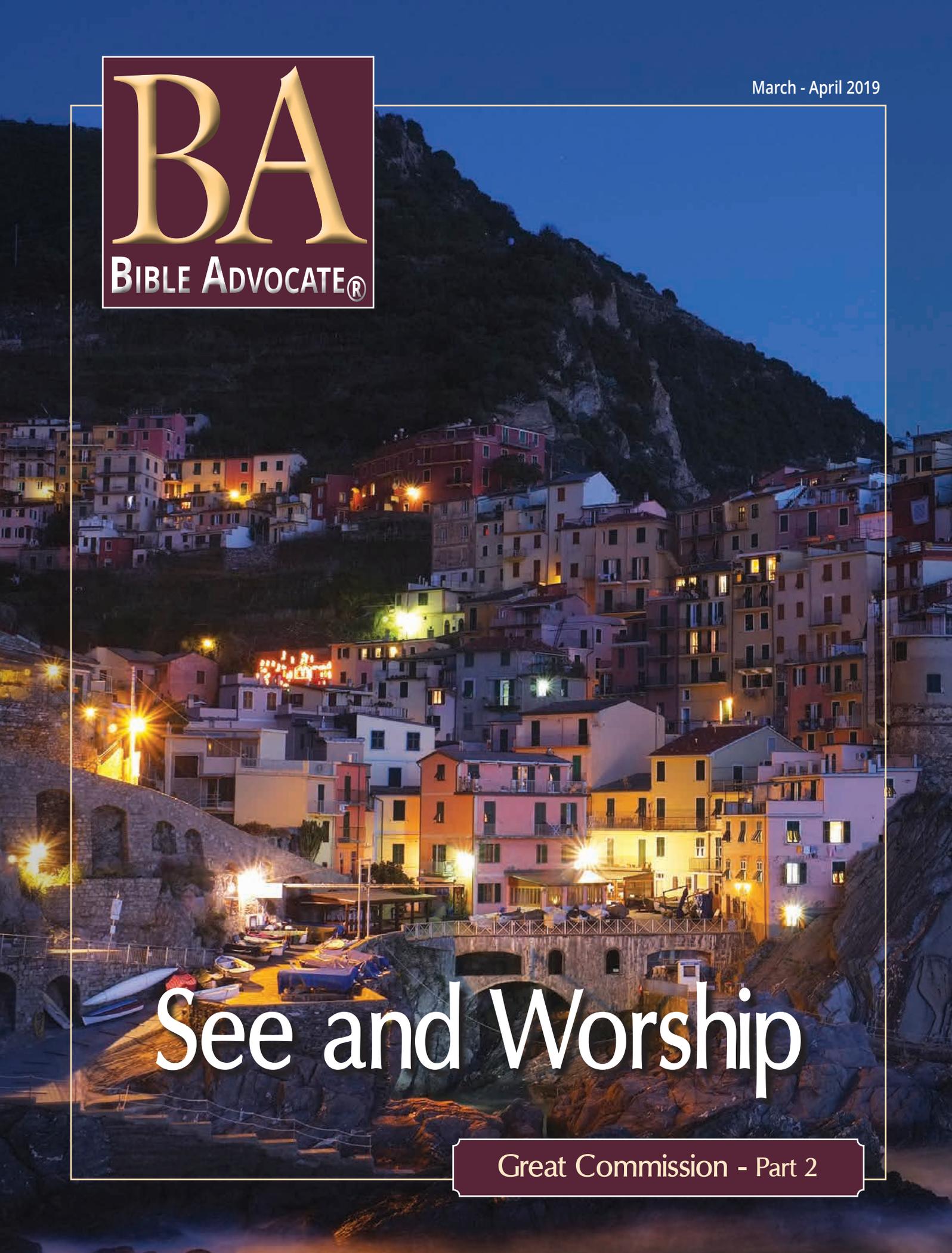


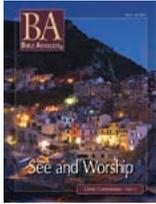
March - April 2019

BA
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See and Worship

Great Commission - Part 2



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2019: Resurrection Commission



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Worship in Weakness

What does witness have to do with worship — or weakness?

Welcome to Part 2 of our six-part series on the Great Commission. Last issue we set the stage with the disciples coming to the mount in obedience to Jesus' "little commission." This issue picks up the story with their reaction to the Resurrected: "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted" (Matthew 28:17).

In our pages, articles explore this loaded text, and the fascinating question asked above, from different angles. Three writers tackle the last curious clause (pages 4, 20, and 31). I admit those three words — *but some doubted* — caught my eye too. They are an example of why I'm passionate about "advocating the Bible."

Matthew, recalling and recording the actual moment of Resurrection observation and commission, could have colored the episode in the brightest ways. He could have painted the disciples at their heroic best and erased the blemishes — those embarrassing parts that remind us of our real limits and failures. That's how much of history is recorded.

But not the Bible. The truth matters, not just in general but also in our Lord's commission. Worship and the witness that follows are informed by that unexpected and unwanted confession of truth, that even in this transcendent moment, human weakness is present: *They doubted*. The transparency humbles us and draws us closer to worship and witness empowered by Christ, and not us.

Here at the *Bible Advocate* we advocate the Bible for its unflinching truth. We will not be the worshippers or witnesses that Jesus would have us be if we cannot see the truth about ourselves. We're tempted to conceal it, but Scripture will not permit that. It calls us to glorify our Lord. The Bible tells us the truth about Him as well. We aren't just people of the book; we are first of all people of the Resurrected!

What do witness and our Great Commission have to do with worship, weakness? *Everything!* They are our point of departure. Take the truth of your weakness into your worship. Take both into your witness. Our weakness and worship *are* our witness, because each testifies to Christ.

— Jason Overman





Reframing the Great
Commission.
by Whaid Rose

Like all important endeavors of life, a commitment to evangelism requires that we return to Scripture for instruction. But a Bible verse remains mere words on a page until it sinks deep into the reader's heart.

Recently, Matthew 28:17, a verse I had read many times, sank deep into my heart. It reads, "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted." This one verse caused me to explore the Word, changing my perspective on the Great Commission.

In context

To begin with, this scripture introduces the setting in which the soon-to-be ascended Christ issued His final charge to His disciples. The disciples were gathered at an appointed place above the Galilean countryside (v. 16). Galilee was the place of His public ministry, the likely reason He chose that location for His final meeting with them. When Jesus appeared to the disciples, they were deeply moved and spontaneously responded with heartfelt worship.

One would be justified in dismissing this as a mere natural reaction if this were the first time the disciples saw the resurrected Christ. But it wasn't. The Gospels record no less than ten post-Resurrection appearances, beginning with Mary Magdalene at the tomb (Mark 16:9); then the Emmaus-bound travelers (Luke

24:13-34); Peter (v. 34); ten of the eleven disciples, Thomas being absent (vv. 36-43); and lastly, to the Eleven (John 20:26-31) — all preceding the Matthew 28:17 appearance.

However, more than just the Eleven could have been present, including some who were seeing the risen Christ for the first time. The Matthew 28:17 account matches this additional appearance Paul references in 1 Corinthians 15:6a: "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once. . . ." This isn't verified by the Gospel records, but it seems a plausible assumption, since many would have followed the Eleven as they left Jerusalem, and many from the regions of Galilee would have joined them, creating a large crowd. And this would account for the presence of doubters among them, because by then, the Eleven would

surely have gotten past their doubts. Still, some believe the doubters were actually among the Eleven and that their doubting wasn't in the sense of unbelief, but more a reflection of their inner struggle to reconcile the mind-boggling events with present reality.*

Either way, Matthew wants us to see the beautiful worship moment when Jesus appeared to them. Mary had responded in worship earlier (v. 9), as did Thomas (John 20:28), but this is the first time this kind of worship is mentioned in connection with the collective band of the Eleven. The Greek word Matthew uses underscores homage and prostration deserving of a king. So we derive from this that for the first time, the Eleven fell at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him as the risen Lord of glory!

This is a good place to underscore that neither the word *great* nor *commission* appears in Matthew 28:19, 20. This designation results from our conviction about the One who issued the charge, based on Jesus' claim in verse 18: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Previously subjected to self-imposed limitations, Jesus now claimed unlimited authority. This affected the way the disciples saw Him. It wasn't just that Jesus reappeared on their radar screen; it was that He manifested Himself to them in a way He never had before: more clearly, more fully, exalted. And there's only one appropriate response to such revelation of majesty: genuine, heartfelt worship. As a standard definition, *worship* is our response to God's revelation of

* See "Disciples in Distress," p. 20.

Himself. That's what happened here in an unusual way.

Seeing the Great Commission in relation to worship puts our worship and our witness in right order, and provides a new paradigm from which to see and live out Jesus' final charge to His disciples.

Prioritizing

Worship is about God and therefore should be the church's highest priority. Given the importance of the Great Commission, it would be reasonable to presume that evangelism and missions should be top priorities.

Indeed, these are critical. But worship must precede witness, for loving God (worship) is what gives motivation and energy to sharing Him with others (witness).

This prioritization is also true regarding other aspects of our Christian walk. For example, our best service flows out of a worshipping heart, as Jesus reminded Martha in Luke 10:42. The quality of our fellowship (the horizontal aspect of our faith) will rise

no higher than the level of our capacity for worship (the vertical aspect). Becoming a worshipper is where becoming a deep disciple begins, which explains why God seeks worshippers, not workers (John 4:23).

No one captures this concept more beautifully than Dr. John Piper. In his bestselling book, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, he writes:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not

“Worship is about God and therefore should be the church's highest priority.”

missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.

Piper further explains that worship should be both the motivation and goal of missions. A deep, inner passion to share Christ with others must be driven

by our own discovery of Jesus as the center of our joy and object of our worship. A prime example is the Samaritan woman running back to her village to invite her friends and neighbors to come see the Man who just changed her life (John 4:28-30). The fact that the breakthrough in her encounter with Jesus happened during a discussion about true

mend what you don't cherish. Missionaries will never call out, "Let the nations *be glad!*" if they cannot say from the heart, "I rejoice in the Lord . . . *I will be glad and exult in you, I will sing praise to your name, O Most High*" (Pss. 104:34; 9:2). Missions begins and ends in worship.

“Becoming a worshipper is where becoming a deep disciple begins.”

worship makes this all the more interesting. Her witness was fueled by her worship, and many were thereby made glad. As Piper puts it, the goal of missions is “the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God,” highlighted by the following verses: “The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice! Let the farthest coastlands be glad” (Psalm 97:1, NLT); “Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee! O let the nations be glad and sing for joy” (67:3, 4, KJV).

So Piper concludes:

Passion for God in worship precedes the offer of God in preaching. You can't com-

Reframing

This principle provides a new paradigm from which to see and carry out the Great Commission. It's like putting an old picture in a new frame. This worship paradigm gives world missions a frame of reference we can relate to. One day all of human history will narrow down to one thing: the ceaseless worship of the Lamb upon His throne. This is what we all long for. Meanwhile, worship is dress rehearsal, and evangelism and missions are simply signing people up to join the choir!

This approach makes the Great Commission less intimidat-

ing and more doable. It puts a handle on it so succeeding generations of the church can get ahold of it for themselves. This answers concerns raised by a 2018 Barna Research study. Half of US churchgoers (51 percent) said they do not know the term *Great Commission*. The report acknowledges that most in this category are from a younger generation less familiar with Scripture, and further acknowledges a correlation between Bible centeredness — regular engagement with Scripture — and familiarity with this and other terms, such as *evangelism, missions, etc.*

But the fact remains that few among the remaining 49 percent are engaged in missions in any significant way. So the Barna organization suggests the need to “translate” the Great Commission for the benefit of churchgoers in both categories.

Doing so begins with putting a new frame around it and finding your place in the picture. Take the road trip with the Eleven from Jerusalem to Galilee. Listen to their conversation, mixed with anxiety and amazement. Stand there with them as Jesus manifests Himself, and be lost in the beauty and wonder of who He is. Those who first did so were never the same, and neither will those who do so now. To see Jesus and share Him with others is missions in its purest form, and it changes everything. **BA**

Whaid Rose is former president of the General Conference and pastors the Newton, NC CoG7. He and his wife, Marjolene, live in Denver, NC.





On Mission ...

*Abrahams Wanda Odongo (left)
and Job Emmanuel Habyarimana*

In Rwanda

Join us in this space each issue of 2019 for CoG7 evangelism stories direct from the field from all around the globe.

In this issue, we feature an interview conducted by Pastor Tshidzanani Malaba (Zimbabwe) with Pastor Job Emmanuel Habyarimana of Rwanda at the 2018 African Convention in Ghana. The following, translated by Pastor Abrahams Wanda Odongo of Kenya, is an edited transcript of the video interview.

Tshidzanani Malaba (TM): Is this your first time to attend an Africa convention?

Job Emmanuel Habyarimana (JH): This is my second time.

TM: Can you tell us a little about your country?

JH: I do the ministry work, and we have twelve scattered churches all over Rwanda.

TM: How did you first get to know about the Church of God (Seventh Day)?

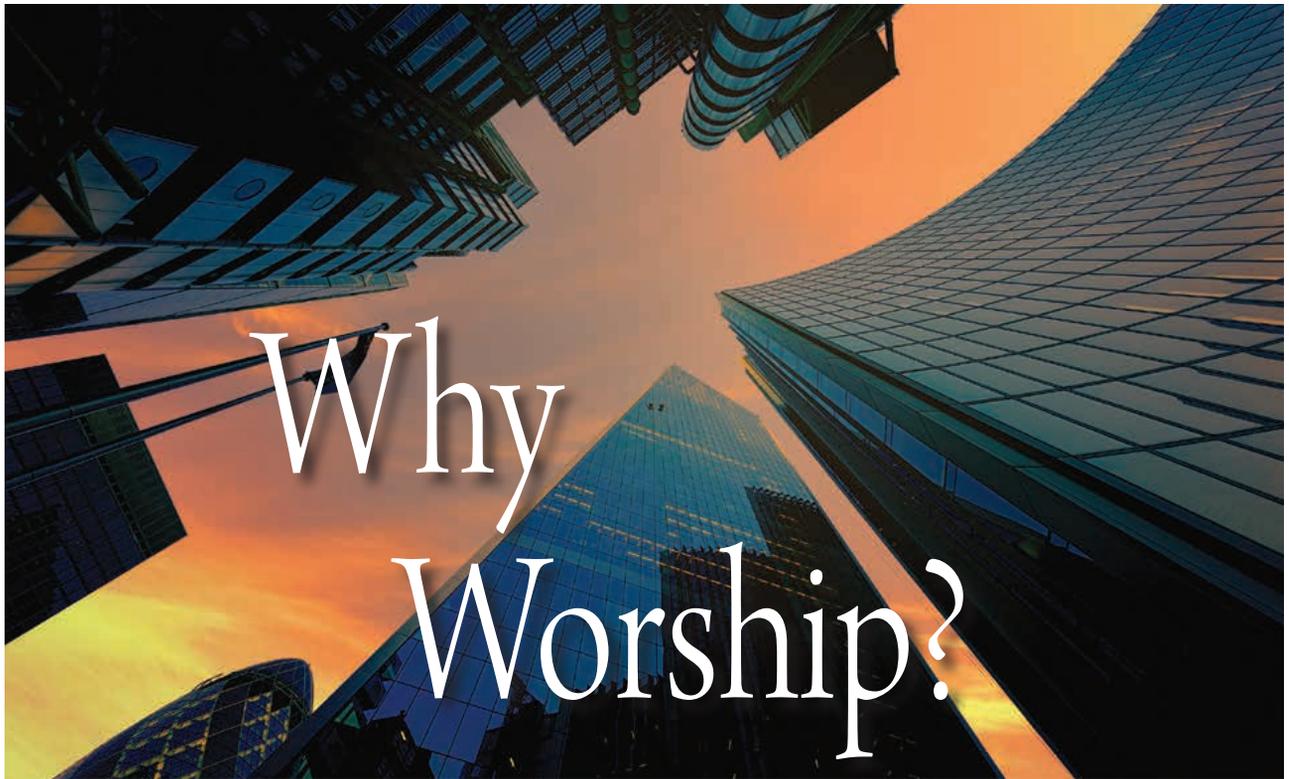
JH: I got this information from my brother, Emmanuel Kayatire, who taught me about baptism by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ. I got to know more about the Church through teachings, even though there are others who came from other religious

backgrounds — other denominations — so we were working together to help in teaching them. These people joined us. They told us that as they were praying, God, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, commanded them to stop worshipping on Sunday and start worshipping on the Sabbath. God also revealed to them that the true name of His church is Church of God — even before they met.

TM: What are the most memorable times in your faith?

JH: My decision to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and even the revelation of the truth that I should worship Him

continued on page 28



Biblical reasons to celebrate
our good God.

by R. Herbert

For many atheists and agnostics, the idea of a God who encourages or demands praise and worship (Exodus 8:1, etc.) suggests a selfish and self-centered being. They presume that the divine desire for worship equals the needs of humans, whose egos cannot get enough attention and reinforcement.

But failure to understand God's requirement for worship is based on the fallacy that God acts in human ways, for human reasons. A person who constantly seeks praise is self-centered at the least, but that is not the character or personality of God. When we look beneath the surface of what might *appear* to

be, we find that God seeks our praise not primarily for His sake, but for ours.

Verbalizing what we love

In his writings, C. S. Lewis frequently made the point that God initiated the cycle of praise and worship because humans need to praise things they love in order to fully appreciate and enjoy them. Have you ever walked along a beautiful beach or watched an amazing sunset and wished someone was there you could talk with about the experience? People in love don't just stare at each other; they verbalize how they feel about each other with praise.

Lewis touched on an important truth in writing that our happiness regarding what we like or love is made complete in praising it. This correlation between praise and happiness is clear in many of the psalms. For

example: "My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him" (Psalm 28:7), and elsewhere in the Bible, including in the life of Jesus himself: "At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth . . .'" (Luke 10:21). It is only natural to praise what brings us happiness and what we love!

Praise shows our need

Many of us grow up learning the value of self-reliance, and that is not a bad thing if it is maintained in right balance. But there are things in life in which we cannot be self-reliant. The Christian faith, by its very nature, demands that we come to see our need of God and His forgiveness and righteousness. The Bible shows we cannot manufacture these things ourselves, and in ongoing worship of God we are

continually reminded of our need of Him.

In *A Circle of Quiet* Madeleine L'Engle wrote, "One cannot be humble and aware of oneself at the same time." In getting our focus away from ourselves and on to God in praise and worship, we find that broader perspective. As King David wrote: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Psalm 8:3, 4). Through praise-filled worship we gain the perspective we need.

Worship aids obedience

Another aspect of worship is that it helps us dedicate ourselves to the purposes of God. In worshipping the nature and character of God, we are reminded of the qualities we are called to emulate, as much as is possible, in our own lives (Psalm 119:15). We should always remember an important aspect of this fact. Despite what some may think, the question we all end up answering in life is not "Will I worship?" but "What will I worship?"

Everybody elevates something to some degree, and it is just a matter of what, or whom, we elevate in our lives. Those who do not worship God eventually worship things of their own choosing. History has shown that this inevitably leads to humans badly hurting themselves, and others, in the process.

That is why the writer of the book of Chronicles states, "For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods" (1 Chronicles

16:25). When we realize the truth of this, we see that worship and praise of God protect us from worship that might eventually harm or even destroy us.

Praise as thankfulness

When someone helps us or does something for us, we often don't just use the expression "Thank you." We want to go beyond that and say something like "I owe you!" or "That's very kind of you!" — acknowledging the help and even directly praising the person who helped us. That

giving, and the more thankful we feel, the more natural it is to praise.

Desire to worship

In all these ways, and more, true worship has nothing to do with the imaginary negative "worship" envisaged by atheists and others. Those who hold a meaningful relationship with God may have begun to worship Him, in some cases, because they saw God's instruction to do so, but they invariably continued because they wanted to do so.

“It is only natural to praise what brings us happiness and what we love!”

is the natural reaction of sincere appreciation.

Not surprisingly, then, we find that individuals throughout the Bible who recognized what God had done for them offered praise as part of their thanksgiving. Look at these two examples from Solomon and David: "Praise be to the LORD . . . who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised . . ." (1 Kings 8:15). "Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name" (1 Chronicles 29:13). Praise is a natural part of grateful thanks-

Whether they "had to" or not, they realized what worship added to their lives.

What critics of religion do not understand is that it is not God who needs our worship and praise, but we who need to worship and praise Him. **BA**

R. Herbert (a pen name) holds a Ph.D. in ancient Near Eastern languages, biblical studies, and archaeology. Scripture quotations are from *New International Version*.



Living Sacrifices

by Eugenie Daniels

Worship isn't just something we do in church. An Old Testament ritual of worship, held in various ways and places from the beginning of the Bible, illustrates the point well. If we comprehend its symbolism, we will have a better understanding of worship.

The ritual is the burnt offering (Genesis 8:20). The animal was selected from the herd, "a male without defect" (Leviticus 1:3), and brought to the tent of meeting. "You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you" (v. 4).

Animals were costly, so it was an economic sacrifice. In laying his hand on the animal's head, the owner identified with the animal and transferred it to God. He was saying that he deserved to die for his sins. He wanted to give himself to God to make and keep a right relationship. The final instructions tell of complete sacrifice to God: "the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering . . . an aroma pleasing to the LORD" (v. 9).

The New Testament symbolically applies this language of sacrificial worship to every believer. Romans 12:1, for instance, says, "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship." Paul utilizes this symbolic language again three chapters later, describing his ministry in priestly terms. As a minister of Christ, he proclaimed the gospel in order that Gentile believers "might become an offering acceptable to God . . ." (15:16).

As the *burnt* offering was a sacrifice wholly given to God and pleasing to Him, now we are a living sacrifice acceptable to God. Worship isn't just going to church but giving ourselves wholly to Christ, setting ourselves apart for God's service.

This sacrifice is bodily — the entire person. We bring to God our eyes, ears, tongues, hands, and feet with believing hearts and transformed minds (10:10; 12:2). We offer our thoughts, words, and actions to the glory of God.

Sometimes we think of ourselves as ordinary people struggling with life and enjoying what we can. We are more than that: "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

A person under the old covenant with their burnt offering could only replace themselves with an animal. But because Christ gave Himself as an offering to God for us, a new way has come. Through Jesus we can be living sacrifices every day. By His gift of redemption and forgiveness, we have a direct relationship with God that was missing before. Let's honor Jesus' sacrifice as a spotless substitute for us by following Him and becoming living sacrifices ourselves. **BA**

Eugenie Daniels writes from Williamstown, MA. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



Questions & Answers



Does the appearance of Moses and Elijah with Christ in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, long after their natural deaths, prove the immortality of the soul?

The immortal soul doctrine many Christians believe is that all people are born with an internal, spiritual component (or soul) that cannot die, but departs the body at death to dwell forever either in heaven or hell.

In Matthew 17:1ff; Mark 9:2ff; and Luke 9:28-36, we read of Jesus being transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John. This means that His appearance in an earthly body was changed to that of a heavenly, spiritual body like we are promised when Christ returns to raise the righteous dead (1 Corinthians 15:35-57). The power, majesty, and blazing light in which Jesus appeared to His disciples were new and glorious beyond description — no doubt a preview of our immortal bodies to come.

Does this fantastic experience compel us to accept the traditional view of soul immortality? Alternate evidence is offered here. First, just after His transfiguration, Jesus referred to the event as a *vision* (Matthew 17:9). Moses' and Elijah's presence with our Lord in glory on the mount was a supernatural appearance, or visualization, provided by the Spirit of God. Such a *pro-vision* of deceased persons requires neither their immediate translation at death to immortality nor a final resurrection from their grave to immortality.

Beyond this, we have other reasons to view the immortal soul teaching as an unproven theory and a remnant of Greek dualism. Neither *immortal soul* nor *immortality of the soul* is a phrase of Scripture. Although hope for

bodily resurrection grew through the Torah, Psalms, and Prophets, still the ancient Hebrews held comparatively vague and undeveloped views of the afterlife. A refrain of “No memory, no wisdom, no praise” fairly summarizes the Hebrew understanding of death (Psalms 6:5; 30:9; 88:11; 115:17; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10b; Isaiah 38:18).

The New Testament continues this case for the unconscious sleep of the dead (Mark 5:39; John 3:13; 11:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). It confirms their resurrection at Christ's return as the blessed hope of all believers (1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16; Titus 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:1). And it dramatizes this point by placing the resurrection of Christ, along with His death, at the climax of each Gospel's narrative and at the center of gospel doctrine (1 Corinthians 15:1-4ff).

First Timothy 6:16a says flatly that immortality belongs to the Lord alone. While believers can claim eternal life now, by faith in Christ (a kind of conditional immortality, cf. 2 Timothy 1:10), this is not the innate immortality claimed for all humans by much of Christianity.

In subtle and direct ways, the New Scriptures affirm that our great and blessed hope is not that we go to heaven when we die (i.e., immortality of the soul). Rather, it is that we shall be raised from the dead to immortality and eternal life (i.e., resurrection of the body) when Christ returns.

Like all the great worthies of faith, Moses and Elijah did not receive their eternal inheritance at death (Hebrews 11:13, 39, 40). God provides something better for us — “that they without us should not be made perfect” (KJV). A visionary preview of that day on the Mount of Transfiguration does not prove otherwise, glorious though it was.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



The “Oh!” of God

Discovering the awe of the Creator through the life of His servant-sufferer.

by **Rose McCormick Brandon**

In January, I resolved to read through the Bible. My journey began well. I cruised through several chapters each day, visited many strong characters en route: Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Joshua. Naomi, a bitter woman turned sweet, grabbed my attention. As she rocked an unexpected grandson on her knee, I waded into Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Esther, and finally, Job.

I'd heard enough depressing sermons from this book to last a lifetime. Its forty-two chapters loomed like a haunted, forbidding forest.

Skipping Job

Spring arrived. On sunny days, I read by the river or in the backyard. Job's dreary story seemed out of sync with buds and birds. So I detoured around it and went straight to the Psalms. Before long, I reached Isaiah. What a prophet and what a writer. Isaiah's beautiful word pictures encourage and comfort the reader. By summer, I'd reached Malachi, the end of the Old Testament, and congratulated myself.

How can you say you're reading the Bible through if you skip Job? That niggling question interrupted my back-patting. I'd placed a mental tick beside each book as I'd completed it. No tick beside Job.

Seeking shade from the sun, I moved my lawn chair under a maple tree. My fingers leafed through the pages of a worn *Amplified* version of the Bible. "There was a man in the land of

Uz whose name was Job . . ." (1:1). With that, my mind left the heat of the backyard and dove into the dark, cold waters of this troubling book.

Reading Job

At the outset, Satan seeks God's consent to test Job's faith. Permission granted. Nobody relays this information to Job, which might seem an injustice. Before the end of the first chapter, invaders have stolen his livestock and killed his servants, and Job's ten children have died in a windstorm. Satan, upset by Job's positive response, challenges God to afflict his health and gets the go-ahead. The poor man's body breaks out in boils from head to toe. Grief angers his wife; she turns on him. By this time, Job's neighbors are crossing the street to avoid him.

As if his troubles weren't

stacked high enough, Job's long-winded, self-righteous friends arrive to console him. These three "wise men" badger troubled Job to confess his sins and renounce pride. Their platitude-ridden speeches exasperate him:

"Wearisome and miserable comforters are you all! Will your futile words of wind have no end? Or what makes you so bold to answer [me like this]? I also could speak as you do, if you were in my stead; I could join words together against you and shake my head at you" (16:2-4).

Job's rebuke insults his comforters. They retaliate by predicting more suffering for their beloved friend. I ached for Job and wearied of his friends and their endless conversation. My journey slowed. Anything that bloomed, moved, or spoke distracted me from reading.

By mid-August Job concludes his three friends are hypocrites. Without a lawyer to represent him, he defends himself and swears he's innocent of breaking God's laws. Then a fourth, younger friend, Elihu, takes five chapters to defend God. The engine of my Bible reading sputtered uphill — until the first chill of fall began turning the leaves of my maple tree golden. That's when I reached chapter 38 and discovered I wasn't the only one fed up with the philosophizing of Job and his tedious friends.

Worshipping with Job

God seizes Job (and the reader) by the collar. He forces our noses to the ground to consider whose hands laid earth's foundation. Then with Superman flash, He circles the constellations and

asks, "Can you bind the chains of . . . Pleiades?" (38:31).

Breathless, Job stutters, "Behold, I am of small account and vile!" (40:4), then clasps his hand over his mouth. But his spiritual awakening isn't finished. The Lord plunges Job to ocean depths and challenges him to take on the sea monster. He wisely declines.

The grand finale — another question, paraphrased: "So you're afraid to awaken a croco-

hensible — then the mind sinks into silence and the heart cries out, 'O Lord God!'" Call it reverence, the fear of God, or awe, discovering God's *Oh!* is glimpsing His incomprehensible power in a way that reveals our true feeble state. *Oh!* immobilizes. It quakes the joints and dizzies the mind. It reminds us that without a Savior, Jesus Christ, we are completely lost. Knowing this, we worship.

I had jogged through the last

“ Discovering God's *Oh!* is glimpsing His incomprehensible power in a way that reveals our true feeble state. ”

dile but not afraid to disrespect Me, the beast's creator?"

Remorseful Job recognizes his sin and confesses; he sees God and worships. So did I.

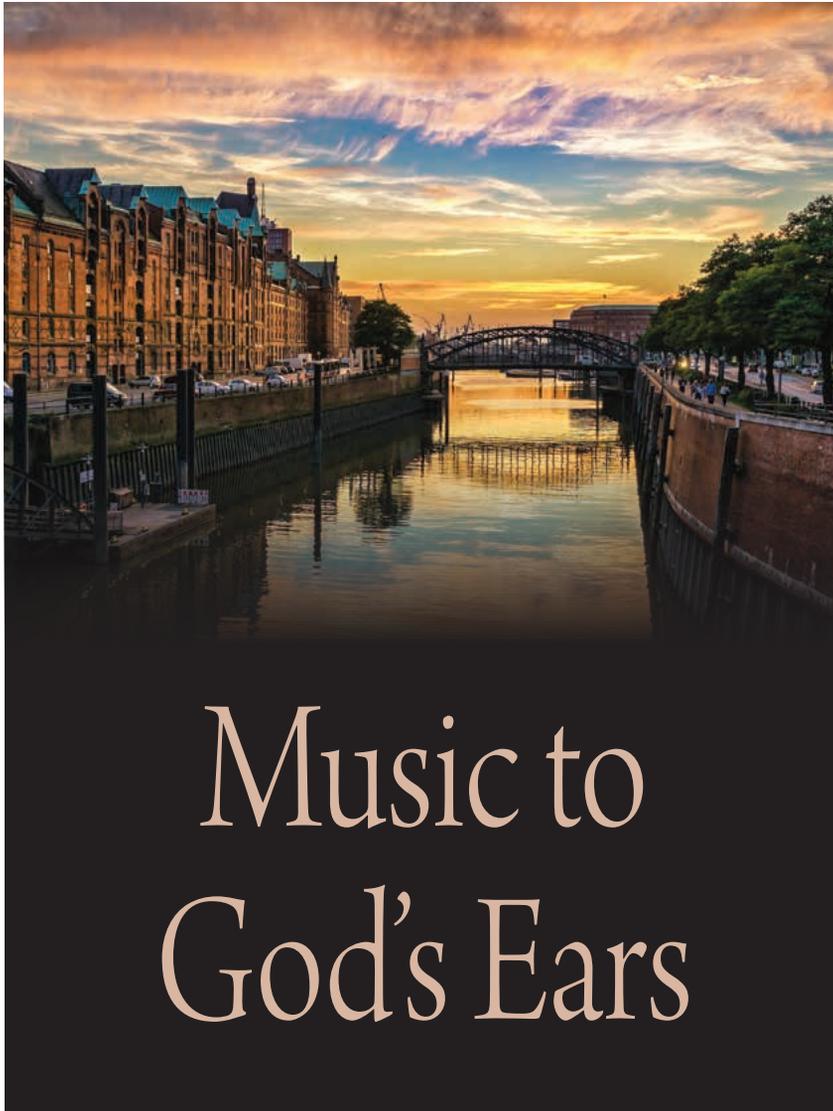
"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear,
But now my eye sees You.
Therefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes" (42:5, 6, NKJV).

I'd forgotten, or perhaps never grasped, what A. W. Tozer calls the *Oh!* of God. In *Born After Midnight*, he writes: "When God Himself appears before the mind — awesome, vast and incompre-

five chapters of Job, lost track of time in wonderment. As the cover closed, I felt a sadness that comes with saying goodbye to a loved character in a novel. Before moving on, I promised to return often, to keep God's awe — His *Oh!* — aflame in my heart. **BA**

Rose McCormick Brandon writes from Caledonia, Ontario. Scripture quotations are from the *Amplified Bible*, unless otherwise noted.





Music to God's Ears

Want to worship? Pray the
hymnal.

by **Bob Hostetler**

I worship every week in a contemporary church. Hymns occur infrequently during the worship service, but they remain an integral, daily part of my life. That's because in my youth I acquired (and have since retained) the habit of using the hymnal as an aid to prayer.

As a young man who had fallen in love with Jesus, I discov-

ered just how poor my prayer vocabulary was. I was frequently frustrated by my inability to articulate the things in my heart. I longed for a better way to express myself in prayer. When it dawned on me that hymns could be not only sung but also spoken, I began to employ the poetry of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, Fanny Crosby, and others as a sort of private diary of prayer. My well-worn hymnal has since bracketed and buttressed my prayers like no other book except the Bible.

Praying the hymnal is so simple, anyone can do it. It takes

no practice and little preparation. It will help you pray when you don't know what to pray. It will help you express the deepest and highest longings of your heart in ways you may never have experienced otherwise. It will keep or make the great hymns of the church a vital part of your life. It will, over time, fill your praying with rich phrases and stunning verses until, eventually, your memory will overflow with the lofty lyrics of history's finest poets even when you're not reading from the printed page.

A few simple suggestions will suffice to get you started in the practice of praying the hymnal.

Speak the hymn. Resist the temptation to sing. Some people find it easy to pray while they're singing, but for most of us, speaking will breathe new life into the words of a hymn such as,

Breathe on me, Breath of
God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou
dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst
do.

It may be hard at first not to be distracted by the melody, especially with the most familiar hymns. But since you will probably be speaking at a different pace than if you were singing, it will soon become more of a prayer than a piece of music. Many fine hymns that you've never sung can be added to your prayer repertoire, since not knowing the melody may actually be an advantage.

Choose hymns that speak directly to God. Not all hymns are prayers, of course. Some teach,

some testify, some inspire. But those written as prayers — like “Have Thine Own Way,” “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go,” and “Take My Life and Let It Be” — need no revision or adaptation to aid prayer and worship.

Personalize the hymn. You may wish to change *thee* and *thine* in some hymns to *You* and *Your*. You may also want to change corporate language (*our* and *us*) to singular (*my* and *me*), as well as personalize in other ways. For example, the hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” may be revised as you pray,

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
You are my shelter from the
stormy blast,
And my eternal home.

Focus on what the hymn is saying. Some people struggle to sincerely pray written words, because they have trouble turning words on a page into the prayer of their hearts. It does take concentration, but it is possible to overcome familiarity, rhythm, rhyme, and any other obstacle to truly pray,

Lord, lift me up and let me
stand,
By faith, on heaven’s
table-land,
A higher plane than I have
found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher
ground.

Amplify or meditate on specific lines or words. Praying a hymn can be just the beginning of prayer, if you give yourself permission to dig deeper into the sentiment the hymn has helped

you express. For example, you might pause after praying the first two lines of John Oxenham’s hymn,

‘Mid all the traffic of the ways,
Turmoils without, within,

to pray, “Lord, You know that’s exactly what my life has been like this past week. I feel so hurried and harried, even as I come to You in prayer, so . . . ”

Make in my heart a quiet
place,
And come and dwell therein.

Or you might stop at the third line and meditate on the phrase a *quiet place*, picturing a tranquil lake or serene garden, and asking God to make your heart like that.

Pay special attention to hymns that rephrase Scripture.

I’ve found added purpose and power in prayer through hymns drawn from Scripture. This is what Jesus himself did when, on the cross, He cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He was using the words of a familiar hymn (Psalm 22) to express the cry of His heart.

Many hymns, of course, are

based on Scripture, but some are Scripture in verse: “The King of Love My Shepherd Is” (Psalm 23); “As Pants the Hart for Cooling Streams” (Psalm 42); “What Shall I Render to My God?” (Psalm 116:12-19); and “Bless the Lord, O My Soul” (Psalm 103:1), to name a few.

To these suggestions you will, of course, want to add your own flourishes. But they are offered in the hope that you will soon find new energy and fulfillment in prayer by borrowing the words of great hymn writers. That has been my experience many times, as I have been driven, speechless, to my knees in prayer, only to find exactly what I long to say waiting for me in the lines of my hymnal. And that, I believe, brings blessing not only to me, but music to God’s ears as well.

BA

Bob Hostetler writes from Hamilton, OH. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



Learn to pray the hymnal with your own personal copy of **Worship in Song** (in red or green) from the Bible Advocate Press. Order at cog7.org/online-store/worship-in-song-regular-edition/.





Transcendence

(Matthew 28:17)

by Jody McCoy

In my previous article, I talked about my transformation at age 14, when I gave my life to Jesus. I didn't understand justification and sanctification; I just knew I'd been forgiven. But what about the things I continued to do? I was trying to be good, but I knew I still sinned sometimes. What did that mean? Was I saved or not?

I started asking youth leaders and pastors, but I didn't find any answers. I thought I'd never know if I was saved until Jesus came. Then one day I read 1 John 5:13: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

I was excited. So you can know! But wait: "I write these things. . . ." What things? I quickly read the verses above it.

Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony . . . And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (vv. 10-12).

Instead of making me feel better, this passage made me feel worse! I still didn't know if I was saved or not, and now I had the added guilt that I was calling God a liar. Now what?

By age 30, I'd been struggling with this insecurity for sixteen years. During this time, I had made a few attempts to read through the Bible, but I always got stuck in Leviticus. I decided to get serious. I read through Leviticus and kept going. Then one day, getting ready for work, it

hit me: I can know I'm saved because salvation doesn't depend on my righteousness, but on Jesus'. That's it!

It was so clear and simple. Why did it take me so long to understand? I realized that spending time in God's Word opened my heart to receive awareness from the Holy Spirit. Like Martin Luther, I had tried to live up to God's expectations, but the harder I tried, the angrier I became. How could a good God demand perfection from such a fallible creature as me? It wasn't fair! But then the revelation came: "By grace you have been saved, through faith — and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

The law is holy and good, but it demands perfection and reveals our sin (Romans 7:7-14). It cannot save, only condemn. Even though I had sincerely given my heart to Jesus at age 14, I was trying to live under the law. I still thought I needed to be good enough to be saved. Consequently, I had no security in my salvation and little joy in my worship. How could I be an effective witness for Jesus like this?

With a new awakening, I transcended law to grace. I transcended rules to a relationship. For the first time, I saw Jesus as my friend. His law no longer condemned me; it lived in my heart. Ever since that day, it's been a joy to worship Him and to be used by Him in His work of rescue. **BA**

Jody McCoy is executive director of the General Conference and lives in Austin, TX. Scripture quotations are from *New International Version*.



Sacred Seventh

Spirit of God fill my heart
This Sabbath night holy night.
Bring Your peace and put to rest
My worthless ways and foolishness.
In place of fear grant holy zeal
That even Satan cannot steal.
Feed me with your living Word,
Wash me in Messiah's blood.
Free me from myself and sin
So I will love Your law again.
Write it in my mind and heart
Burn it on my inward part.
Never let me drift away
From Your sacred seventh day.

Asa Thomas Taylor



Worship by Design

by Israel Steinmetz
and Whaid Rose

Corporate worship should be dynamic and life changing, not mediocre and boring. Such worship doesn't just happen but results from deliberate and purposeful planning.

If corporate worship is truly a meeting between God and His people, how the worship service is designed is critical as to whether or not that meeting actually happens. Beneficial as it is, however, deliberate weekly worship planning, let alone regular evaluation of it, does not take place in many congregations.

Is planning and evaluating worship an intimidating thought for you? If so, here are eight keys to get you started.

Dynamic design

View worship planning as the most important activity of the week. Worship isn't just another activity on the weekly church calendar; it is the church's most important activity of the week. Daily ministry and witness should anticipate the climactic celebration of the gathered community at the end of the week. Let this influence the quality of time and attention devoted to worship planning and preparation.

Meet regularly for worship

planning and prayer. Many worship teams get together weekly to go over the music for the upcoming service. However, worship practitioners recommend additional meetings, such as annual retreats, quarterly and monthly meetings, and other impromptu gatherings during which attention can be given to matters not usually focused on during weekly rehearsals. Remember to involve circles of people beyond the worship team: sound and tech crew, pastoral staff, etc.

Aim at offering acceptable worship. One of the most important questions Christians can ask is, "How shall we worship?" Scripture provides one right answer to this question. Consider Romans 12:1; Hebrews 12:28, 29; and 1 Peter 2:4, 5. The common thread in these verses is the word *acceptable*, underscoring God's demand that we worship Him on His terms, not ours. Worship that God accepts is offered humbly in faith, proceeding from a heart and attitude rightly aligned with God.

View all elements of the service as worship. Worship is greatly enhanced when all elements of the service are viewed as worship. For example, the tendency to think of the offering as something to get out of the way so we can get to the important elements of worship

Adapted from the book *Getting a Handle on Worship*, by Whaid Guscott Rose and Israel Steinmetz. Want to deepen your study of worship and worship planning? Purchase this book at amazon.com.





creates dichotomies in people's minds that are unnecessary and, in some instances, unbiblical. However, the goal of giving is to inspire us to offer up our very lives. Likewise, if worship is conversation between God and His people, then Scripture reading (God's Word to us) and prayer (our communion with God) are worship.

View worship as enhancing the glory of God. It's been said that the goal of worship is to make God beautiful. Since God's glory speaks of the radiance and splendor that emanate from His very being, the frequent scriptural command to glorify God involves making God's beauty known. Thus, we make God beautiful by putting His glory on display. We must continually raise the standard and quality of our worship to match the glory of the worship of heaven.

Handle music with care and wisdom. Music ranks near the top of all elements of corporate worship. To put it succinctly, if the music isn't done right, the service flops just like a cake that has no flour. Some songs don't go together; some do not belong at a particular place in the service. Remember that just because someone loves to sing doesn't qualify them to be a member of the worship team.

Prepare the heart. This is

instructional for the worship team as well as for the congregation. It is possible to miss worship while attempting to lead others in it, and it is also possible for congregants to arrive at church so frazzled that they miss the "God encounter." That's why deliberate preparation is tantamount. It will not totally prevent distraction and interruption, but it can help us better handle them.

Regularly evaluate your worship. It is suggested that worship teams meet for a few minutes immediately following each service while the experience is still fresh on everyone's mind. A good bit of evaluation takes place spontaneously following the weekly worship service: in the church parking lot, on the drive home, or at the dinner table. Since evaluation happens anyway, let's influence how it happens. Let's make it deliberate, constructive, and done in a way that makes the greatest difference and yields the best results.

Making it work

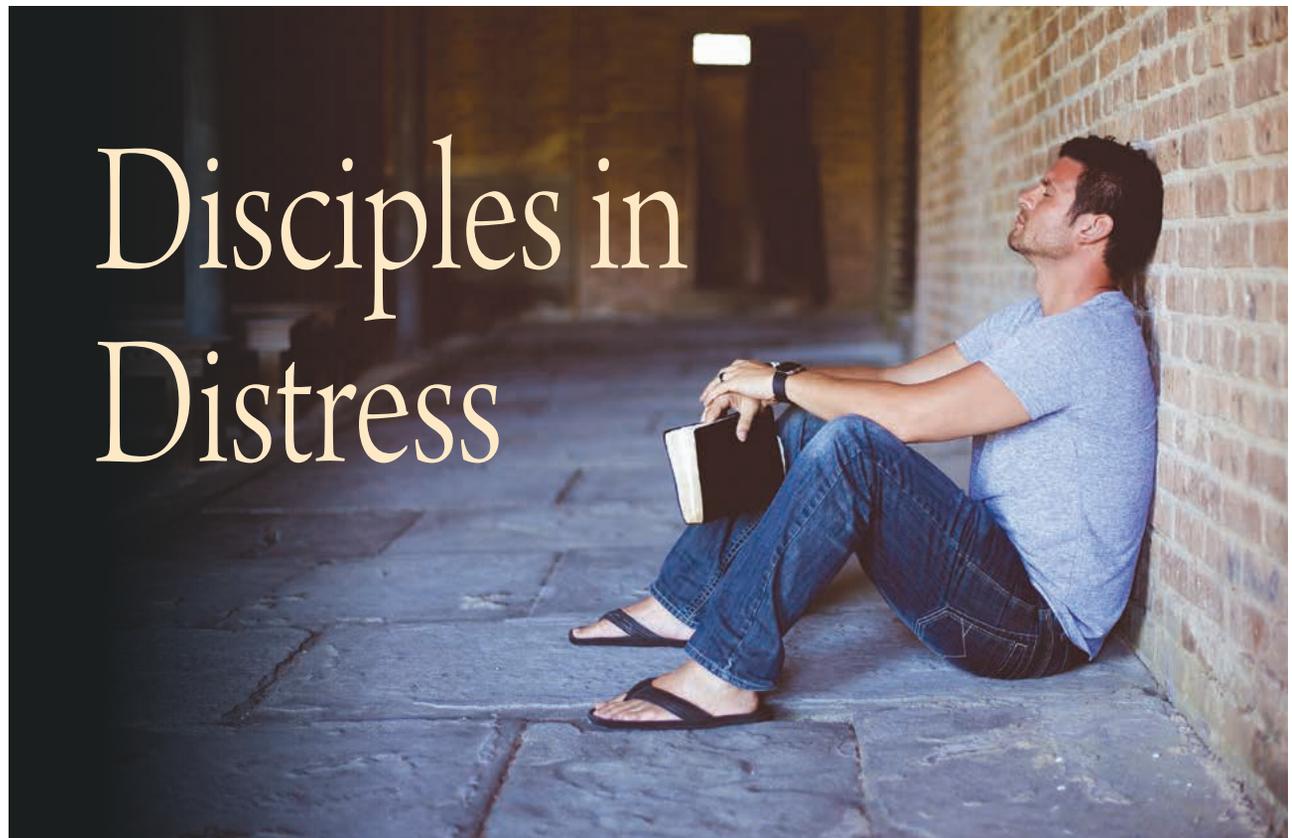
Here are a few suggestions to assist worship teams in applying these principles. For best results, plan a gathering in which you discuss the following as a team:

- Adjusting your church calendar to prioritize worship planning.

- Identifying five questions that would be meaningful ongoing evaluation tools for your worship team.
- Listing every element of your current worship service. How are you currently framing each of these elements as an act of worship? How can these acts of worship be made more intentional?
- Gathering your song sets from the past four weeks of worship services. Are the opening songs focused on ascribing worth to God? How well are the themes of each song connected to one another?
- Looking at each of the eight keys of designing dynamic worship services. List five action points to discuss with your worship team.

Important reminder

Like the frame of a house, worship services need walls, windows, doors, and those things that make it livable. You've been given a frame on which to build a house of praise and worship. It is now the task of each worship team to complete it, to fill in the details, to plan a dynamic worship service. **BA**



Disciples in Distress

Worship and evangelism in the company of doubt.
by **Jonathon Hicks**

Now, more than in any other epoch, the church needs to reorient her understanding of doubt. James K. A. Smith has noted that in our modern age, “We don’t believe instead of doubting; we believe *while* doubting.” And so, rather than running from doubt, we must respond to Jesus’ call in the midst of our hesitation. We must see doubt as a temporary companion on the way to intimacy with our Savior.

Numerous stories in Scripture illustrate this paradigm, but none more shocking than the one in Matthew 28:16, 17: “Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”

The first time I took notice of the last clause, it bewildered me. I was studying to give a devotion

on Jesus’ Great Commission to the disciples. I tried to answer one question: When Jesus gave the command to “Go, and make disciples of all nations,” why did the Eleven go, but I, and those I know, struggle to move? I wanted to say that after the disciples spent three years with Jesus, after they observed all His miracles and viewed Him in a resurrected body, Jesus sent out a fully committed group of missionaries. Then it hit me: “some doubted.” Yet Jesus still promptly commanded them to “Go.”

This disquieted me. I wanted an excuse for my lack of response to Jesus’ last command. I wanted to believe that in order to be used by God, you had to be purged of all doubt. You had to surrender your life, with nothing wavering, before He would ever send you. If this were so, then I could focus on my private

relationship with God and perfect it before responding to His call. I found the complete opposite. The doubters were sent. This means that you and I are sent too.

“They doubted”

Years later, I returned to Matthew 28:16, 17, and the astonishment of Jesus’ command increased for me. Although, as Donald A. Hagner explains, it could be reasoned from the grammar of this passage that “some doubted” refers to just a few of the disciples. And some theologians have even claimed that those who doubted were not among the Eleven who worshipped. The truth is, both of these perspectives fail to deal with the way the story unfolds in Matthew 28.

To begin with, only the Eleven are mentioned as coming to the mountain. So inventing some unmentioned skeptics who happened to be there is difficult to justify. Furthermore, when the verse says, “but some doubted,” Hagner argues that an equally appropriate translation is “but they doubted.” In support of this, consider how the passage treats *disciples* as one unit: All eleven disciples came, they all worshipped, they all doubted, and they were all sent out. Jesus did not encourage a few doubters in the group before sending them. He addressed them all with one command. We doubt, and Jesus sends us anyway.

Doubt in Matthew

This Greek word for *doubt* is used only two times in the New Testament, and both are in Matthew. After Peter sinks into the

Sea of Galilee trying to walk on water, Jesus picks Him up. Before entering the boat, while Jesus is still supporting him on the choppy waves, He asks, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (Matthew 14:31).

Doubt is given pictorial expression in Peter’s wavering in fear over the strong winds. As Hagner notes in his commentary on Matthew, “The doubt here amounts to hesitation, indecision, . . . and perhaps uncertainty.” Although Peter doubts, he is the only one to answer Jesus’ command to “not be afraid” (v. 27). He is the only one to say, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you

on the water” (v. 28). Peter has faith, *and* he has doubt. He oscillates in the two while choosing to move toward Jesus. Because of this, he is the only one who is lifted into the arms of Christ over the waters. Peter gets to stand with Christ. The rest remain in the boat of purely natural comfort and miss the intimate comfort of being carried on the waves by Jesus.

When we come to Matthew

28, this story, related by the unique doubt, should be in our minds. In the same way that Jesus said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid” (14:27), He says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (28:18). In the same way that Jesus told Peter, “Come” (14:29), He says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (28:19, 20a). And in the same way that He is ready to lift Peter out of the sea, He says, “And remember, I am with you

always, to the end of the age” (v. 20b). Jesus is ready to support us on the waters in a moment of intimacy.

Doubt is not something that keeps the disciples from following Jesus. The opposite point is made. Jesus tells Peter to “Come” when he is not even certain whether the figure on the water is his Lord. And Jesus tells the Eleven to “Go” while they worship and doubt.

“I wanted to believe that in order to be used by God, you had to be purged of all doubt.”

Going in doubt

As a lifelong doubter, I have always empathized with and envied damsels in distress. In every Superman movie, Lois Lane is terrified of the plane crashing, the volcano erupting, or the bomb exploding. She wonders whether her Superman will rescue her. I, too, wonder whether Jesus will rescue me from my constant mistakes. Every time Lois is swept out of danger into the arms of her helper, I swoon. I envy such a concrete demonstration of love from the One who loves me and gave His life for me.

“We doubt, and Jesus sends us anyway.”

My reasoning in the last sentence sounds confused, doesn't it? How could I wish for a greater demonstration of love than the cross of Christ or a greater manifestation of rescue than His resurrection? But I do, and I think the Eleven did too. They still had doubts. They still wavered in their worship. They needed to know that Jesus would be there for them every time they were in distress.

When Peter looked at the waves, he became frightened that he could not stand against them. When the disciples saw

the resurrected Jesus, doubt arose in them when they looked at the cross-shaped road ahead of them. As followers of Jesus, would they sink into death? Would the rulers and powers of this world treat them as they had treated their Lord?

Notice that Jesus addresses no such concerns in Matthew 28:16-20. He says that all authority is given to Him. But the text also implies that they will have to teach and model a life of obedience to God even to death. Jesus' comforting words are "I will be with you always."

In this last sentence, Jesus draws the disciples to exit every natural security they have and receive His support in the trouble ahead. He commands them to go with their only comfort, that He will be with them as they do so. Jesus' assurance to His disciples is that He will hold them in His arms through every situation.

Moving to intimacy

Being held by Jesus is the reason to follow His command to "Go." The disciples could not be motivated by power; their Savior

was just crucified by the powerful. They could not be motivated by safety; their Lord just died. They could not be motivated by prosperity; Jesus was just tortured. The reason given to follow the Great Command is to be held by the Great Commander.

The author of Hebrews offers us the same reason: "let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . ." (12:1b, 2a). We must look to Jesus not just as our example, though He is certainly that, but also as our source of motivation. If you want to be held, then run to His arms. This means racing directly to the crosses you must bear, and there discovering that He is lifting you up.

A common phrase is to "set yourself up for success." But Matthew 28 compels the opposite. Answer Jesus' call where you are wavering most, so that when you fail, He will pick you up.

As doubters, we all want to be held by our Savior. So when He says, "Go" or "Come," we need to move. We are not ready. We will fail. We still waver with our companion doubt even as we worship. Jesus knows this. Still, He sends us out into the world as His disciples in distress. Behold, He is with us always. **BA**

Jonathon Hicks and his wife, Danielle, serve the Lodi, CA congregation. Scripture quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.



2019 Convention



General Conference Conventions bring back so many memories for attendees: singing on an outing at Red Rocks Amphitheater; fun youth activities; altar calls; meeting a friend or future spouse; impromptu jam sessions; a life-changing sermon; late-night conversations.

July 1-6, you can make your own memories in beautiful Albuquerque, New Mexico, at our 2019 Biennial Convention. Rallying around the theme “Compelled by Love,” we will meet in the Albuquerque Convention Center to conduct business, attend challenging workshops, and worship as a body of believers.

“Compelled by Love” emphasizes living in alignment with the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Explore with other attendees how individuals, families, and churches can effectively live to honor the words of Jesus. Together, we can do great things for the cause of Christ.

Check out the convention website (cog7.org/convention) for details about registration, accommodations, programs, schedules, evening speakers, and much more. Updates will be made as we continue to finalize details, so please check back often.

Accommodations for the 2019 Convention are at the Albuquerque DoubleTree and Albuquerque Embassy Suites. Dedicated reservation information is provided on the Convention website. Making your reservations by June 14, 2019, will ensure that you receive the special rate. Because our partnerships with these hotels help defray the cost of the Convention Center, your commitment to stay at one of them is greatly appreciated.

Special programs for children, youth, and young adults are planned for Convention week. Volunteers are needed for all programs, and many of the volunteer spots require only a few hours of your time. At the 2017 Convention, over 200 volunteers contributed to the program. Will you be available this year?

Afternoon workshops include evangelism, discipleship, family life, General Conference Ministries, and other topics related to living out the Great Commission. Artios Christian College will also offer a class on leadership. These workshops are a great means of enhancing knowledge, skills, and motivation for doing kingdom work here on earth.

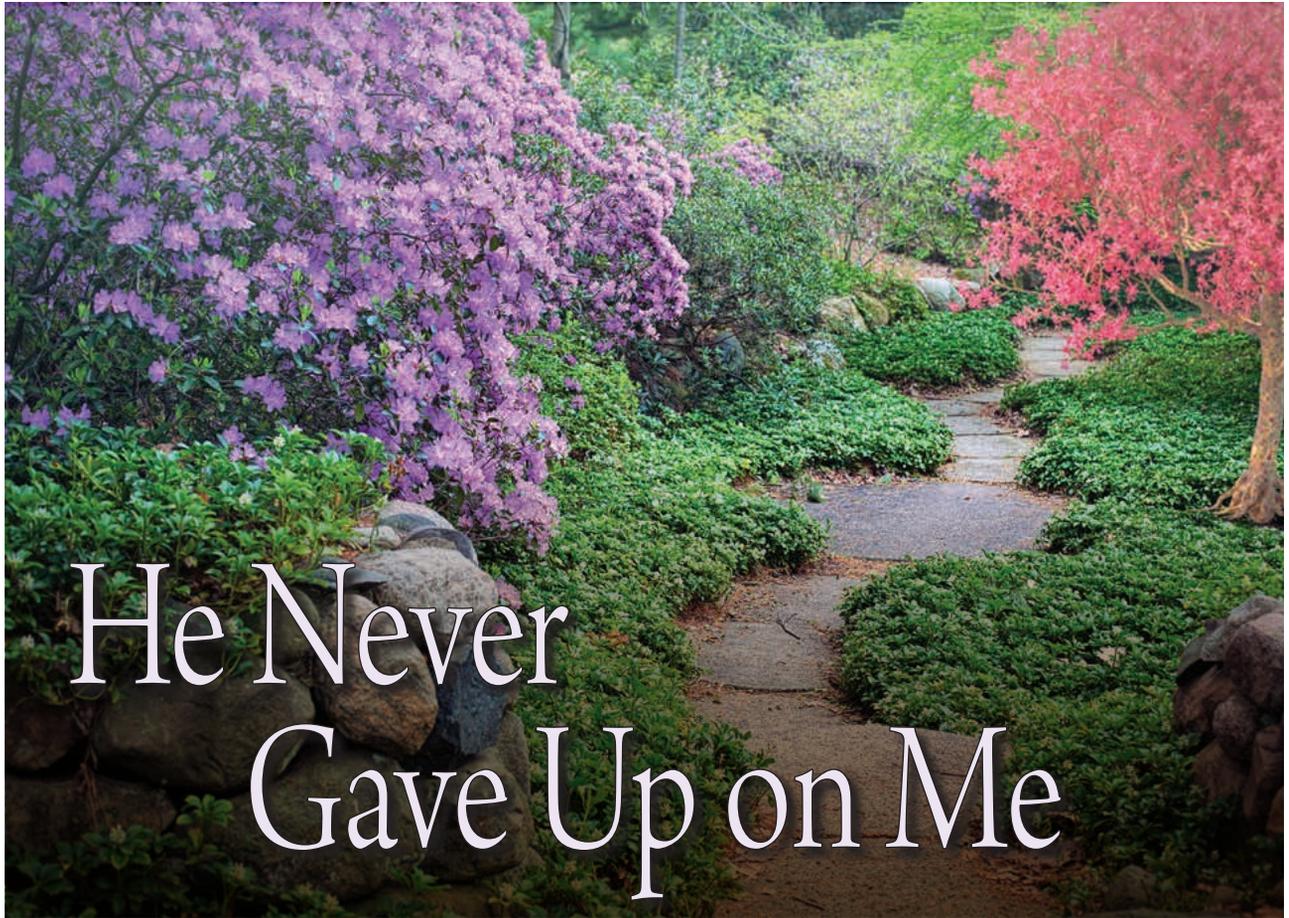
While many traditional activities and events will remain in the Convention schedule, new features will add a special flare to our meeting in Albuquerque:

- Cultural and historic tours arranged with Tour New Mexico, offered all day on Monday, July 1, and Friday afternoon, July 5. Check out the website for details of how to register for these tours.
- A Fourth of July fiesta for all paid attendees.
- Dynamic testimonies.
- Reports from churches actively involved in Great Commission work.

Let’s make some new memories in Albuquerque July 1-6. See you there!

— Program Committee

Please email questions to conventioninfo@cog7.org.



Discovering God's gifts and calling over a lifetime.

by **Maureen O. Vanterpool, Ph.D.**

When God called me to ministry, it came as a shock to me and, undoubtedly, to everyone who knew me. I had spent years rejecting God and His Word, although I had been raised by a devout Seventh Day Adventist grandmother. We held morning devotions at dawn and vespers at dusk, kept the Sabbath, and lived our lives in the world, but not of the world. Under Mama's care, I came to know Jesus as my

Savior, but later I chose to go my own way.

Wandering away

As a college student in the turbulent 1960s, I majored in philosophy and adopted a worldview that combined several belief systems contrary to biblical teachings. I gave up on church, and I practically gave up on God. I didn't mind calling on Him or reading the Psalms in tough times, but I prided myself on being self-sufficient. Although many psalms spoke of humility before God, my response was, "A loving God wouldn't want me to humiliate myself" by bowing down. Even an excellent education didn't prepare me to discern the vast spiritual difference between humility and humiliation.

Then came that evening in 1985 when it seemed as though God held a mirror up and I saw myself as a sinner, living a life that sorely displeased Him. I found myself on my knees crying uncontrollably, begging God to forgive my sins, and asking Him to come back into my life. I felt His forgiveness, and I'd love to say that I did a complete turnaround then. But that was not the case.

I compare my experience to the parable of the four soils in Matthew 13:3-9. In my case, I never was sure on which of the three infertile soils the seed fell. However, I was sure that it did not fall on fertile soil, because it did not produce the fruit of lasting change in my life.

Conflicting values

About ten years later, I landed a management position at a small corporation with a national clientele. That job seemed great at first, but it was in a toxic environment where most people were treated badly and the executives operated without a moral code.

After several months, I was asked to do something I considered unethical. I delayed as long as I could and gave the false impression that I was doing what had been asked of me. I was disappointed in myself and ashamed of how I was handling the situation. To make matters worse, my expenses were high. Without a safety net, I feared to take a stand and risk being fired.

In despair, I began praying and asking God to deliver me. I remembered the story of how God delivered the Israelites from their Egyptian taskmasters (Exodus 1-12) and continued to pray for deliverance. Before long, He showed me that I needed to step out on faith and leave that job, even though I did not have another one waiting. God gave me the courage to leave and the grace not to regret it for a single moment.

Different direction

The call to ministry came within days after I left that job – a shock to my system. Immediately, the Lord placed a burning desire in my heart to draw close to Him. I started attending a church in a denomination different from the one I was raised in. I participated in a Bible study group and studied His Word intensely, with the help of study guides and commentaries. God gave me the

drive to delve into the Bible with the same commitment to learning that helped me earn three degrees. I was a scholar trained in research, with academic publications to my credit. Earlier in my professional life I had been a reading teacher, well equipped with reading and writing skills and the ability to teach others. While I sought a new position, the Lord equipped me for work He was preparing for me.

During this preparation time, the Lord led me to focus on Habakkuk 2:2, 3. That passage helped me understand that my appointed task was to write something related to studying His Word. I needed to write it plainly and to be patient in

executing the task. I also had a fleeting vision that the work was to have an international reach, although I could not imagine how that would happen.

Most importantly, God showed me ways to use my gifts and talents so that my study of His Word would bear fruit. That fruit took the form of a line of puzzles and games I called Bible Goodies that helped children and adults learn how to find and read Scripture for themselves.

New opportunities

By the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Bible Goodies ministry came together with my desire to be a businesswoman. I developed and self-published a dozen products, and I soon began selling them on a small scale to churches, Christian schools, and families in several states and the US Virgin Islands. Through my product donations to missionaries, Bible Goodies were carried to several Central American and African countries – the fulfillment of the international reach. During my eighteen months between jobs, I was blessed beyond measure, although the business never turned a profit. The Lord

“It seemed as though
God held a mirror up and I
saw myself as a sinner.”

gave me a joyful spirit and supplied all my needs. I continued the Bible Goodies ministry for several years, even after I landed full-time work.

The Lord provided me with a full-time director position at a national nonprofit organization, where I worked for two years. During that time, my desire to serve Him grew so intensely, I prayed He would open an opportunity for my professional

life and my life of faith to come together seamlessly. In that time, He continued equipping me as I delved deeper into Scripture. I meditated on several scriptures, including Isaiah 6:1-8, in which the prophet described his vision of encountering God's glory. I adopted verse 8 as my own, frequently praying, "Here am I! Send me."

Equipped for ministry

At the end of two years, the Lord called me to a teaching ministry at a Christian college, where my professional life and my life of

gave their lives to Christ. It was an awesome experience for me as a professor to spend fourteen years teaching leadership with a solid foundation of Scripture.

Divine communication

In the Organizational Leadership program, we used many textbooks, but the Holy Bible was the most important textbook in every session of every course. For example, in our Leadership and Communication course, we discussed the fact that communication is so important to God that He *spoke* the creation

apostles to speak in other languages at Pentecost, so people from all over heard the gospel in their own language. Studying Leadership and Communication from a biblical perspective gave the organizational leaders in our program a meaningful way to think about their own communication. The same was true for all ten courses that made up the master's program in organizational leadership.

I am still in awe of how the Lord called me, equipped me, and used me in ministry. Having been blessed with the gift of teaching, I am thankful He allowed me to use that gift to draw others to Him. Above all, I am so grateful that although I almost gave up on Him, He never gave up on me. **BA**

“I adopted Isaiah 6:8 as my own, frequently praying, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”

faith blended. Most importantly, I grasped the fullness of the lordship of Christ in my life, humbling myself before Him. For fourteen Spirit-filled years, I taught in a two-year master's degree program in Organizational Leadership. My students were executives, managers, and supervisors from a cross-section of industries in a tri-state area. Some students were believers and some skeptics. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, some believers grew in their faith, and some skeptics

into existence in Genesis 1:1-31. Communication is often named as the biggest problem in organizations, so we explored other biblical references to it.

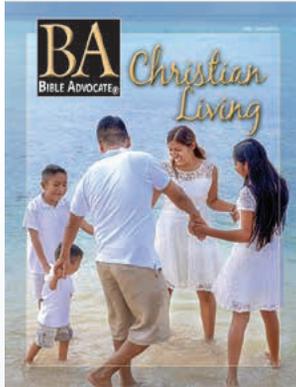
We discussed how the people rebelled against God by building the Tower of Babel to reach the heavens (Genesis 11:1-9). At that time, God confused their common language and scattered them all over the earth, speaking many languages. In another communication miracle described in Acts 2:1-13, God enabled the

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Extra! Extra!

Be sure to visit baonline.org for this issue's extra feature: an article by Gordon Feil on the perils of Job. While you're there, check out other articles and content to help you grow in your spiritual walk.



Military service

In your BA of July-August 2018 article on “This We Believe” [pp. 4-6] you several times use the phrase “as a result — not a cause — of redemption, believers should. . . .” This strikes home how a great many Christian concepts should be viewed.

However, in your brief summary of what *This We Believe* says about military service, it seems to be saying that it is quite all right for other men and women to die defending our country’s freedom and our *religious freedom* — just not Church of God (Seventh Day) members or their families. Think about what has just been said to us Christian veterans and those still on active duty, and there are many of us.

Freedom, including religious freedom, is not free and never will be.

*J. and M. W.
Mannington, WV*

Editor’s reply: Thanks for writing. Your letter reminds us that the

Church of God (Seventh Day) holds a position on carnal warfare that most Christians disagree with. We also recognize the tension Christians face as dual citizens of both an earthly nation and of God’s kingdom. I think we agree that our first loyalty is to King Jesus, to the freedom and security that only He can deliver.

We may also agree that war is a reflection of our fallen nature. It is the way the world works. Jesus understood this. “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled” (Matthew 24:6). Jesus could have done what most before and after Him have: approve our joining the carnage. But He didn’t. Instead, He called us to follow a different and better way — even in the face of death: “Put your sword into the sheath . . . If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight” (John 18:11, 36).

The world is a violent, dangerous place. The Bible Advocate is read in over 160 nations, 120 of which guarantee some degree of religious freedom. But according to the authors of the 2016 Global Peace Index, only ten countries out of 163 tracked are conflict free. The United States is not among them. While we all pursue peace and security, the wars that fill the earth are not evidence of its freedom, but of its bondage.

We do not expect others to take up arms to keep us free. It takes courage to follow the Lord. He could have called heaven’s armies,

but chose rather to lay down His own life for the Highest Cause. The Church preaches the gospel of peace and teaches non-violent resistance, not to judge others or avoid danger for ourselves. In this way, we also serve our respective nations. By remembering that Christians everywhere are a “holy nation,” we are not reduced to the interests of any one state (1 Peter 2:9).

*We preach this peace not because it is practical or always works **but because it is faithful to Christ and His highest principles.** We believe this is the way of the gospel and what our Lord and King lived and commanded of His disciples who bear witness to His kingdom. In following Him, we learn other ways besides lethal violence to serve our nations and work for freedom and peace.*

Some readers will identify with your comments, others with mine. The Church also teaches that Christ’s followers should be true to their highest convictions, being persuaded in their own minds, by the Spirit, of the Bible’s truest teaching. May we all be so guided. Peace be unto you, wherever you live and serve.

For a more complete discussion of this issue, we refer readers to our tract *Military Service: Is It Biblical?* and to the vast Christian literature on gospel nonviolence.



Rwanda at a Glance

- Population: over 11 million
- Capital: Kigali
- Land area: 10,169 square miles
- Official CoG7 congregations: 12 (*see below*)
- CoG7 membership: 978
- Chairman and overseer: Job Emmanuel Habyarimana

Missions Director Bryan Cleeton explains that in Rwanda the government put strict building regulations in place on church structures last March. As a result, thousands of congregations closed in that country, including all twelve Church of God (Seventh Day) churches. Only one has been reopened so far. However, the Conroe, Texas CoG7 raised \$11,000 last October to help reopen two churches in Rwanda. For more information on how your church can support global missions – in Rwanda and elsewhere – while maintaining a focus on local evangelism, contact Bryan Cleeton at bryan.cleeton@cog7.org.



IMC News

In December 2018, the first edition of *IMC News* launched. This quarterly newsletter, produced by IMC Secretary John Klassek, is devoted to sharing news of the International Ministerial Congress. Visit imc.cog7.org/newsletters.html to download English and Spanish versions in both high (printable) and low resolutions.



Rwanda

continued from page 7

on the Sabbath day and that I should keep the Ten Commandments as a sign of obedience to Him.

TM: What is the greatest strength in your pastoral area?

JH: My strength in the ministry lies in the help, the grace that I received from God, that has enabled me to travel all over the country to preach to people, to witness to other brethren, and even to open churches.

TM: So your strength is in evangelism and church planting?

JH: Yes.

TM: Would you comment on the challenges that exist and that you face in Rwanda?

JH: Sometimes in the past we were not having any challenge concerning our fellowship. But since the government passed the legislation that churches must be built to the required standards of the government, some of our churches lack fellowship because they have nowhere to meet. This is one of the key challenges that we face as the Rwandan church.

TM: And what are you doing currently to make sure it doesn't get worse?

JH: In our congregations where they can't fellowship together, we have pastors we have assigned, and they move from one house to another, encouraging members, teaching them the Word of God, and praying with them. And we are encouraging such congregations to start making their own bricks so that we can have bricks in the future. In the meanwhile, their pastors are



giving them some level of spiritual care.

TM: Is there anything from this conference you have picked up that relates to the ten-point vision? What do you find easiest to preach or teach on?

JH: What I can go and share is that as a church, we need to put our focus on Christ so that we can become a Christ-centered church. Without Christ in every aspect of the Church, there can be no good result. So I'm going to show them that everything that we do, we are going to do in Christ and for Christ.

TM: Since you don't [speak] English, do you have any literature in Swahili that you have received from the Church of God?

JH: I have not received any literature that is printed in Swahili, and I struggle to see the verses in the English version.

TM: So, I guess even the book *This We Believe* is not available in Swahili?

JH: Yes, yes.

TM: Finally, what do you think is the greatest need in your church?

JH: There are workers who are willing to go and evangelize and share the gospel, but they lack any way of enabling them. For example, they can't afford to travel to various parts to preach. If they had a way of being supported so they can reach out to the people, then the Church can grow.

TM: So you need support for preachers to go out?

JH: The most urgent need is the issue of worship structures, because even if you preach and win souls, where will you direct them?

TM: Do you think a Bible school would help in any way



covering your weaker areas?

JH: Yes, it would greatly help, even though studying through the Internet can be a challenge because not all people can access it. And Internet is expensive in the long run, so most people cannot afford it.

TM: Finally, what do you want the world to know about the Rwanda church? What's your last message to the global church?

JH: I am appealing first and foremost to all to pray for us. Second, I'm appealing for assistance and support in building places of worship, because we have labored so much to preach to people, and they have believed

that they have come to church. Now, if they can't find a place to worship, according to the government regulations, they might at one point be enticed to join other religious organizations. So this is our priority need for support and for prayer: prayer for the situation in support for the gospel work and support for the construction of worship structures in Rwanda.

TM: Thank you, my brother, for the wonderful interview!

JH: Amen, amen!

Watch the video of this interview at imc.cog7.org/video.html.





G. C. Ministries News

ARTIOS • MISSIONS • PUBLICATIONS



Kenneth "Ken" Knoll (1946-2018)

Kenneth Glen Knoll (72) was born May 14, 1946, in New Auburn, Wisconsin, and died November 29, 2018, in Springfield, Oregon, surrounded by family.

Ken graduated from Midwest Bible College in Stanberry, Missouri, with a degree in pastoral ministry. He married Mary Jean Wilson on June 15, 1969, in Conroe, Texas. They have two daughters, Carla and Kristen (Kristi).

During his almost fifty years of ministry, Ken pastored churches in Texas, Oklahoma, and Oregon. He retired from the Eugene Church of God (Seventh Day) in January 2014. However, he continued to be actively involved in the Church both locally and nationally, as well as with the Eugene One Hope Network of pastors and churches.

Ken was passionate about his family, his friends, and his God. He will be remembered for his humor, his smile, his love of life, his unconditional love for others, and his total commitment to sharing the love of Jesus. During his brief illness, Ken was often seen with his hands lifted high, singing praises to God and His Son Jesus.

Ken is survived by his wife, two daughters, two sons-in-law, five grandchildren, and many other relatives and brothers/sisters in Christ. He is preceded in death by his parents, sister Violet (Anklam), brother Jesse, and granddaughter, Amy Lang.



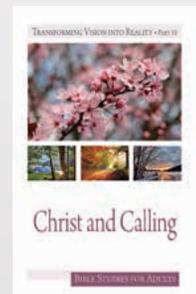
Where is your path taking you?

Your talents can greatly impact the world. Work with your local district to find the right path for you!

Adult Second Quarter Lessons

Christ and Calling focuses on the biblical basis of being disciples of Christ. The necessary attitude, commitment, and enduring faith that mark out a disciple of Jesus is explored throughout.

Becoming Christ's disciple mandates a personal desire to be encouraged, corrected, and ultimately transformed into the very image of Jesus Christ. This quarterly discusses the challenge of discipleship and the results it produces.



Lord's Supper Service

Thursday, April 18





They Worshipped Him

It happened on a mountain in Galilee. The Gospel according to Matthew relates that, earlier, women had gone to look at Jesus' tomb, and "an angel of the Lord" met them there and told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. Then the angel — and, later, the risen Christ himself — instructed the women to tell Christ's disciples that He would meet them in Galilee: "The eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him . . ." (Matthew 28:16, 17, NASB throughout).

Why did they do that? Why would these Jewish men worship Jesus when the law given to Moses completely condemned the worship of anyone or anything other than the one true God? And why didn't Jesus stop His disciples from worshipping Him? That's what Paul did when people attempted to worship him (Acts 14:15). That's what angels did when the apostle John attempted to worship them: "Do not do that. . . . Worship God" (Revelation 22:9).

Why did the disciples worship Jesus, and why did Jesus receive their worship? It can only be because the disciples had come to believe what Jesus had been saying about Himself throughout their time with Him: that Jesus is much more than a mere man; He is the divine Son of God. He is more than human; He is deity. Jesus is, in the words of the disciple Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). And what does one do in the presence of God? Worship Him.

The final phrase of Matthew 28:17 must be considered. The entire verse reads: "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful." I'm left with many questions. Are you? Who were the ones who were doubtful? How

could they possibly still be doubtful about Christ? He had just risen from the dead as He said He would! Right? And what exactly were they doubtful about? That the man they saw walking toward them was really Jesus? That He had actually died and come back to life? Were they perhaps doubtful about their dawning realization that the one God exists as multiple persons? Matthew doesn't specifically answer my questions, but Jesus' first words to His disciples on this occasion may have helped to alleviate their doubts: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (v. 18).

Those who may be concerned that recognizing the deity of Christ violates the will of God the Father may also take comfort in Jesus' words. Even as He claims "all authority . . . in heaven and on earth," Jesus acknowledges that this authority "has been given to Me." Who gave Jesus all authority? God the Father. This was the testimony of John the Baptist: "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). This was the teaching of Jesus: "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father . . ." (Matthew 11:27). Confessing the truth about Jesus and bowing before Him in worship bring glory to God the Father. It was He who exalted Jesus and bestowed on Jesus the name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9-11).

What, therefore, should be our own foundational response to Jesus? In spite of any doubts we may have, we, too, should worship Him. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. He is our God.

— Loren Stacy



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