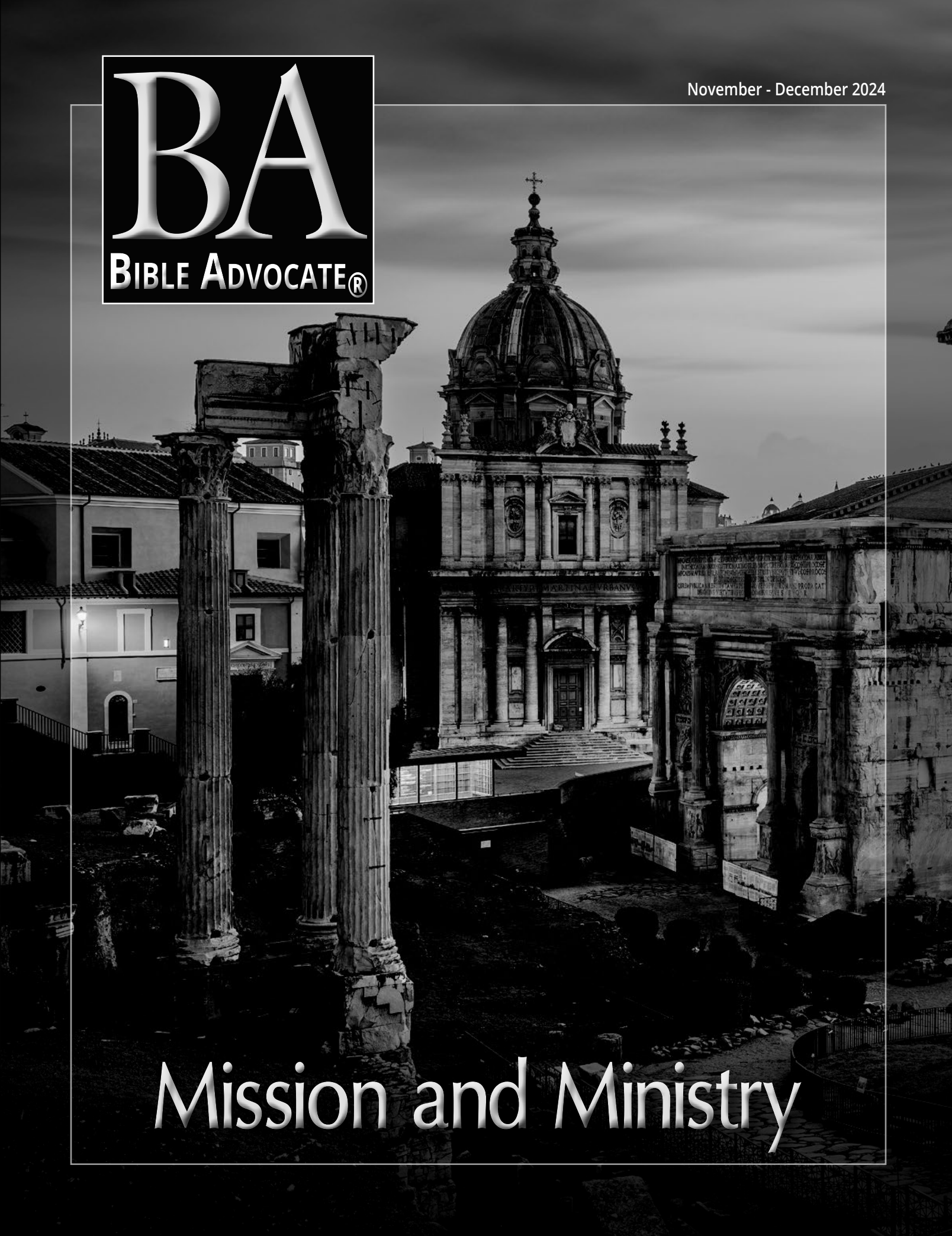


BA
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Mission and Ministry





Inside

2024: Meeting God in Scripture



ARTICLES

- 4 The Gospel Triumphant | Rick Straub
- 8 The Joy of Discipleship | Denise Kohlmeyer
- 12 Sandpaper for the Soul | Kathleen Barrett
- 16 Held Together | Stephen R. Clark
- 18 Pass the Baton | Loren Gjesdal
- 20 Different | Sarah Schwerin
- 22 Taking the Plunge | Mike Wallace
- 28 On Mission in Tanzania | Elly Malima and Bryan Cleeton

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 First Word — One Body, One Spirit
- 7 Spotlight on Romans: Systematic Salvation
- 11 Questions & Answers
- 14 2025 Convention
- 15 David Discovers Ministry
- 24 Poetry — Doc Arnett
- 25 Bible-Based Riddles
- 27 GC Ministries News
- 31 Last Word — Calling, Mission, and Ministry

Scripture quotations

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One Body, One Spirit

I can't believe we've made it through the whole Bible! We've only scratched the surface, of course. But I hope that, in the effort, you have not only come to know more about God but have come to know Him better.

The Prophets reveal our God as almighty and everlasting Creator and Redeemer; righteous Judge and Covenant Maker; the Great I AM, who is and acts for us. As Psalm 145 sums up well, God is the great God, good and gracious and glorious. Amen! Jesus reveals this God to us fully, intimately, as our loving heavenly Father. As God's Son, Jesus declares Him perfectly as Lord and Savior. That's good news!

But how about the last twenty-three books of the Bible, spanning Acts to Revelation? How do we meet God here? The apostolic witness is remarkably focused. We see it in two passages that bookend this vast material:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." . . . And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" (Acts 1:8; Revelation 22:17).

The apostles write to and for the church, the bride and body of Christ formed and moved by the Spirit. "There is one body and one Spirit," Paul writes (Ephesians 4:4; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:13). It's a sobering wonder: In the Epistles, God is revealed in the ministry and mission of a Spirit-filled church, who bears witness to the gospel of God in Jesus Christ as she's conformed to His image (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We come now to the end of the story, realizing we are part of the story. God would be known to the world through His people. With the Spirit we say, "Come!" If ever we've needed His Spirit, it is now — to lead and comfort, to equip and bring forth fruit in us, to unify us in the good news of Jesus Christ. That's our ministry. That's our mission. May we be faithful to it.

— Jason Overman





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The Gospel Triumphant

Becoming the aroma of Christ before God and humanity.

by Rick Straub

In our circus world, where senses are bombarded by the overstimulation of social media, political protests, world conflict, and personal crises, can people still be impressed by the gospel? Should we fear that the good news of Jesus has lost its power to stand and is destined to be buried below the new, the novel, the scintillating, sparkling noise of this world's "now"?

God's book of the gospel says otherwise. Paul states:

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 2:14, 15, NRSVUE).

Processing in triumph

Paul's reference to "triumphal procession" compares the ministry of the new covenant with the Roman tradition of that name. The highest honor that a Roman general could receive from the state was to be granted a "triumph" by the Roman senate. A general who won a significant victory on behalf of that city could request such an honor. If

granted, the triumph would consist of a parade or victory march that mustered outside the city of Rome and then proceeded into it along a route that led to the altar of Mars, the god of war.

The procession included the transported spoils of war, gold and valuable treasures, exotic animals, captive people in bonds — perhaps even a captured king or a defeated enemy's general. As the procession passed, you would find government officials in the parade and, behind them, the general honored in a chariot drawn by four horses. He might be wearing a mask representing a god, perhaps Mars. A laurel wreath signifying victory might be held over the general's head by a slave. The honor and prestige awarded in this triumph was second to none. In Roman terms,

it added greatly to the general's gravitas.

Following the general came his unarmed army shouting and singing praises to their commander in chief. Dancers and musicians took part in the procession. Incense was burned, as the procession was to be a sensation for all the senses.

Most Romans never experienced a triumph during their lifetime, but the ones who saw them remembered them for years and shared their experiences. The sight, the sound, the smell, the vibrations under foot of the passing triumphant force signaled victory for the general, the army, the state, the empire. Monuments commemorated it. The triumph was about victory, but also about spectacle and glory.

Gospel fragrance

Out of the metaphor of the triumphal procession, Paul highlights its impact on the nose, our sense of smell. Paul sees his role in the procession as the burner of incense. The spectacular and glorious are left to God. God is leading, directing, and orchestrating the triumphal procession. Paul is following along with his fellow incense burners, generating the fragrance that will be carried on the wind to the world through which the procession marches.

The fragrance is not unimportant. It is said that the sense of smell is tied closely to our memories. The fragrance of the gospel should cause the ones who are positively affected to be led by their noses to Jesus.

The aroma metaphor is instructive in our ministry of the

gospel. It includes the element of wind — the breeze of the Spirit — that guides and directs the gospel message. If we stay within the procession, following our triumphant Lord; if we remain faithful in thought, word, and deed, the profession of our faith will be carried where it is needed through the Spirit. We should not go out on our own, searching for the spectacular and glorious. We find all the glory necessary in following Jesus. If we express the gospel faithfully, the breeze of the Spirit will give it direction.

Mixed results

Paul warns that the impact of the gospel will be different on different people. Those being saved by the message of Jesus

they loath our message of faith. To the latter we have the stench of a corpse. They hold their noses and run, throwing a few stones in our direction, hoping that we and our "smell" will just go away.

Who is equal to such a task? We may be inclined to answer, "Nobody." Our human desire to impress everyone, to be loved by all, is strong. Such should not be our expectation as those sharing the gospel. The good news divides the saved from the perishing, the accepters of Jesus from His rejectors, the ones who desire to have standing in the kingdoms of this world versus those who seek the kingdom of God.

Paul answers his open-ended question a few verses later:



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receive it one way, but others reject it: "To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task?" (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Sadly, not everyone values the gospel and our role in sharing it. While some love us because they have found life's answer in Jesus, others loath us because

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (3:5, 6).

Glory of Jesus

The triumphal procession we join is not one in which a general wears the mask of a warrior god to imitate the appearance of a deity. It is not even the glory of the face of Moses, whose face shone because he was in the presence of God. No, the glory of the One we follow in triumphant procession is true deity, seen in the face of Jesus. It is a glory so great that, as we look upon His face, we are transformed into His likeness (v. 18).

Again, Paul reminds us that the gospel message, though triumphant through God, is not always accepted by this world.



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The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this

treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (4:4-7).

God's glory seen in Jesus is the treasure we possess. The power of God in our lives makes the ministry of the gospel possible. It is not a treasure to be hidden but revealed and shared.

We ask, as Paul did, "Who is equal to such a task?" Here Paul gives a more extended answer of how one prevails through the hardships of Christian service:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not aban-

doned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body (vv. 8-10).

In a world that dwells on misery, death, despair, and depression, we glory in One who represents the power of healing and life, joy and peace. In triumphal procession we march with the host of Christ's followers. We share the incense of His love, the knowledge of His glory.

Eternal glory

But there is more.

In Rome, the triumphal procession would sometimes last several days, perhaps accompanied by a week of games and entertainment. But this is still only momentary in the scope of history. Paul admonishes his readers not to lose heart, because an eternal glory awaits the faithful who endure through the fleeting moments of hardship (vv. 16, 17).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not weak, outdated, or insignificant. It is powerful, triumphant, and glorious. We are not called to be spectators, sitting in the shade while the triumph's participants march past. We are called to join the parade, to march with our glorious Lord.

Are we up to the task? Yes, if we carry with us the treasure of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Will we be able to stand up to hardships that come with the march? Yes, if we realize that the momentary difficulties of the march are nothing compared to the eternal glory that awaits us at the end.

If you are not part of this triumphal parade, join it! If you are marching with our Lord, keep it up! You are changing lives as the aroma of Christ drifts to the world on the breeze of the Spirit.

BA

Rick Straub writes from Elk Grove, CA, where he lives with his wife, Kathy. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.



Spotlight on Romans: Systematic Salvation



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For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . . (1:16).

Among 20 New Testament letters, Romans is first in order and first in influence. No other book covers sin, salvation, and the Christian life in so extensive and structured a way.

Paul's doctrine of sin . . .

entered through Adam (5:12ff); brings God's wrath (1:18; 2:5); begins with disbelief (1:19-23; 14:23); advances to moral depravity (1:24-27); expands into all life (1:28-32); is inexcusable (1:20; 2:1); affects the whole person (3:10-18); exists with or without law (2:12; 5:13a); is defined by law (3:20; 7:7); is not imputed without law (4:15; 5:13b); uses law to deceive and condemn (7:8-11); dwells within as its own law (7:20-23; 8:2); makes people slaves (6:17-22); is universal (3:10-19, 23; 5:12); damages all creation (8:19-22); abounds, reigns, kills (5:12, 20, 21; 6:23); is forgiven in God's mercy (3:25); is not imputed to the forgiven (4:8); is cleared, condemned by Christ (6:6, 7; 8:2, 3); can't continue or rule, under grace (6:1, 2, 14, 15).

Paul's doctrine of salvation

Salvation past. We were saved from the guilt and penalty of our sins by the death of Christ on the cross: This is *justification*, by God's grace through faith. Justification means that God counts us as 100 percent righteous now and at the Judgment! It looks to Jesus, not to human righteousness (3:20, 24, 28; 4:5; 5:1, 9).

Salvation present. We are being saved from the grip and practice of our sins by the life of Christ in us: This is *sanctification* through the Holy Spirit, reflected in human obedience that is never 100 percent in this life (6:1-7, 10, 11, 12ff; 7:24—8:4; 5—13, 26).

Salvation future. We shall be saved from the presence and possibility of sin by the return of Christ to transform us into His likeness forever: This is *glorification*, the perfect redemption we will receive with all creation on the last great day. Nothing can separate God's people from His love in Christ Jesus (8:17, 18, 21, 23-25, 30, 31-39).

Salvation's synonyms

atonement or *reconciliation*: joining the separated (5:10, 11; 11:15); *redemption*: releasing the enslaved (3:24; 8:23); *propitiation* or *expiation*: satisfying the offended (3:25);

justification: acquitting the guilty (3:24, etc.)

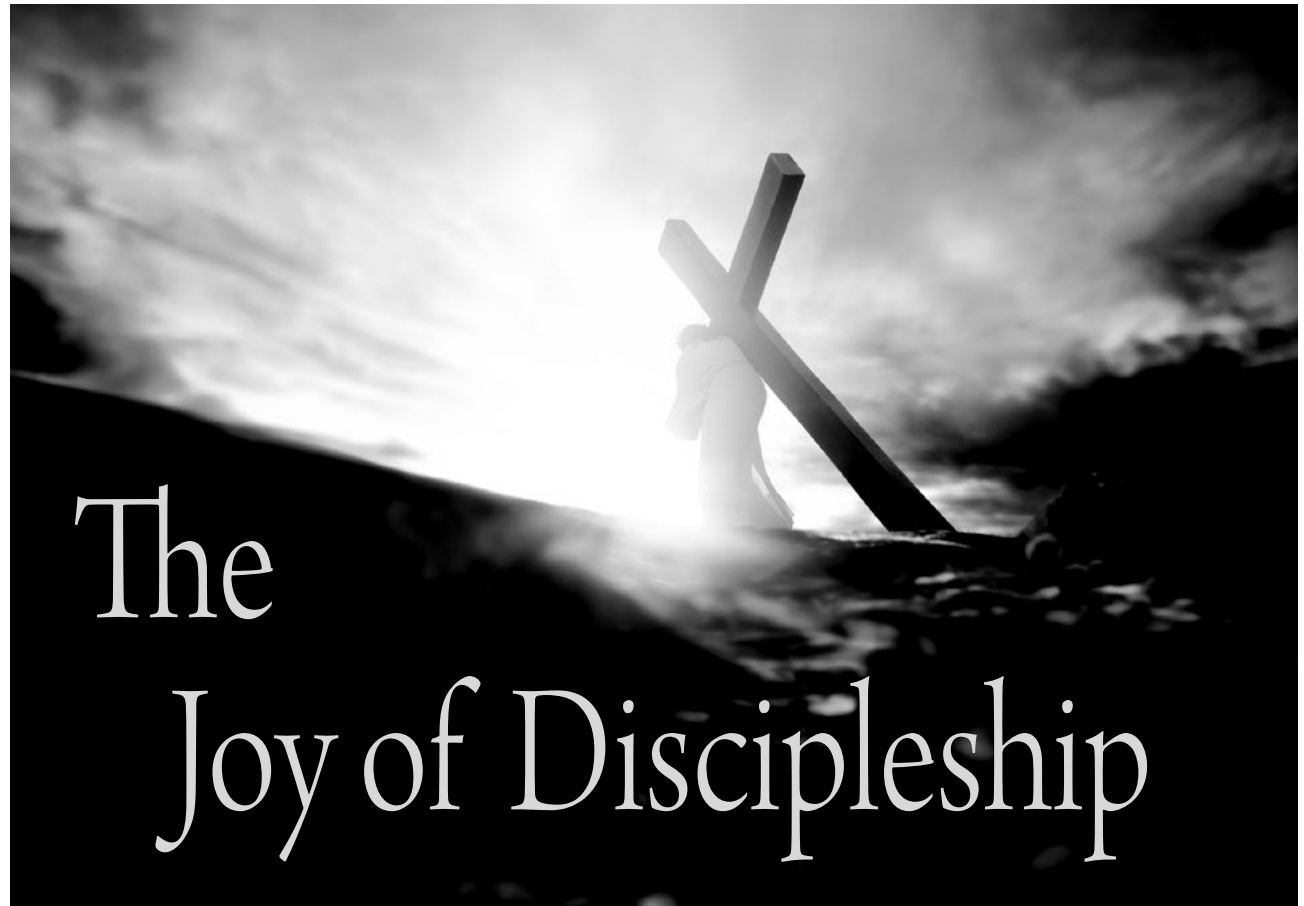
Salvation summarized

- 3:21-28 is most comprehensive, but not simple; study through it.
- 5:1-11 is more easily grasped; memorize it.
- 10:9-13 is compact; or begin with 10:1.

Christian life has . . .

its motivation: God's mercy (12:1); its opposite: ways of the world (12:2); its arena: body of Christ (12:3-5); its energy: gifts from God (12:6-8); its character: loving service (12:9-21; 13:8-10; 15:1-7); its practice: submission to proper authority (13:1-7); its stimulus: Christ's nearness (13:11-14); its challenge: unity amid diversity (14:1-23; 15:1-7).

Romans in a sentence: God's wrath is revealed in the downward spiral of sin and death; His grace is revealed in the gospel of Christ through which Jew and Gentile receive right standing with God, live faithfully by the Spirit, and hope for final glory.



The Joy of Discipleship

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The cross as a way of life.
by Denise Kohlmeyer

Then all the disciples left him and fled (Matthew 26:56).

They ran like rabbits. Just when Jesus needed them most, they were gone. The thought of the cross was too much for them. The pain, unbearable. So they ran.

Oftentimes when I read the

account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and His arrest, I shake my head at the cowardice of His disciples. How could they abandon their Rabbi, whom they had devoted themselves to for three long years, at His greatest hour of need? But they did.

When I reflect more deeply and am honest with myself, I likely would have done the same. It's human nature: fright *and* flight!

I'm not alone, either. No one likes a cross. Yet it is a cross we need. And instead of running from it, as disciples, we should be running *to* it.

Capital punishment

Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment that predates Christianity. It was used by the Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, and Greeks long before the Romans used it to execute prisoners of war and enemies of the throne. It was the Romans, however, who ultimately perfected this torturous method of execution, and they extended its use to include every conceivable criminal.

In an act meant to utterly humiliate and subjugate, the criminal was forced to carry the cross-beam, on which he would hang, to his own execution. He would

be paraded through the streets to the execution site, subjected to the jeers and harassment of onlookers.

Crucifixion was a public and shameful way to die in ancient times. Of course, it was something to be avoided, as Jesus' disciples well knew.

So why would God incarnate choose the cross to die on? Could He not have chosen another way, a less tortuous, less conspicuous way?

Yes. But He didn't. In God's view, the cross was the perfect form of death. He saw it not as punishment for wrongdoing but as a means of payment for His wrath against sin and the pathway for redemption of humanity.

The altar in Old Testament times was a tangible, public means of sacrifice for sins. So, too, was the cross. It was the "altar" that Jesus, the Lamb of God, was sacrificed on. In this way, God reversed the symbolism of the cross, from one of shame to one of substitutionary atonement and salvation. The cross thus became a catalyst and symbol for forgiveness, healing, and restoration.

Self-denial and discipleship

The cross also became a powerful metaphor for what it means to sacrificially follow Jesus.

Fellowship with the Lord demands that anyone following Him must "deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a

man give in return for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26).

In the Greek, *deny* means "disown." In the context of Matthew 16:24, Jesus was saying that the disciples (and we) must disown (or sacrifice) their allegiance to themselves as being number one, the popular social theology of our culture today. Rather, our allegiance — our hearts, our minds, our souls . . . our entire being — exclusively and irrevocably belongs to Jesus Christ, our Savior and King.

Take up means "to pick up, take on board." If one is to be a disciple (or, in our vernacular, an apprentice) of Jesus, the requirement is exacting and oftentimes difficult. It involves full submis-

Furthermore, self-denial means surrendering our will for God's good and perfect will. In this there is freedom. As we follow and obey Jesus, we aren't subject to follow and obey every whim, whether cultural, political, or religious.

Our obedience is bent toward God, who will never lead us astray. He goes before us always and makes our paths straight (Isaiah 45:2, 3). We can trust that He will guide us in the right and perfect way to places of peace, grace, and healing.

There is also freedom in laying down our wearisome burdens of sin and self and finding rest in God's sovereignty, of *His* being in control of all things, including

“Self-denial and cross-bearing are not one-time things. They are a lifelong journey.”

sion to Jesus as our authority. It means giving up self-autonomy. It means accepting the inevitability of ridicule, rejection, humiliation, pain (emotional and physical), and maybe even death.

Jesus was saying, essentially, that anyone who desires to follow Him must sacrifice everything connected with self — pride, reputation, status — and "get on board" with everything discipleship entails. If a person can't, then perhaps it is best to run away.

our very lives. In this way, self-denial is an incredible gift of liberty and peace, which should be fully embraced.

Embrace the cross

As with all things, Jesus faced the cross with joy and scorned its shame. This sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? *Joy* and *cross* should not be in the same sentence. Yet here they are in Hebrews 12:2: "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set

before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The joy was not in the cross itself but in what it would accomplish for humanity, and even for Jesus himself. He afterward was seated at the right hand of God, a place of authority and honor.

The disciples initially did not have the mindset of embracing their crosses with joy. This was why they bolted from the Garden of Gethsemane. Thankfully, that was not the end of their story.

After Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead three days later, the disciples had a fuller understanding of what He meant. They had just witnessed the greatest demonstration of it and knew what was fully expected of them. What they had feared most that night in Gethsemane, they now heartily got on board with, fully embracing all that the cross of discipleship meant and would cost them. They embraced it all with joy. Paul and Barnabas explained this in the book of Acts:

“For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’” And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (13:47-52).

Perpetual practice

But the cross was work. Hard work. Long-haul work.

Being a disciple of Jesus was back then, and is today, not for the faint of heart. Self-denial

and cross-bearing are not one-time things. They are a lifelong journey, a lifestyle of perpetual practice. Hence Jesus’ use of the word *daily*. Surrender and submission to Jesus mean getting on board with doing God’s will day by day, minute by minute, no matter the cost.

Being a disciple of Jesus requires intention, full-out devotion and dedication, patience, and perseverance. It is not a race but a marathon, with the Holy Spirit “coaching” us along the route.

Eternal rewards

When we have finished our own spiritual marathons, we look forward to the resurrection and being forever in God’s presence, feasting at the banquet table, clothed in brilliant white robes, shaded by the Tree of Life, worshiping with our fellow saints, and basking in the light of Jesus’ glory. We will reign with Him as co-heirs upon the new earth in the New Jerusalem.

It’s true: No one likes a cross. Yet it is the most beautiful shape, representing our intentional discipleship, our internal and unapologetic allegiance to Jesus Christ — now and forever. **BA**

Good Gift

Matthew 7:11 tells us that our Father knows how to give good gifts. When we think of good gifts, however, we don’t immediately think of the cross. Yet the cross brings peace and restoration between a holy, just God and lost, sin-sick people. When we view it in this light, we see that the cross truly is the most poignant and powerful gift ever given. And that makes it good! Without the cross and Jesus’ sacrificial atonement, we all would be condemned to destruction, without any hope of rescue.

— Denise Kohlmeyer

Denise Kohlmeyer writes from St. Charles, IL. Scripture quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*.



Questions & Answers



Is it permissible for Christians to charge one another interest on loans?

The law condemns *usury*, particularly to poor brethren: "If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, . . . you shall not charge him interest" (Exodus 22:25). On the contrary, generosity is instructed: "But you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him . . . whatever he needs" (Deuteronomy 15:8).

While biblical usury is not just *excessive* interest, but interest of any kind, verses like these and others (i.e., Leviticus 25:35-37; Deuteronomy 23:19; Matthew 5:42; Luke 6:35-36; 1 Timothy 6:18) have been misinterpreted to conclude that charging interest of any kind is a sin.

The problem with this interpretation is that it takes the word *interest* out of context. The law's prohibition of charging interest is almost exclusively tied to the purpose of not oppressing the poor. In biblical times, borrowing had two purposes: first, to relieve the suffering of the destitute and, second, to make more profit in business. There was no prohibition against the latter except among Jews, and they made exceptions for themselves. Everyone would share in the profit, including the investor who loaned for interest. The law, rather, forbade the former. Israel was not to charge interest when the borrower was poor, which basically enslaved them to the loaner.

The Bible is said to have as many as 2,350 verses on how to handle our money and possessions. The basic teaching on this point is clear: Don't be greedy but be generous, especially where the poor and needy are concerned.

The Bible has been described as a letter from God to people, co-authored by men of God under

the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and received by God's people by that same Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19-21). The problem arises when someone determines a doctrine and then looks for biblical support for it, instead of letting the Holy Spirit guide them into understanding the message from God. It is not mystical; there are rules for interpreting the Word of God that one does well to follow. This is true with our understanding of usury too.

By the letter of the law, a biblical phrase may condemn a certain practice. But the one who interprets a text to mean the practice is sin in all cases misinterprets the message of God. Consider Jesus' words about Sabbath observance related to the work of priests and the behavior of His disciples (Matthew 12:1-5). Consider how Jesus was accused of breaking the Sabbath when He performed miracles. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath; He honored the law of God (v. 8).

We must learn and obey the spirit of the law. Similar considerations are necessary when considering the sound teaching on usury. Jesus' parables appear to approve of charging interest on loans (Luke 19:11-27). On the other hand, He drove the money changers from the temple for extorting God's people for their own gain (vv. 45-48).

For Bible-based believers, the greater weight of teaching on money is on generosity, contentment, forgiveness of debts patterned on God's forgiveness of us, being wise stewards, and avoiding greed, deceit, and fraud. When Christians lend to each other, we must consider the ability of the borrower to repay the debt. Exorbitant interest rates are always wrong, of course, but it is permissible to receive interest when it is mutually beneficial to both parties.

— Elder Chip Hinds



Sandpaper for the Soul

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Reflecting Christlikeness
through our words.

by Kathleen Barrett

What do your words say about you? What does God hear?

When we were four or five years old, our words might have been precocious, profound, or silly but were endearing to all.

As we grew, however, our words took on more weight. We expressed both graceful words at times and critical ones at other times.

What we say now, indeed, matters and reveals who we are on the inside (Luke 6:45). Words are God's idea because He is the author of language. Nonetheless,

His pure and holy character is such that He will not tolerate unkind, crude, or careless talk.

Discipleship

What do words have to do with God's mission and the ministry He has called each of us to carry on?

First John 1:3 helps us here. It says that God the Father's mission was the Word of life, Christ Jesus: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." God's mission is fellowship with His creation, and His ministry makes that possible by reconciling sinners to Himself.

So the mission begins with God's love, grace, and peace toward us — a personal, loving

relationship. The ministry continues in discipleship. As we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12), we understand how important our words are to God.

Spiritual and emotional growth must take place in us to reflect the character of God through what we say. James helps us see this by pointing out the discrepancy between our words and the Word: "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. . . . My brothers and sisters, this should not be" (3:9, 10).

This lesson should help us realize that we need varying degrees of sandpaper in our communication skills — correction from the Holy Spirit through God's Word. It is not only vulgar words blurted out (requiring heavy

grit sandpaper), but words that discourage or dishearten those closest to us (requiring finer grit sandpaper). Unlike Christ, we demean others by holding grudges and then lashing out in anger.

Salvation and beyond

I know this to be true for me. Years ago, I stood at the kitchen sink washing dishes after one unpleasant family dinner. I sensed an impression from the Holy Spirit: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger” (Ephesians 4:31).

This was a “sandpaper” moment for me. I was doing nothing to reflect the love of God through my unkind words, and, in the process, made a loved one sink deeper into the depths of self-loathing.

I learned a valuable lesson through this. Salvation is not merely a way to avoid future punishment. It is an eternal gift that keeps on giving life to those who live for Christ. Some may think receiving this gift is a one-and-done decision and that we don’t need to do anything else.

But that isn’t true. As believers, we must abide in Christ (John 15:4) and strive for unity in the Spirit. Unity is accomplished if we each take responsibility for our spoken words, allowing the Holy Spirit to use His sandpaper as needed: “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1, 2).

Guidance and correction

Think about your words. Are they healing or hurtful? Perhaps it is time to write a letter to mend

fences, forgive another, or seek forgiveness. Or perhaps a New Year’s resolution requires you to be *the letter* Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 3:3.

As we grow in our Christian walk, we will become more aware of the Holy Spirit’s adjustments, helping us go from glory to glory. By recognizing when a sandpaper moment is needed, we willingly and prayerfully address our character flaws. His sandpaper will smooth out unwholesome words (Ephesians 4:29). Day by day, we will become more Christlike in character, worthy of being known as a child of the King of Kings.

“Think about your words.
Are they healing or hurtful?”

Such daily correction is needed for another reason. God is Judge of all and loves us too much to accept our old ways. Paul therefore says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Transformation

Wouldn’t it be unbecoming to hear that beloved characters in the Bible were gossips,

foul-mouthed, or complainers?

A Christ follower can’t be double-minded. They can’t be one way serving in the community and another way at home. If this happens, our character and God’s reputation in the ears of a critically attentive world are compromised.

God’s very best for His children is wrapped in one amazing word: *transformation*. This begins with salvation and continues with spiritual sandpaper from time to time as we grow in Christlikeness. Within this concept, we have our mission and ministry to a rough, splintered, and wayward world.

There is joy in the journey when we are willing to lean into the sandpaper of correction. As we do, our words will reflect God’s transformation, inside and out. **BA**

Kathleen Barrett writes from Port Saint Lucie, FL. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*.





GC Convention

Excitement is building for the next General Conference Convention in Salt Lake City! We hope you are planning to attend the entire week (June 30 - July 5). Grab your memories of the last convention and get ready to take them to the next level!

In 2023, our afternoon workshops included topics covering the GC Initiatives. Convention 2025 will focus on motivating and equipping us to apply our knowledge and skills in active ministry. It is not a coincidence that the convention theme is "Engage." Learn ways to become involved in your churches, families, friend groups, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

Some of you are eagerly waiting for

specific details about the convention. As usual, the registration website will be released in early January. At that time, hotels will provide the dedicated information for you to receive convention rates. Booking one of our reserved rooms (not using your points) helps to ensure the Church can meet contractual requirements. By reserving a block of rooms, you receive a discounted rate, and the cost for renting meeting rooms is greatly reduced.

Working together helps keep convention costs reasonable. We appreciate your assistance and patience. Be planning and praying for our time in Salt Lake City!



CHURCH OF GOD™
(SEVENTH DAY) UNITED STATES & CANADA

David Discovers

Ministry



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by Marcia Sanders

David listened to the cheers of his teammates and the crowds in the stands as he pushed himself to run his fastest to the finish line. Dropping to his knees at the end, he gasped for air as he checked his time.

“Wow! What an exciting finish!” his coach exclaimed. “You gave it your all!”

“I’m beat!” David panted.

His coach smiled. “You’ve earned a rest after that run.”

Later that evening, David enjoyed recounting all of the events of the track meet, but especially his own 800-meter run. “I couldn’t believe how many people were cheering for me and came up to congratulate me afterward. The whole school must have been there! It’s a good thing I didn’t trip and fall. How embarrassing that would have been!”

Papa grinned. “Boy, you did it! You put on quite the performance and represented your school, your team — and yourself — well. That was a long run. Makes me think of the words in Hebrews 12:1: ‘Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us’” (NASB).

“That verse never meant quite as much to me before today,” David agreed. “I didn’t want to let anyone down, so I gave it my all.”

Papa smiled. “Since you have given your heart to the Lord and announced that you are one of His followers, people will be watching your Christian walk,

just as they were watching you run today. You may not know yet just what your personal ministry will look like, but you do know a few things. You know that you are to be a witness for Him and that you must endure to the end. This verse also tells you that you’ll be observed by a lot of people — a great cloud of witnesses — just as you were representing your school today. It’s important to always keep in mind that you are representing our Savior with every word you speak, every place you go, every show you watch, and everything you do. People will judge Christ and the Christian life by what they see in you.”

“That’s a scary thought,” David said. “I sure don’t want to let Jesus down. I’m not sure I’m strong enough.”

“You’re not,” Papa replied.

“Hey, that’s not very encouraging.”

“Hold on,” Papa laughed. “Let me finish. By yourself, you are not strong enough to do battle with the devil. But you are not by yourself. You have God’s Holy Spirit living inside you, and His Spirit is definitely more than enough. You have to seek and follow His leading.”

“Oh, I get it. You really had me going there for a while,” David responded. “By myself, I can’t make it, but if I read His Word and seek and follow His guidance, I will.” **BA**

Marcia Sanders writes from Fort Smith, AR, where she attends the Church of God (Seventh Day) with her husband, Randy.



Held Together

by Stephen R. Clark

It's a vast universe we live in. Now and then, videos simulating how truly vast pop up in social media. They start by looking down on a specific location on earth and then zoom out, seemingly to infinity. The earth quickly shrinks to a dot and then can't be seen at all. Around the edge of the video, stars, planets, and galaxies zip by. The universe is exceedingly vast, and it is filled with created things. Yet the earth is but one tiny dot.

Seeing these videos can make you feel small and insignificant. For many it raises a question about whether or not we are alone in the universe. Is there life on other planets? Are other galaxies inhabited?

But for some, it spawns a sense of reverential awe when contemplating that all of what's out there was put there just to sustain us! Still, we wonder, are we really that important? Do I really count?

I still exist

In the 1957 movie *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, the main character, Scott Carey, is exposed to a mysterious mist while boating. He begins to shrink. At one point he's living in a child's doll house to avoid being eaten by the housecat. Soon, he's so small, he can walk out of his cavernous basement through one miniscule square in a screen window.

At the end of the movie, smaller than an ant, Scott moves out into the yard of his home and

looks up from between blades of grass to the stars. As the camera pans to the heavens, you hear Scott's voice declare:

"The universe, worlds beyond number. God's silver tapestry spread across the night. . . . My fears melted away. And in their place came acceptance. All this vast majesty of creation, it had to mean something. And then I meant something, too. Yes, smaller than the smallest, I meant something too. To God there is no zero. I still exist!"

The great thing is that we are not alone in our existence. The One who created all that we can see, and beyond — the One who holds it all together — keeps us company: God!

One and the all

Genesis offers us only a microscopic look at God creating. The words "In the beginning" refer primarily to *our* beginning, the start of our human history. But it's not the full story of creation. All that exists, all that we can see and cannot see, big and little, He brought into being. God, through Christ, created the vast expanse of space in which He has set the earth.

In Colossians 1:15-17, Paul declares:

He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.



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From molecules to magnificent vistas of stars and the sun, Jesus is behind it all.

The word *all* in this passage is important. It truly means *all* – everything. Planets, stars, sun, moons, galaxies, quarks, atoms, and the rest came into being and continue to exist by the word of God. He spoke them into existence, and He continues overseeing their maintenance.

Awesome but intimate

Given the expansiveness of God’s infinite domain, when He interacts with us on this little blue marble, it should give us pause. For example, God spoke to Moses from a burning bush! The God of the universe and beyond focused His attention on Moses, inhabiting a bush as angelic fire and speaking to a shepherd.

Everything about the encounter is personal and awe-filled, miraculous and mundane. A bush burns, but not up. Moses is curious. He hears his name and answers. Moses recognizes God in the burning bush and covers his face. He listens as God explains his purpose in life.

This is personal and intimate interaction between an expansive God and a miniscule human being. The Creator still communicates with His creation – you! – individually, intimately, insistently.

The fictional shrinking man got it right as he looked up into the heavens. To God, there are no zeros when it comes to us, His most special creation. In the beginning, God crafted the man and woman (us) after His own image (Genesis 1:27;

2:22) and breathed into them (us) the breath of life (2:7). He has not and will not forsake us (Deuteronomy 4:31; Hebrews 13:5).

His workmanship

From now on, when you read Romans 8:28 (“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose”), those two little words “all things” will hold a much bigger meaning.

When studying the amazing stories of the Bible and exploring the sweeping themes, it’s easy to lose sight of the reality that we are part of this big, sprawling story. Yet we are characters as significant to God and His plan as were Moses or Abraham or Sarah or Eve or Joseph. In Ephesians 2:10, Paul declares, just as this world and universe has been created for God’s purposes, we also “are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.”

We are in God’s hands, we are here for His reasons, we are valuable to Him, and His life pulsates through us. **BA**

Stephen R. Clark writes from Lansdale, PA. Scripture quotations are taken from the *Christian Standard Bible*.





Pass the

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by Loren Gjesdal

As I write this article, the 2024 Paris Olympics are taking place. Notably absent from the medal podium is the US men's 4x100 relay team. Despite having the gold medal-winning 100m runner on the team, the US failed to medal due to a botched handoff of the baton.

Think of this in terms of the Christian faith. It has been said that Christianity is always one generation from extinction. If a generation ever fails to pass their faith to the next generation, Christianity will vanish. The same is true of the church and of any congregation. Passing the baton is the commission of the church, especially of her leadership and of every individual believer.

Paul's example

The Great Commission tells us to go and make disciples — to pass the baton of faith on to others. Often, we think of this in terms of going into all the world, of sending missionaries to foreign lands. Although Paul was the greatest missionary that Christianity has ever seen, he had

an individual and local vision for passing on the baton of faith. He spelled it out in simple terms to his protégé, Timothy: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2).

As Paul sat in prison awaiting his execution, his mind was turning to the next generation. How would the young church continue once the original apostles were martyred? How would the leadership handoff take place, and who should be commissioned to take the lead in his absence?

Paul's mind turned to Timothy. Paul had identified him years before as being full of leadership potential, a godly young man with a heritage of faith, a knowledge of the Word, and a willingness to serve (1:5, 6).

In Acts 16, Paul meets Timothy. He invites him to continue with him on his missionary journeys (vv. 1-3) and, after being chased away in Berea, leaves him behind to continue the ministry of the Word there (17:14). Throughout his epistles, Paul mentions Timothy as one he sent on his behalf to Corinth

(1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Corinthians 1:19); Philippi (Philippians 2:19); and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:2). These were ministry assignments of significance and genuine responsibility, notably entrusted to a relatively young man: “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1 Timothy 4:12).

The US men's 4x100 failed, not because they had never seen or heard of passing the baton, but because they did not devote priority time to preparing and practicing the exchange in advance. They thought they could rush the preparation at the last minute, and the results were not good.

Prayer and priority

Throughout the Church of God (Seventh Day) we need to take note of Paul's success and the relay team's failure. A generation of godly leaders, teachers, and pastors are nearing retirement, or are continuing to serve out of necessity past retirement age. It is essential for the future of the Church to be actively

Baton

engaged with the next generation. It's time to learn from Paul how to bring a young person alongside an experienced person, to pour into them wisdom, knowledge, vision, and the heart of missional engagement, and to involve them in genuine ministry responsibility.

It's time to entrust to faithful men and women what we have received and to teach them how to do the same to the generation that will follow them. The process should not be rushed or reserved for the last minute. It must be prayerfully initiated, allowing time to mentor, disciple, encourage, and instruct. This is how the baton came down through the ages to us, and this is the template for passing the faith to succeeding generations until Jesus comes.

Worship leader, Sabbath school teacher, children's ministry leader, elder, deacon, pastor: What person have you identified to pass the baton to? Who has leadership potential and could someday take your place? Is there a young man or woman you could invite to participate in your area of ministry now, to teach them the ins and outs of doing the work well, but

especially of understanding the heart behind the service?

Having trouble identifying someone? Then follow Jesus' insight and instruction: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

Pray today for God to raise someone up where you serve and for discernment to recognize them. Then invite them to join you in the work of ministry. Teach them more than just how to fulfill a role or an office. Show them how to pass the baton. They will need to do the same someday as well.

Don't delay and don't rush the handoff. The mission is too important. **BA**

Loren Gjesdal is co-director of Artios Christian College and co-pastor of the Marion church in Oregon. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



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Will the real Christian
please stand up?
by Sarah Schwerin

I walked into the school, knowing my first day of substitute teaching would be a success. In my pressed khakis and dress shirt, I looked over the classroom teacher's lesson plans, glad I'd arrived early. As the first-grade students filed in and put their backpacks away, I smiled at their cherubic faces.

A blond-haired girl stopped in the doorway and scanned the room. "Where's the teacher?"

I leaned down, making eye contact with her. "I'm your substitute today."

She shook her head and narrowed her eyes. "No, you're

not." Then, as if I weren't in front of her, she continued scanning the room.

My heart pounded. I felt younger than my twenty-two years. A child playing dress-up. An imposter.

Take off, put on

Have you ever felt like an imposter — unqualified and unable to complete the job you've been called to do? Living the Christian life can be that way. It is intimidating when others are doing the exact opposite. Yet we must be different in our thoughts, actions, and feelings.

In Ephesians 4, Paul instructed the believers not to live as those around them lived. God had accepted the believers into His family, and they needed to take off their old life and put on their new life.

During my second year of college, I learned how challenging turning from one way of life to another way of life can be.

My professor slid a folder across her desk. "Look at these while I finish this work. Then we can go over them. I haven't peeked at them yet, but I know you did great."

I opened the folder that contained the evaluation forms from my sophomore practicum, where I had shadowed teachers in the classroom. God had called me to be a teacher, and I received top grades in all my classes. Of course, I had done a good job. Yet as I read, tears formed in my eyes.

Did not show initiative. Did not interact with the students. Not a good choice for a teacher.

I had sat in the back of the classrooms and observed. I thought that was my job. Yet as

I read over the forms, I realized I needed to change from being a passive observer to an active participant. To become a teacher, I had to take off my old life — that of a student — and put on my new life — that of a teacher.

Think differently

The same thing is true in the Christian life. Putting on a new life starts with our thoughts. Who we are and how we act begins with how we think about ourselves and our world. In Ephesians 4:17, Paul warned, “This I . . . testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind.”

Empty and futile thinking focuses on false and selfish information — a thought life that obsesses over social media reels and gossip, that believes lies about ourselves and those around us. This kind of thought life keeps us separated from fellowship and intimacy with God.

Paul describes the right kind of thought life in Philippians 4:8: thinking on whatever is true, noble, just, etc.

When we put on our new life, we need to get rid of all lies and selfish thinking. Our thought life should focus on truth and godly information, guided by the light of Christ.

When I read the comments on my evaluation forms, negative thoughts filled my mind. *They're right. You aren't meant to be a teacher. Even if God called you, He made a mistake.*

But my thoughts were lies. I needed to focus on the truth. God doesn't make mistakes. He had called me to be a teacher. I was a teacher.

Act differently

Thinking that I was a teacher wasn't enough. I also had to act like a teacher.

In her office, the professor and I came up with an action plan, another chance for success. Over the next few months, I completed a successful practicum at an elementary school near my home. This time, I studied the classroom teacher and imitated her example. I learned from the feedback I'd received and took an active role in the classroom.

In the same way, we as believers are to study God's Word and

the *real* teacher, while her classmates looked on to see how I would handle the situation. I had thought I was a teacher, and even acted like one. But was I the *real deal* or an imposter? I wanted to run away and quit. I didn't feel that I could succeed.

In a culture filled with lies and people who wear the old life with pride, putting on our new life is hard. Focusing on true and godly thoughts might seem impossible. Imitating Jesus is challenging when everyone else ignores Him and His teachings. Suddenly, those old ways of thinking and acting feel comfort-

“Imitating Jesus is challenging when everyone else ignores Him and His teachings.”

imitate Jesus' example. Some guidelines for our behavior are in Ephesians 4:32: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Feel differently

God's Word contains an action plan for our success as believers. But what happens when we think differently and act differently, but we still don't feel differently? We feel like an imposter.

On that first day of my teaching career, the girl looked for

able and right. Our feelings tell us we aren't Christians, and even if we were, living the Christian life is impossible.

Yet the truth is, our feelings lie. Proverbs 28:26 says, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered.”

Just as I had everything I needed to complete my first day of substitute teaching, God gives us everything we need to complete the job we have to do when we become Christians. The Holy Spirit guides our thoughts and

continued on page 25



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Learning and living the
steps of discipleship.
by Mike Wallace

The first thing one teaches students as a water safety instructor is reach, throw, row, go. Safety in rescuing a drowning victim has a natural progression of action. First, *reach* out to them. If they are too far from shore, *throw* them a life buoy attached to a rope. If available, use a boat or raft of some kind you can *row*. The last thing you want to do is *go* into the

water after the victim. In water rescue, the axiom is always “It is better that one drowns rather than two.”

Our discipleship into the life and mind of Jesus also has a natural progression of action: learn, follow, teach, and go make disciples. What stage of discipleship are we in?

When I was a ten-year-old, my family began to learn of God and His Sabbath day of rest. To a young boy raised in a home of agnostics, this was exciting. Soon I began to preach the gospel to school mates, only to be told by one, “My mom says I can’t listen to you anymore.”

Well, at least I was trying, but

I was not equipped properly to “go” preach the gospel.

Since then, my life has been a steady progression of learn, follow, teach, and go.

Concepts

First, I dedicated myself to the study of God’s Word. The Bible urges us to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) and study to show ourselves approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15).

By the sixth grade, I was reading Bible stories and participating in church. I was and still am a slow learner. I started to collect books on history and now have around fifteen hundred books. I am a voracious reader,

particularly during Montana winters when it is 29 below zero.

Second, I learned to follow the leader (Matthew 4:19; Philippians 3:17). As a young high school student, I was close to our pastor. He mentored me and encouraged me to continue on the right path.

Our youth group had around thirty kids, and I was named its president. Our great desire was to have a weeklong backpack trip in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. We followed our pastor, raised funds, and went on a trip to Ranger Lake in Kings Canyon. We lost one young girl in the mountains when she forgot to follow her leader down the trail. We found her the next day, perfectly fine.

Third, I began to look at the idea of becoming a teacher (Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 2:2). I volunteered in high school to help as a teacher's aide. In college I took water safety, CPR, and first aid and became an instructor in all three. I loved teaching the little kids how to blow bubbles and be safe around water. Last year, I ran into a man who was my student forty-four years ago. He was forever grateful for learning how to swim, and his daughter is now a lifeguard at a church summer camp.

Fourth, I eventually felt the need to go preach the gospel (Luke 24:47; Acts 28:31). After graduating from college, I had not been called into the ministry but worked as an insurance agent. Interestingly, one day an aged, retired pastor came to my office, leaned against the doorjamb, crossed his arms, and said, "Your job is much like mine was. At 3:30 in the morning when

something bad happens, they call you, me, and 911."

He had a good point. I have found my job in the "service" industry to be one of the greatest ministerial preps I could have had. After being out of college for forty years, I was finally called into the ministry, and it has been "go, go, go" ever since. Considering it took Moses forty years to begin his ministry, I felt good with the forty-year wait.



Saving others

One young teenage girl on our backpacking trip went too far out into the lake and was not a good swimmer. The other teens had convinced her she was fine to be out there with them.

I was sitting on a large dead tree log by the lake shore when I heard the cry for help. I could not reach the girl, and I had nothing to throw and no rowboat. All I had left was to "go." I rescued her, and the teens were grateful for the help.


The same applies to our life of faith. We must do our best to save others. Are we ready to go? Have we been trained (learn)? Are we following the leader? Are we equipped to teach about the gospel of the kingdom of God? If so, then it is time to go! **BA**

Mike Wallace, an elder in CoG7, is the senior spiritual advisor for the Colorado Springs, CO congregation and coordinator for the church in Montana. He lives in Florence, MT, with his wife, Bonnie.



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Beyond Destruction

Though all of earth will some day pass,
the mountains melt with fervent heat
and even stones be consumed with fire:

yet until that day children must eat,
the sick shall need their care
and the whole be better off clothed.

Until the lion lie down with the lamb,
the eagle fly with the dove
and the bear be gentle as the dew,

until all things be made new
and we receive the kingdom from above,
this earth shall need its stewarding

and all who live on it
will live in need of love.
And even after faith shall turn to sight

and hope receive its desire,
yet shall live love and light,
as one eternal fire.

Doc Arnett

Different

continued from page 21

actions. His power enables us to live the Christian life.

If we believe in Jesus Christ, we aren't imposters; we are His children. He guides us so that we can think and act differently. We might not always feel different, but that's okay. We can trust that God lives in us, enabling us to follow His example.

The real deal

I knelt next to the mischievous first grader that day and spoke the truth she and I both needed to hear. "I'm the teacher. It's my first day and I'm going to need your help. Can you help me pass out papers?" The day went smoothly when I ensured that she knew who was in charge and that she had a place in the classroom.

Likewise, God is in charge and we have a place in His plan. Even when we feel like imposters, if we believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, we are His children. When we imitate His example in our thoughts and actions, others will see that we are *real* Christians. **BA**

Sarah Schwerin
writes from
Sorrento, FL.



Bible-Based Riddles

Acts - Revelation

Who or What Am I?

A sacred service, memorial each year.
Lives examined our conscience clear.
Show the Lord's death until He comes.
Unworthily taken, brings condemnation.

Of the seven churches in Asia, I'm first to be named.
Commended for my patience, but lost my first flame.
I have fallen to be condemned, unless I repent.
To me and all, this message is sent.

Made from six pieces when all put together.
Each piece explained in Paul's letter.
In spiritual warfare believers attire.
Having done all stand. Never retire.

An angel appeared at the ninth hour of the day.
He said my prayers and alms had sent him my way.
Spirit gave witness so Peter realized.
Salvation includes Gentiles so I was baptized.

Outside of city on Sabbath women by river pray.
My heart was opened when I heard what Paul had to say.
I was from Thyatira and was baptized with my household.
Selling was my trade, purple is what I sold.

Beginning and the end.
First and the last.
Two Greek alphabet letters.
Forever forecast.

*Answers on page 27. Excerpted from 250 New Testament Riddles
by David Keith Robinson. Used by permission.*



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2025 Bible Advocate Theme Kingdom People

In January 2025, a new President of the United States will be inaugurated. In our divisive political climate, it is sure to be a contentious election season.

The US is not unique. Political tensions are everywhere, whatever country you call home. It's a good time to remind ourselves that whatever your national citizenship, believers are first and foremost "children of the kingdom" (Matthew 13:38).

With all that in mind, the BA editorial team has selected "Kingdom People" as our 2025 theme. What do kingdom people look like, and how do they relate to, and interact with, the kingdoms of this world?

In 2025, we will examine six kingdom dispositions that set us apart *from the world*, yet *for the world*. These core characteristics are essential to us because they're found in and flow from the very character and person of King Jesus. They should define His followers as well.

Join us on our journey to understand what it means to be children of the King in the world today.

January-February: Kingdom Humility

March-April: Kingdom Service

May-June: Kingdom Mercy

July-August: Kingdom Wisdom

September-October: Kingdom Patience

November-December: Kingdom Faithfulness

ASLEEP IN JESUS

Marjolene Ijames Rose

1959 - 2024

Born December 6, 1959, in Mocksville, North Carolina, to William Calvin Ijames and Vertie-Mae Coulter, Marjolene was



the youngest of three siblings. She passed away July 21 at age 64.

Marjolene married Whaid Guscott Rose and joined him in pastoral ministry in New York City. Both of their children – Arvella Elizabeth and William Nathaniel Simpson (Nathan) – were born there.

After returning briefly to North Carolina (1990-1994) to lead the Newton Church, Marjolene and her husband answered a call to serve the church in Colorado. For a combined 23 years, they ministered in both the local church and the General Conference.

Since returning to North Carolina in 2017, Marjolene devoted herself to caring for her parents, serving the church alongside her husband, and making her house a home to everyone. She did all of this while participating in Bible Study Fellowship.

Marjolene was loved and appreciated by so many here at home and around the world, but Jesus loved her most.

Read Marjolene's full memorial on our Memorials page at churchright.org.



Giving Tuesday

We give because God gave first. By contributing to what the Church of God (Seventh Day) is doing for our local churches, districts, and around the world, we use what God has given us to serve others and walk the extra mile in Jesus' plan.

You can designate an amount to support our Ministries (Artios, GC Missions, and Publications) or departments. Your donation will impact our work and develop more opportunities for our members.

Giving Tuesday is December 3. Mark your calendar!



SHINE Mission

GC Missions' SHINE ministry will hold its medical and dental mission in Paraguay. More details are to come. In the meantime, start praying for the mission and the team that will be there.

If you want to donate for this upcoming mission, please go to <https://secure.cog7.org/giving/>.



Lord's Supper Design

Since 2023, we have selected a brother or sister who is willing to put their skills and talents to use for our annual Lord's Supper commemoration. If you are a graphics designer, illustrator, or artist and would like to be considered for next year's Lord's Supper design, please contact Communications Director Jamin Teran at jamin.teran@cog7.org.

Honor God with your skills and edify the Church for this special occasion. Thanks to Rebecca Arguelles and Patrick Chalus for blessing us with their designs in the past.



CoG7 Gear

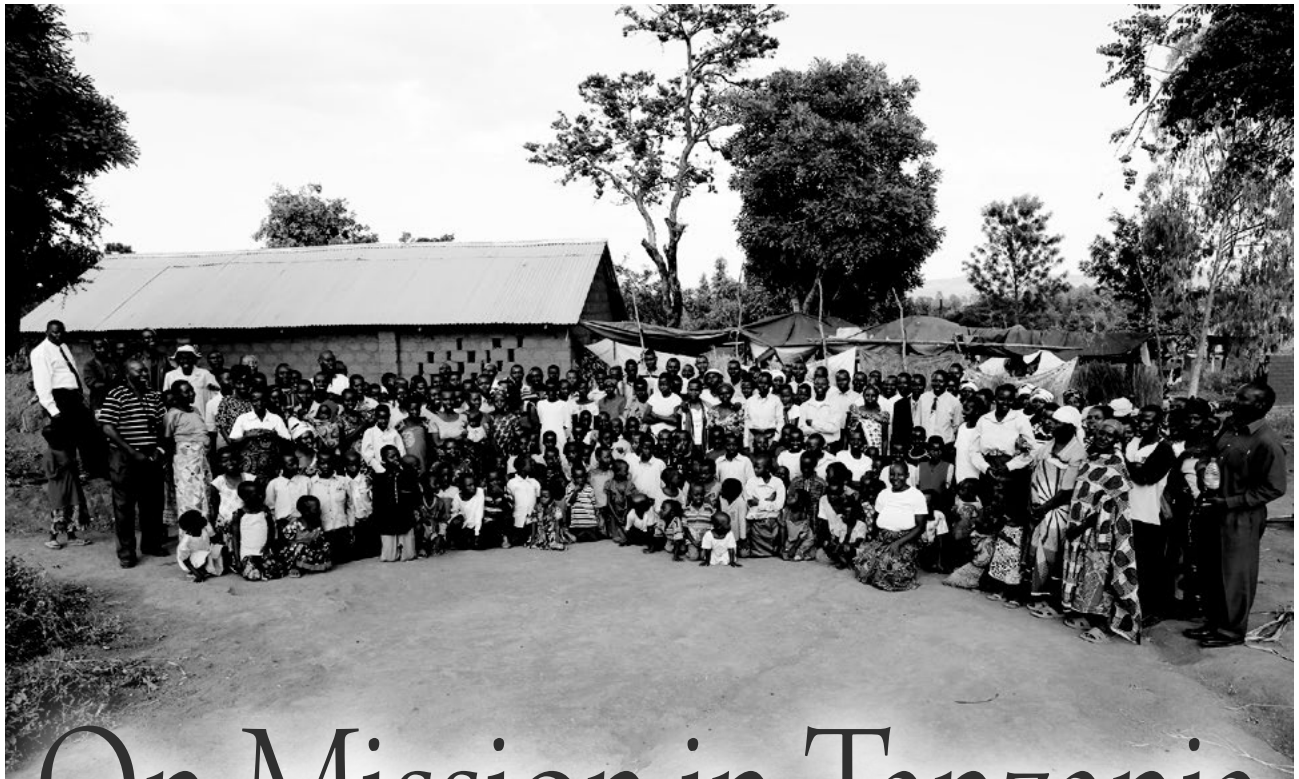
Our Vision for a Vibrant 21st Century Church is available on a t-shirt for everyone to wear. Only adult sizes are available (small, medium, large, and x-large) in 100 percent heavy cotton - Gildan brand. Only \$15, plus shipping and handling charges on all orders.

This is a one-time offer, and we have limited stock. Get your t-shirt today! Contact us at cog7media@cog7.org.



Riddles answers (p. 25)

Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-34); Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7); Armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-17); Cornelius (Acts 10:1-6, 31-48); Lydia (Acts 16:13-15); Alpha and Omega (Revelation 22:13)



On Mission in Tanzania

**by Elly Malima
and Bryan Cleeton**

Tanzania is a country located in East Africa, bordering Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. It was ruled in the past by Germany and Great Britain and became a nation in 1964.

There are more than 120 tribes in Tanzania, including the Masai and Sukuma. Swahili and English are the country's official languages, while more than 100 different languages are spoken by its various tribes.

Tanzania's climate is warm and tropical with significant regional variations due to its large size and location. Coffee, tea, corn, rice, cassava, and bananas are common food crops there. Fishing, cattle raising, and mining are also significant industries.

Different religions can be found in Tanzania, including Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, and traditional faiths.

Beginnings

The Church of God (Seventh Day) was established in Tanzania in 1997. After Pastor Moses Nonga learned about the Church in Kenya and its biblical teachings, he and other pastors

in Tanzania agreed to organize themselves as the Church of God (Seventh Day).

The first national leadership team consisted of Moses Nonga, chairman; Selestine Lyamayaga, vice-chairman; Sosthenes Bhatta, secretary; Petro Chibuga, treasurer; and Benard Bwakitare, evangelist. The Church was officially registered with the Tanzanian government in 2013.

Recognized as a member of the International Federation of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in 2023, the Church in Tanzania today has 20 official congregations, and more than 1,200 baptized members located in six of the country's 36 regions.

Challenges

The people of Tanzania face significant challenges. Poverty, disease, and lack of education are the most common issues.

The vast majority of Tanzania's population work in agriculture, making just enough to provide for their daily needs. Drought, flooding, and lack of capital are common as well, making most people vulnerable and limited in their ability to expand their earning opportunities.

Forty percent of Tanzania's population is uneducated. This contributes to a lack of employment and of other opportunities for improvement. Furthermore, the country experiences common health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, cholera, and tuberculosis. These contribute to financial hardships, loss of jobs, and instability.

The Church is not immune to these challenges. However, despite a difficult life in Tanzania and the struggle many people have in getting adequate resources for their daily needs, the Tanzanian people desire to know the Lord and understand the gospel.

Goals

The Church of God in Tanzania is actively addressing these challenges. It is working to provide spiritual education and guidance through evangelism and education. Crusades are held in different areas to establish and grow new churches. The Church is also opening schools for children. In addition, it is working



Tanzania

Country: United Republic of Tanzania

Population: 68,580,157 (22nd)

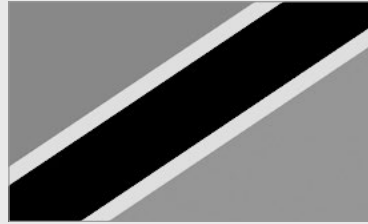
Capital: Dodoma

Land area: 365,794 sq mi / 947,403 sq km (31st)

Official languages: Swahili, English

Official religion: secular, 61.4% Christian

Official CoG7 congregations: 20
CoG7 Membership: 1200+



with the vulnerable, including widows and orphans, the sick, and the elderly, embracing them as part of the Church community and assisting their needs to the best of its ability.

To strengthen its capacity to preach and teach the good news and serve those in need, the Church of God is developing income-generating projects. These sustain daily ministry needs,

provide for purchasing equipment (such as public address systems), and supply training for pastors and leaders.

Such efforts enable the Church in Tanzania to extend its ministry into urban and rural areas. They also provide means for the Church to be economically independent and to support new ministry. Church leaders are also better prepared to

overcome problems they may encounter and are better organized to conduct their evangelistic activities.

Appeal

If you or your church would like to partner with GC Missions and the Church in Tanzania to equip pastors and evangelists, share the good news, and assist people in spiritual and physical need, please contact us at office@cog7missions.org or bryan.cleeton@cog7.org.

Elly Malima is secretary of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Tanzania. He and his wife and children live in Katoro.



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STATEMENT

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Calling, Mission, and Ministry

Aside from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, I can't think of anyone with a greater sense of spiritual calling, mission, and ministry than the apostle Paul. If all we knew of Paul was through what he wrote in the salutation of his epistle to the Romans, we'd have a pretty good idea of the man he understood himself to be. In Romans 1:1, Paul introduces himself as "a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel . . ." (NASB throughout). Let's consider each of these three components of Paul's self-image.

Bond-servant of Christ. *Bond-servant* translates from the Greek word *doulos*, the term for the most abject slave within that society. New Testament Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest writes, "The word designated one who was born as a slave, one who was bound to his master in chords so strong that only death could break them, one who served his master to the disregard of his own interests, one whose will was swallowed up in the will of his master."

Called apostle. This is a more literal and accurate translation of the Greek, and I think it places Paul's emphasis where he intended it to be: on his calling. The Greek word *apostolos* ("apostle") combines the Greek words *apo* ("from") and *stello* ("to send"). An apostle, then, was a person who was sent, usually to carry a message or to accomplish some purpose on behalf of their superior. Adding the adjective *called* emphasizes Paul's role and mission. His message was not his own. Nothing in his life belonged to him or was originated by him anymore. No! He had been

selected. He had been summoned. And he had been sent. By whom? By his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Set apart for the gospel of God. This gospel is the message Paul was called to carry, and in Romans 1:2-4, he describes it. First, it is the good news "which He [God] promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures." Second, it is the good news "concerning His [God's] Son." Who is that Son? He is one "who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh." He is the one "who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness." He is Jesus Christ our Lord!

The apostle Paul's strong self-image of being an abject slave of Jesus Christ, a specifically selected and called message bearer of Jesus Christ, one who had been given the task of spreading the gospel of God about Jesus Christ, gives us insight into Paul's commitment to his calling, to his mission, to his ministry, and to his Master.

Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Paul wrote, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Are we willing to do that? Are we, too, prepared to live as slaves of Jesus Christ? We, too, have been selected and called. We, too, have been given mission and ministry. May we, too, prove faithful.

— Loren Stacy



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