faith until death falls upon me or Jesus takes me home.
- I voluntarily accept the hazards of my calling — I will not whine, complain or make excuses for my life, but will write a new legacy of hope and victory.
- I will not talk about fight club but will live out this creed with my actions — I will never be “that guy.” **BA**

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FightClub414.com.*

*For information about Fight Club and participation with a group of like-minded men, e-mail Todd Larson: toddlarsonfightclub@live.com.*



## My Journey

# Beyond a Jar of Jelly

by Linda Marie Freemyer

“I thought you might enjoy this,” congratulated Carol Jean Palmer, placing a jar of clear homemade jelly into my hand. Our 6 pound, 11 ounce daughter Shanda, fresh from the hospital, was the immediate prompt for this greeting by these neighbors.

*What an unusual gift, I thought, smiling. “Thank you” came from my lips.*

### Good neighbors

Nearly two years earlier as newlyweds, my husband, Richard, and I moved into a 620-square foot yellow dream cottage on Jenkins Street. Those in our neighborhood included a couple whose nighttime fights kept us awake, various young boys on bicycles, and the pristine Palmer home and family.

The Palmers had four daughters: Karen, Nancy, Barb, and Ramona. Ramona was a talkative nine-year-old who came to our car one day, chatting small talk. She quickly befriended my husband and me. After Shanda’s arrival, Ramona’s enchantment

with the friendly red-haired baby brought her often to our porch and hearts as she visited and helped with our newborn.

Over these two years in the neighborhood, I observed the politeness of Carol’s family, plus their regular Saturday church attendance. Barb and Ramona would occasionally have a water hose fight, but all in all Karen, Nancy, Barb, Ramona, and their mother, Carol Jean, were some of the nicest neighbors we’ve ever had.

The girls were bright, happy, and even apologetic. One time when Nancy, in her early twenties, accidentally backed their white Ford out of their driveway and into our embankment, her conscience was so well-tuned that she came to our house apologizing for the miniature dirt dent.

“I didn’t even see it,” I told Richard, explaining the damage. “That family is so nice.”

*I hope Shanda turns out that nice, I thought. What makes those kids so much nicer? What’s so different about them? Their church attendance?*

### Christian kindness

In my growing-up years, God put other extra-nice Christians along my path. My dear grandmother daily showed me an example of Christ’s love and humility by her quiet spirit. Pastor Chappell, my parents’ preacher, gave me a smile and a paperback New Testament. Still, I quit church at fifteen. Partying instead of praying was my norm.

Now that I had Shanda, that Christian kindness continued. Lola, my friend’s mother, brought us a tiny pair of moccasins for the baby and allowed me to borrow her bassinet. She showed love to me at every turn. I didn’t realize that God was working Jesus’ love into our lives through their kindness to our baby and us.

### Marriage problems

A joyful, giggly baby filled most of our next several months, but as the newness wore off parenting, the marriage part of my life began to get worse. Before the pregnancy, I had threatened to leave my husband. During the pregnancy, he taped his wedding ring to the front door and left —



for just a short time, thankfully. We knew how to keep a cute, clean house, enjoy our baby, and “party hearty” with friends – but not how to make a happy marriage. Still, I didn’t want to leave because of my strong connection with Richard’s Christian grandmother “mom.” I loved her nearly as much as my own dear grandmother. I truly didn’t want to leave his family, but it seemed more and more that our marriage wouldn’t make it.

### Spiritual change

One day in March 1978, God’s conviction was so strong, it seemed to fill our neighborhood. I knew I had to make a decision. But to stay married, I would need help. I had been running from God in a party lifestyle for five years, to the point I now doubted His existence.

Inside our little home, I cried out, “If You are real, make Yourself known to me.”

It was then I remembered Carol Jean. Hesitantly, I called her to come over to my house. She prayed with me, asking God to make the changes *through* me. It was enlightening to realize God *could* help me change – and that He *would*!

My deep concern lifted. I didn’t have to make a spiritual turnaround all by myself. God would put the ability and desire to change within me.

After this quiet, deep experience, the thought of a public confession of faith stuck in my mind. Too timid to go to church alone, I asked my mother to attend a nearby Baptist revival with me so I could go forward in public. But the church was engulfing. Strangers urged me to take my baby to the nursery. I was terrified.

My mother and I decided to keep Shanda with us in the pew. When I walked to the front at the close of the service, the minister looked surprised. I know I felt no

special presence of Christ in the message calling to the lost. From his reaction, maybe the minister didn’t either. God had called me days earlier when I got out of my car in front of my house. My heart had already responded in my own home.

After my public confession of faith, I went home truly feeling like a new person. But I had no desire to return to a big church, where I might be urged to put my baby in a nursery.

### Redemptive return

Back in our tiny dream home, with a clean heart I asked God about church attendance. On His cue, Carol Jean asked me to go with her family the next Sabbath.

“Can I carry the diaper bag?” Ramona said, volunteering to tote. This began my new life in church.

Five years of God’s patience – plus wonderful expressions of love, acceptance, gifts, and a friendly, godly family – helped bring me back to Christ. It also brought me back to the heart of my husband (we’ve been married over thirty-six years) and home.

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#### Linda Freemyer

has had poetry published in *Endless Horizons Daybreak*, *Best Poets of 2011*, and *Great Poets*

*Across America 2012*. A member of CoG7, she writes from Maryville, MO.



# Spiritual Refreshment

## The Spirit-Helper in CoG7

In view of the BA's and our church's recent themes regarding the Holy Spirit, we asked a dozen or so ministers to reflect on the corporate state of spiritual formation among us. This stimulus package of admonition and encouragement comes by four questions, the first of which gained the most response. — *Editor*



**BA: How can the Church be refreshed and healed in 2013?**

**T**hrough humility and a submissive spirit . . . Let each of us admit the brokenness in our lives due to the Fall. This whole life is a period of refinement, purification, and maturation till we come to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Let us recognize our own pride and its subtle, destructive effects in our lives, in our families, and in our church.

Let us welcome Christ's purifying work through others, allowing them to speak powerfully, sometimes painfully, into our lives.

• Through celebration of God's diverse gifts . . .

Let us acknowledge that God knows the needs of the church body and that, through His divine providence, He brings to us the people needed to accomplish His kingdom purposes in this age, in this organization.

Let us acknowledge the presence of Christ and the giftedness of God at work in others with whom we worship and serve.

Let us acknowledge the grace and gifts of God in all redeemed people wherever they are, willing to humbly learn from them and from the organizations they serve.

— *Larry Marrs*  
*Corunna, MI*



**W**hen offenses occur, tension and wounding bring a festering mistrust and discontent among us, like yeast in a lump of dough. Offenses that cause deep hurt do not come from the One who called us to relationship in Jesus (Matthew 18:7).

The Church has an enemy. His goal is sowing discord to take our eyes off Christ and turn our attention to self. The Enemy will place in your mind the thought that it is not your fault. He/she said or did that awful thing that hurt me! Let's cease the wounding, stop the gossip, and take bold moves to activate Matthew 5:23, 24 and 18:15-17 — before the Enemy gloats again.

Do we want to be refreshed this year? Let's unite to defeat the Enemy! Let's heal the hurt and make peace. If the Church is to be refreshed and healed in 2013, let it begin in each of us. No matter the issue, I ask you to find and read a few texts that teach us to "step up" and "clear up" what we've "messed up": Matthew 18:32-35; James 3:2;

t:



Computer icon meaning “refresh the program.”

Romans 16:17-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-13.

Refreshment for the church body cannot come – will not come – until the discord our enemy has attempted to sow is removed and the unity and beauty of our relationship in Christ is restored.

– Ken Lawson  
Cottage Grove, MN

**A**nalysis paralysis is a problem. What we must do is put into action what we already understand. Then the Lord will bring new understanding to us, and a kind of secret will be revealed. All the CoG7 membership will spread the good news with enthusiasm, the miracles will flow, and our Lord will come back soon.

– Raul Lopez  
Woodbridge, VA

**B**y seeking the Lord. As a prominent lady once said, “Just do it!” Turn your thoughts, your heart, your audible or silent expressions toward heaven. God’s always available when an earnest prayer is addressed to Him. “Seek the Lord while He may be found,” the prophet Isaiah advised. “Call upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6).

God hears the faintest cry from a sincere heart seeking relationship with Him. The assurance is that He can be found. And notice, “He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27). The fact is, God is right beside every man, woman, and child – even inside those who love Him. There’s reason to believe He wants to hear from us even more than we want to speak to Him.

If it’s restoration with Him that’s sought, God



is the source of that longing. He draws us more than we seek Him. A million ways of approaching God through Christ will work. Just come!

– Max Morrow  
Owosso, MI

**B**y applying the Bible truth of peace. Jesus left His peace with His followers (John 14:27).

Why then is the body of Christ not known for its peacemaking? Whenever possible, let us live peaceably with our brethren, celebrating that we share the same Parent and owe each other nothing but love. The love we experience from Him is to be dispensed to our brothers and sisters and not just bottled for our own use (1 John 4:7-21).

– Sam  
Holland  
Ancaster,  
Ontario



**B**y following 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people, who are called by my name, will 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” (NIV).

Returning to God and better times is always appropriate. The verse calls us to realize our need and humble ourselves — the toughest part. What does it take for us to see how far we’ve fallen? Total breakdown? Broken relationships? Everything falling apart?

It may show up when quiet disagreements escalate into indecorous verbal brawls in our home or in public. It could be embarrassment and shame of responding in an un-Christian way toward a brother.

Healing and restoration of relationships come first. Prayer for and prayer in unity bring revival! A most powerful work of the Spirit occurred when the early church was together praying — in one accord, in one mind, with one heart (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 42, 46; 4:24, 32; 5:12).

Start with the humility and brokenness mentioned in 2 Chronicles 7:14. It can begin at the top, in the middle, or at the grassroots. Leaders who model repentance are needed. Being poor in spirit, mourning, and meekness (Matthew 5:3-5) are comparable to a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51). This spirit and these



attitudes are not to be forgotten after conversion. As we grow in Christ, they will be deepened. Real revival starts with brokenness before God. Pride — humility’s opposite — is a sure way to quench the Spirit.

At some lower points in my ministry, I knew I was right and “they” were so wrong. How much better if I’d bowed my heart before the Lord, rather than plan my own strategy.

God always stands ready to heal! Will we confess and find repentance, focusing on the risen Lord, as did the early church? Let’s busy ourselves in His gospel work! Like the Good Shepherd, let’s tend the flock, the lambs, and the lost.

In humbling ourselves, repenting, giving and receiving forgiveness from God and man, healing is found. Who will lead the way?

— Steve Kyner  
Jamestown, ND



**BA: How might our convention theme of “Unity in the Spirit” refresh the Church? How should we prepare to receive it?**

**R**emembering the business sessions at the 2011 convention, a few members may be hesitant to attend this convention. But let us not forget how that week in Pheasant Run, Illinois, ended: not with open conflict or dissension but with reconciliation and a desire to work together. That spirit of unity has

continued, and the fruit of the Spirit’s good work among us will no doubt blossom as we meet in Omaha.



In preparing, we ought to do all we can in prayer and action to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). Read and meditate on the richness of Ephesians 4. Convention messages from this chapter will guide us through what it means to be united in our attitudes, beliefs, diverse gifting, and sanctified lifestyles. We will learn what it means to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). Don’t miss this opportunity for healing and growth!

— Israel Steinmetz  
Kansas City, MO

**L**et’s all pray now for these days of fellowship. Pray for the planners, teachers, and preachers; for the leaders of children and youth programs; for business sessions, worship teams, various committees; for safety and inspiration for everyone.

Let’s leave grouchy, grumpy, gripey, self-promoting attitudes, anger, and gossip at home, and come in the Holy Spirit’s power to be awesomely blessed by unity! Let’s get Spirit-filled and overflowing now to give testimony to each other, to Omaha, and to our Lord: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35, NIV).

— Ken Lawson  
Cottage Grove, MN



**BA: What steps should each of us be taking now to deepen and strengthen the Spirit's work in us? Is prayer enough?**

**F**rom the Spirit's initial, internal work (conviction) to His outward and evident work (transformation), we discover again and again that obedience is the key. Nothing else deepens or strengthens our experience in the Spirit more than yielding to His direction. Whether we are barely aware of His efforts to reveal to us our need for Christ or learning to recognize His direction in daily decisions or responding to His prompting to serve and reach out to others, the only response that leads to deeper experiences in Him is obedience to Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). In our local campaign on the Holy Spirit in the believer, we called this "supernatural" – God's in-

dwelling presence, His empowerment (giftings), and His perfecting work.

– Erik Dunn  
Houston, TX



**T**he true disciple of Christ will be in prayer often. However, prayer without regeneration does not bring salvation. First

and foremost, it is essential to be born again.

Being convinced of biblical precepts, then doing the best we can in human strength, is not sufficient for relationship with the Father and rewarding service to King Jesus. It takes a new birth – the life-forming power of the Holy Spirit in the redeemed believer.

Now drink deeply from the fountain that is Jesus Christ by developing a life filled with kindness and forgiveness. Be transformed constantly into a fully committed disciple. Let the believer prepare by understanding that the most mature section of that life cycle will be to offer oneself up in pure sacrifice.

– Chip Hinds  
Tahlequah, OK

**P**rayer is the unceasing task of Christians, but it must be mixed with action. What good is it to know the whole Bible if we never change according to God's Word?

When I have been in a problem, I don't look for anyone more guilty than I. Rather, I focus myself in seeking our Lord with all my heart – back to my first love, asking forgiveness for my sins. Rereading Isaiah 55:6-13 is like hearing the Lord's voice. Yahweh will have mercy on me. In my meditation I breathe, thinking that the Holy Spirit is coming into my entire being, giving me relief and healing in my spirit,



body, and soul.

No matter how big the problem, it's already solved, whether I can see the solution or not. It's just a matter of time, so I trust and wait. Sometimes I feel like a boy who's been told he will receive a new toy, so I just think, How will my Lord solve this?



– Raul Lopez  
Woodbridge, VA

**B**e tuned into the Spirit's work – in ourselves and in those around us. The Spirit of God sustains us firm in the faith and is active now as before. We must pray, discern, proclaim, and serve accordingly, not denying any of the Spirit's work.

– Sam Holland  
Ancaster, Ontario



**BA: Are we waiting on God to do great things through the Church? Or is God waiting on the Church?**

**G**od is already doing great things through His church. Visiting congregations, I see evidence of God's work – an anointing in every aspect of the Sabbath experience and a re-

flection of our active role in the body of Christ.

God's Word is consistently illuminated to hearts and minds through Sabbath school lessons, sermons, and publications. It is inspiring to see God's people respond to guidance and encouragement from the revealed text, communicated under His anointing.

Even in our diversity, the Holy Spirit unites us powerfully as we minister together in our regions, districts, nations, and around the world. Seeing God give fruit in each one is humbling.

What we say about God's church must match both our faith in Him and the evidence we see. What do our children and grandchildren hear when we speak of the Church? A long list of complaints, criticisms, and failures? The impression that God is not in control? That we are a pathetic group of people wandering aimlessly in the wilderness without hope?

Our younger generation should hear the truth from our lips. If God is working through us, they must hear us saying that "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy" (Psalm 126:3, NIV). They need to know that much has been accomplished, by His provision.

They should hear testimonies about missionaries, our outreach in the world. They ought to hear that we recognize the sealing, filling, gifting, and fruits of the Holy Spirit in our leadership and in every member.



Mephibosheth saw himself as a dead dog, crippled and unworthy of sitting at King David's table (2 Samuel 9). However, he experienced the king's kind grace and dined with his family at the king's table all his days.

God's church has reservations at the marriage supper of the Lamb, prepared by the King himself. Our words should not focus on our "crippled legs" but on the mantle of grace that covers us. We are heirs of the kingdom, awaiting the King's return, living in victory, joyously serving the Lord, announcing there is still room at the table!

— Heber E. Vega  
Upper Marlboro, MD

**G**od is not waiting for us to fill His kingdom with saved citizens. God is doing great things all over the world now! People in every nation, race, and language are being led of the Spirit to accept Jesus as Savior. Most of these future kingdom of heaven residents have never heard of our church!

God is ready to do something really good for CoG7 in North America. In the last three years, forty-four new men were ordained to the ministry and fifty-five new local pastors serve among us. Over one hundred students are enrolled in LifeSpring, planning to enter ministry in the next few years. God is calling men and women to ministry among us. Doors are opening for those He calls.

Are we a part of the greater effort of the body of Christ to carry the gospel to the world?

Of course we are. Are some of our churches growing? Yes, but not many. Some are declining.



God will not call believers, people, guests, and sinners to our churches if we're not ready to receive them, love them, come alongside them, and help them grow in grace and knowledge. If we can't sit by sinners and worship God, why would He bother to call them to attend with us? God is not in the business of calling people to Himself just for us to mess them up!

When local churches are ready to receive those God calls, God will send them to us (John 6:44, 45). If we are not ready to receive them, they won't show up at our place! We are in the people business, taking the gospel to sinners. God is waiting for us to do that work.

Let every church get ready to receive those God calls. Do not judge or condemn them, but love on them intensely. Include them in your worship and study circles. God is ready to use us to help fill that city whose streets are paved with gold and where the Tree of Life stands ready to nourish us all for eternity. Let's get to work, Church!

— Ken Lawson  
Cottage Grove, MN

BA

# Practical Love for 2013

A lowly good deed outranks a lofty good intention. **by John Schott**

**H**ow practical is love? Can we see, hear, or touch it? Or is it mostly an abstract, ethereal term — hard to define with our five senses? If love is real as concrete, God's people should manifest it for all to see, to hear, to experience.

Paul's earnest desire was that he and the church be united in Christ during suffering and persecution. Four times in one verse he probed for love's presence, using the words *if* and *any*: "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion . . ." (Philippians 2:1).

Knowing that even bits of hope and love in Christ could anchor their lives in the storm, he completed the thought: "then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose" (v. 2).

Yes, love is practical — especially in bad times when relationships are sorely tested. Christ

was the Rock to whom Paul and the church would fervently cling and through whom they would embrace and support each other. Practical indeed!

Love is the basis for church, as our Master said: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35) and "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand" (Matthew 12:25). A divided, marginalized church and ministry are *not* for us, because a loving and united church and ministry *are*!

Let's be a church that introduces people to Christ and stays true to Him. God's love in the gospel is our priority, our hope. It is practical for us to preach and hear this gospel often, teaching it at every opportunity.

Let's be a church that reverences God's house of prayer. Gathered each Sabbath, we are not to quarrel or seek our own ways but worship God, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath" (1 Timothy 2:8, NKJV). Holy hands are practical, prayerful hands, reaching up to God in thanks and out to others in service. Let us rarely be absent from one another on Sabbath.

Let's be a church that keeps Christ's words by loving our enemies and praying for them, not killing others with our words or judging them unworthy. We ought to strive to live our Lord's teachings, even if we have just failed one for the thousandth time.

Read these practical verses:

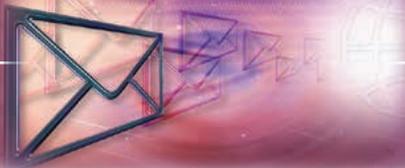
Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (Philippians 2:3, 4).

Until we draw our final breath or Jesus comes, may we evermore be found in humble love and service.

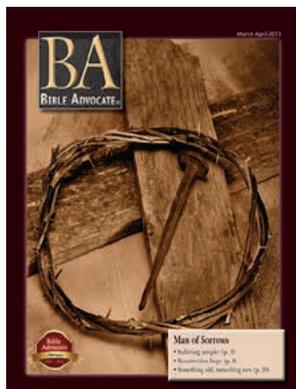
Just as faith and unity have marked our past, may they continue to be a hallmark of our church in 2013. **BA**

**John Schott**, a schoolteacher and pastor, serves the Petersburg, MI church with the support of his wife, Susan. Scripture quotations taken from the *New International Version*, except where noted.





# Mail Bag



## Sabbath in March-April

I really appreciated Wilbur Dornburger's *wonderful* points ["Simple Sabbath Truths," p. 13]. Brian Frank's ideas of starting our own businesses to protect the Sabbath were great ["Sabbath Works," p. 12]. My husband and I have worked in service jobs and found that if you tell prospective employers at first interview about Sabbath and the constraints involved, they usually work with you to get Sabbath off. Once he was offered full pay to study meteorology and air traffic control, but when he was told they couldn't guarantee Sabbath off, he turned down the offer and walked away. We have not suffered from that!

P. L.  
Oklahoma City, OK

## More on Sabbath work

It would be wonderful if we could create more "Sabbath-friendly" jobs. My last job required me to work on Sabbath. With a letter from my pastor, I was able to take time off for Sabbath school, church service, and that all-important potluck. While I tried for shifts not on the Sabbath, I ended up with ones that were. As a single parent in an economically

depressed area, I was going to hold on to my good-paying job.

I am not working on the Sabbath any longer. When I had to, my day was still blessed, knowing I was going to be renewed and refreshed at church and able to carry that back to the rest of my workday. Who says the Lord didn't use my contented heart to minister to the people I came in contact with that day? It is what we keep in our hearts that truly matters most.

D. D. M.  
Bend, OR

The article "Sabbath Works" by Brian Franks offended me! How in the world are we ordinary high school educated working stiffs supposed to just go out and start up a business? Yes, I have been blessed in many ways in my life, and I do have weekends off, but I have never been blessed to the point I can just go out and start my own business.

B. D.  
E-mail

## Hell: pro and con

Dirk Anderson's "Does Hell Burn Forever?" article [p. 15] was a masterpiece of well-documented writing about the "mystery" of hell that has confused many well-meaning Christians and God's people for more than 2,000 years.

The examples of "forever" reminded me of my favorite "hell on earth" story. How many times have we been put in the "doghouse of hell" by a well-meaning spouse or person and told we will never get out until they let us out?

I have solved the problem. I have built a doghouse with a back door. Therefore, I can open and leave the doghouse when God says

so, even though I have been placed in "hell" forever or until my spouse or friend says so.

May all of your doghouses have back doors.

B. M.  
Liberty Center, OH

I'm sorry, Dirk Anderson, but you may be wrong. Hell may burn forever. "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10) is not a metaphor, allegory, simile, parable, euphemism, idiom, synecdoche, or some such. Fudging and hedging doesn't work here. Unlike we mortals who die in our sins, the Devil, false prophet, and the beast will be tormented forever. Sinners will burn up — only ashes will remain, although the smoke of their burning ascends forever (symbolic?). Like it or not, the Devil, being a unique spirit of sorts (angelic), gets no such break. The Father, kind and loving as He is, doesn't have much love for the Devil. His eternal torment is "just."

D. W.  
Kittredge, CO

As a Seventh-day Adventist, I enjoy your publication. We have members of your church who attend our services because there is no CoG7 in our area.

Both our denominations teach the truth regarding this subject (hell, by Dirk Anderson). A text that has been overlooked [also] supports our position regarding this matter: Revelation 21:4. This text could never be fulfilled if hell were something that went on forever throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

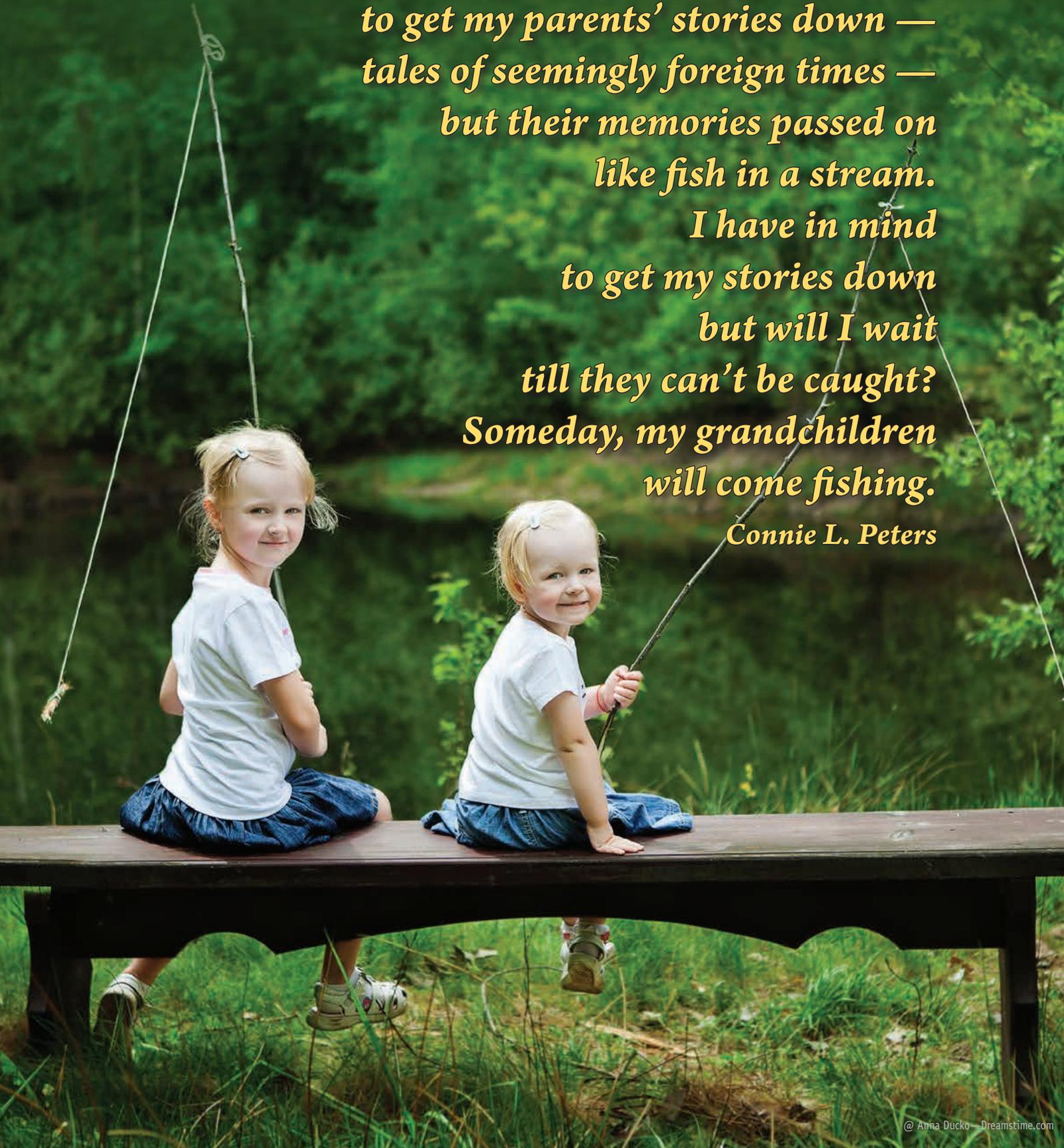
W. F.  
Owensboro, KY

# Legacy

*I had in mind  
to get my parents' stories down —  
tales of seemingly foreign times —  
but their memories passed on  
like fish in a stream.*

*I have in mind  
to get my stories down  
but will I wait  
till they can't be caught?  
Someday, my grandchildren  
will come fishing.*

*Connie L. Peters*





## **Cristo Viene**

supports 50+ native missionaries in 20 countries (\$10+ per month)

## **Disaster Relief**

provides aid to CoG7 and others when, not if, the next disaster strikes

## **Widows and Orphans**

supports those with little through a small monthly gift

## **SHINE**

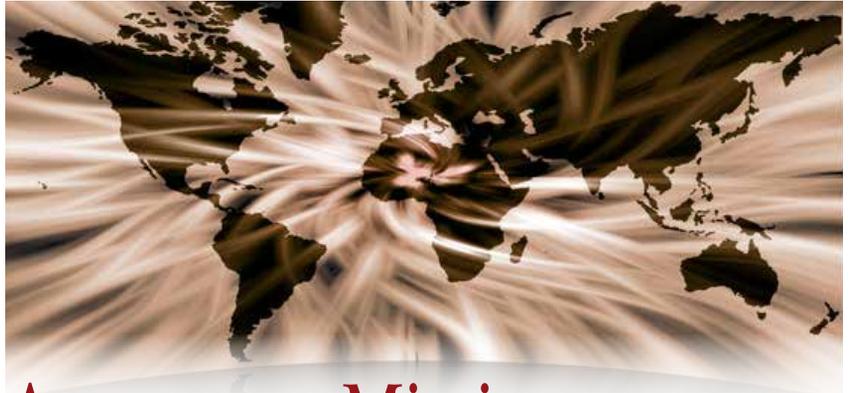
medical and dental services freely given to those who cannot pay

## **Change for Your World**

annual IMC fund offering, on June 29 this year

A gift to G. C. Missions may be your best soul-winning dollar!

G. C. Missions, P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233  
E-mail: [office@missions.cog7.org](mailto:office@missions.cog7.org)



## Accent on Missions

### **Calvin Burrell, Director**

General Conference Missions (a.k.a. Missions Abroad) embraces the task of assisting established mission churches around the world and of planting new missions in countries where CoG7 does not exist. To accomplish these tasks, we focus on

- sending our literature broadly and freely, as funds permit (BA magazine, tracts and leaflets, quarterlies)
- supporting native missionaries to preach and serve the gospel in their countries (through Cristo Viene)
- encouraging, training, and guiding mission churches through their contact with area representatives and this office

When mission churches in new countries reach a certain level of growth, stability, and self-governance, they may apply for (national) membership in the Church's International Ministerial Congress (IMC). As a charter IMC member (one of the few with active missions programs), Missions Abroad in the United States and Canada serves the newer English language member churches in their growth and maturation. The Church in Mexico provides similar services throughout Latin America, and we are reaching into regions and nations where other languages dominate as well.

Auxiliary programs operated by G. C. Missions are the Disaster Relief Fund, Widows and Orphans Ministry, and SHINE Medical and Dental team.

I can report that, in the past year, all the above facets of G. C. Missions work have continued apace. For the improved status of our mission efforts around the world, we are indebted to the grace of God at work among us through the innovation of my predecessor, Elder Bill Hicks, the several missions leaders who came before him, the leadership of IMC President Ramon Ruiz, and your gifts.

To receive a monthly e-update on missions with current needs listed, please e-mail your address to [office@missions.cog7.org](mailto:office@missions.cog7.org).

## Personnel Notices

**Eastern Canada and NAMC:** Leeroy Williams of Scarborough, Ontario, has been appointed superintendent of Canada's Eastern District. He replaces Pastor Samuel Holland, recently elected president of the North American Ministerial Council.

**Missions and BA:** The vacancy left by Elder Bill Hicks' departure as Missions director has been filled. The Conference board appointed Elder Calvin Burrell to complete this term (through June 2014). The search for a new BA editor to replace Elder Burrell later this year is underway.

**Ministerial licenses** have been granted by NAMC (by its License and Credentials Committee) to Johny Solarzano (Fairfield, Connecticut), Kirk Grant (Pottstown, Pennsylvania), Marvin Espana (Jamaica, New York), Gerson Gonzalez (Claremore, Oklahoma), Stephen Salazar (San Antonio, Texas), Bryan Cleeton (Sacramento, California), and Allo Sanchez (Hidalgo, Texas). Also, Eddie Villalba (Denver, Colorado) and Samuel Holland (Ancaster, Ontario) were elevated from license to ministerial credentials.

**Pastors needed:** An English language church in Alabama and a Spanish one in North Carolina need full-time pastors. Interested men may contact Southeast District Superintendent Steve Krome (423-710-3911; [sdkrome@yahoo.com](mailto:sdkrome@yahoo.com)).

The Conroe, Texas CoG7 also seeks a licensed minister of the NAMC to serve as pastor. For information or employment



G. C. President Whaid Rose: "This is my call to all the Church's members and friends to attend our convention in Omaha, Nebraska, July 1-6. This event is truly 'a cherished tradition' of rich worship, Bible study, business sessions, fellowship of old friends, and much more. The sermons and studies in Omaha will unpack the theme 'Unity of the Spirit.'"

"Omaha? This historic city has made many family-friendly improvements, yet retains a small-town feel. It's not too far from anywhere! I'm asking you to check out the registration info and hotel rates here and, if you haven't already, sign up for Omaha."

Go to [cog7.org/convention/](http://cog7.org/convention/) and call 402-998-4215 for a room.

application, contact Justin Brann (936-697-1089; [justinbrann@gmail.com](mailto:justinbrann@gmail.com)).

**Personal accolades** to LeRoy and Hazel McGill of the Marion, Oregon church, who celebrate their 72nd wedding anniversary May 15, and to Lavern and Wilma Ling of the Meridian, Idaho church, who celebrated their 70th anniversary in late 2012.

## CoG7 Books

After several years of research and writing, Elder Robert Coulter has completed his full-length story of the Church of God (Seventh Day), from the mid-1800s through 2012. That story, in book form, is expected to be available for distribution by June 30. Obtain your copy at the convention in Omaha, or order it from the Bible Advocate Press, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

**Men's Retreat**

**Fathers, grandfathers, and sons are invited to Alfred, North Dakota's Still Waters Prairie Retreat, June 7-9. Theme: "Spiritual Leadership in Families," with Calvin Burrell. Fishing on June 9, 10.**



## Doing Ministry the Rice Way

by Brian Baker

After the long civil war in Sierra Leone (1990s), nearly half the population was displaced to refugee camps or the capital city of Freetown. Until now, many are returning to their villages, and the Church is growing as fast as the crops they're planting.

Pastor Tom Benzen from Arkansas has made three trips to Africa in the last three years, using his degree and experience in horticulture as a ministry opportunity. He received large dona-

tions (over 100 pounds) of seed from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company in Mansfield, Missouri, to take to both Sierra Leone and Kenya. He also purchased seed in those countries.

The recent dry land rice harvest was very successful. Six bushels of seed were planted, resulting in a crop of 180 bushels. Sixteen bushels were removed for tithe, 90 bushels were given to the Daughters of the King (a ministry to about 80 former prostitutes), 14 went to orphans and widows, 15 went for replanting, and 25 to the workers who planted and harvested.

Six gardens, totalling nearly 20 acres in south-east Sierra Leone, have been donated for use by our church. While there are challenges of weeds and birds, our brethren are steadfast at the business of seeds and souls. Our churches now number nearly 1,500 members — up from eleven children and five adults who came together to form the Church of God (Seventh Day) a decade back, after founder and pastor Peter Blackie was given a *Bible Advocate* magazine.



Church leaders from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua meet in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in March. IMC President Ramon Ruiz (upper left) was among this Zone 2 delegation.

## More CoG7 Books

Available in both Spanish and English: *This We Believe: Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*. This 200-page book can be used devotionally or as a Bible study guide and ready reference to Church doctrine. In addition to being in the home of every leader and member, the book is recommended for non-members and friends who wish to evaluate points of doctrine that fall outside the Christian mainstream.



**Congratulations!** Elder Samuel Smith, 98, served CoG7 in Jamaica 16 years as choirmaster, treasurer, evangelist, and church-planter. At mid-life he moved to the UK and served as pastor in Hackney and on the British Conference board for many more years. He and his wife Evelyn (married 67 years until her death in 2011) produced ten children, 37 grandchildren, and 43 more in the next generations.

Always a hardworker, Elder Smith built the family home with his own hands. It survived the 1951 hurricane in Jamaica while other nearby homes were destroyed. His life's motto is "Trust in the Lord, and do good . . ." (Psalm 37:3), and his constant prayer is for all people to give their lives to the Lord.

## National Youth Ministry

National Youth Ministry's annual **Hunger Lock-In** weekend will happen this spring, by June 30. Packets are available at <http://youth.cog7.org>, or e-mail [youth@cog7.org](mailto:youth@cog7.org) for a printed copy. Your group's participation supports NYM and a foreign missions project. Will your church accept the challenge to raise at least \$75 for this worthy cause?

The NYM has a new officer team for the 2012-14 term. They are Cheyenne Cox (Oregon), Faith Mills (Oregon), Nikki Hammock (Texas), and Zach Del Toro (Texas). They held their first meeting at a youth ministry conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, March 1-4, along with Director Kurt Lang and Southwest District Youth Coordinators Jason and Rose Rodriguez. We look forward to working with this team, with fresh ideas and new skills for National Youth Ministries!

### Youth Dates

**General Conference Convention** — July 1-6, Omaha, NE; contact: Kurt Lang ([youth@cog7.org](mailto:youth@cog7.org))

**Central California Youth Camp** — July 8-14, Capital Mountain Christian Camp, Weimar, CA; contact: Larry Zaragoza ([zman52@msn.com](mailto:zman52@msn.com)). Junior (ages 8-12) and senior (ages 13-18) campers welcome. Cost: \$280. Register by June 10: \$50 off.

**Sis-Q Meadows Senior Youth Camp** — July 21-28, Cave Junction, OR; contact: Harold and Vona Ogren ([HOgren@msn.com](mailto:HOgren@msn.com))

**Michigan Youth Camp** — July 14-21, Long Lake Outdoor Center; contact: Aaron Coulson, camp director ([coulson.a.n@gmail.com](mailto:coulson.a.n@gmail.com))



### SVA Seniors

Top (L-R): Michael Carbajal (Maplewood, MN), Wyatt Hise (Albany, OR), and Evan Schmitz (Perry, MI). Middle (L-R): Faith Mills (Redmond, OR), Carlos Robles (York, PA), Alex Arroyo (Mechanicsburg, PA) Katarina Nienhuis (Galt, CA), and Clay Baker (DeWitt, MI). Front (L-R): Cathryn Caswell (Owosso, MI), Christopher Huff (Owosso, MI), Kayla Silvestain (Humble, TX), and Douglas Camero (Entwhistle, Alberta, Canada)



@ Pariwattip—Dreamstime.com

# International Congress

## IMC President's Letter

**G**reetings of love in the name of the Resurrected One!

A resolution of the congress near London (2012) charged IMC officers to select a special Sabbath in which CoG7 congregations in all countries would celebrate and support the work of International Ministerial Congress. Accordingly, June 29, 2013, has been scheduled and announced.

The purpose of this event is to kindle a more universal awareness of our mission. We have not yet reached the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8b), but more than forty nations are now members of the congress, and we have contact with forty more. This compels us to broaden our understanding of God's kingdom that transcends languages, borders, cultures, economies, and any other regional focus. The kingdom is greater than any national project.

Sabbath, June 29, then, will be a great opportunity to watch an IMC documentary in every congregation, to rejoice together for what the Lord is doing among the peoples of the earth, and to enjoy a foretaste of the eternal kingdom — in our midst (Luke 17:21b).

I invite every pastor and church leader in the world to take initiative for June 29. Include liturgical ceremony in your worship: a parade of flags, printing or reciting John 3:16 in several languages, displaying photos from churches in other nations, and any other idea that may be feasible for this special Sabbath.

— Elder Ramon Ruiz Garza



*Myanmar National Board (2010): The application of this conference for IMC membership was overlooked in the 2012 congress. We regard it as a full participant while its application is being officially handled.*



*The Italian Church prints its own BA and works with several groups of Bulgarians, Romanians, and others. Aided by Cristo Viene, Pastor Roberto Torre (third from right, front) reports 24 new baptisms in 2012.*

### Africa's Convention-on-the-Continent

Where? Omoku District, Rivers State, Nigeria

When? December 18-22, 2013

To learn more, contact Robert Ikechukwu Crawford, IMC's Zone 5 representative for all of Africa: [robertashcrawford@hotmail.com](mailto:robertashcrawford@hotmail.com).



## “Habemus Papam”

The puff of white smoke from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel was a giveaway: A new pope had been selected. But the crowd at St. Peter’s Square on March 13 still anxiously awaited the words “Habemus Papam,” Latin for “We have a pope!” It came like music to their ears, electrifying the crowd and Catholics worldwide. After only two days in conclave and five ballots, the College of Cardinals elected Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, as the 266<sup>th</sup> pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church.

It had been only a month since Benedict XVI announced plans to resign. Unlike his predecessor, the charming and popular John Paul II, Benedict seemed shy and never fully at ease in his role. Yet the eight-year tenure of this reluctant pope showed courage and conviction. He called his followers back to conservative values and stressed the need for a personal relationship with God. And when increasing divisions and sex scandals made the burden of his pontificate too heavy to bear, he made the tough decision to resign — a decision no pope has made in six hundred years. With no turf to tend, Joseph Ratzinger stepped out of the limelight, pledging himself to a life of prayer for his church.

Now all eyes are on Jorge Bergoglio, the first non-European pope in one thousand years, first Latin American, first Jesuit, and first to take the name Francis, after Francis of Assisi, who devoted his life to serving the poor. Bergoglio is admired in Buenos Aires for forsaking the trappings of his office, choosing a small apartment instead of the archbishop’s palace and using public transportation instead of his chauffeured limousine. He is a defender of the poor, a champion of social justice, and a staunch opponent of liberation theology — values his papacy is expected to reflect.

What should non-Catholics make of all this popery? I suggest a balanced perspective that goes beyond skepticism of all things Catholic.

The reasons for rejection of papal authority by 16<sup>th</sup> century reformers should not be forgotten. Believing the pope to be vicar of Christ, successor of Peter, forgiver of sins, and conduit of divine revelation contradicts Scripture and the gospel’s purity. Benedict emphasized justification by faith but stopped short of “alone.” Much has changed since the 1965 Vatican Council, but some things have not.

On the other hand, we are wise to pay close attention. The pope’s direction greatly influences Christian faith and religious liberty worldwide. Catholicism plays a leading role in defending marriage, the unborn, and the dignity of all human life. Francis, like his two predecessors, understands the challenges facing Christianity in our post-modern era.

Abraham Kuyper, the late Dutch theologian, not only articulated the difference between Rome and Protestant Christianity but also asserted that partnership between them is critical in meeting such challenges. That was the mission of Evangelicals and Catholics Together, a 1994 initiative led by the late Chuck Colson and associates. But this ruffled too many evangelical feathers, largely deflating the effort.

The world’s largest faith community, numbering 1.2 billion, is growing in popularity and influence. Francis isn’t my pope, but he leads an ecclesiastical giant, and wise Christians should take note.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*  
*General Conference*  
*President*





*SIS-Q Meadows, Oregon, 2012*

# 2013 Camp Season — No Exceptions

Every year since 1961, hundreds of CoG7 tweens, teens, young adults, and friends have made memories at a church camp or retreat. Let there be no exceptions this year — no youth left behind! See page 29 for a partial list of camps, or find a longer list at [youth.cog7.org](http://youth.cog7.org).