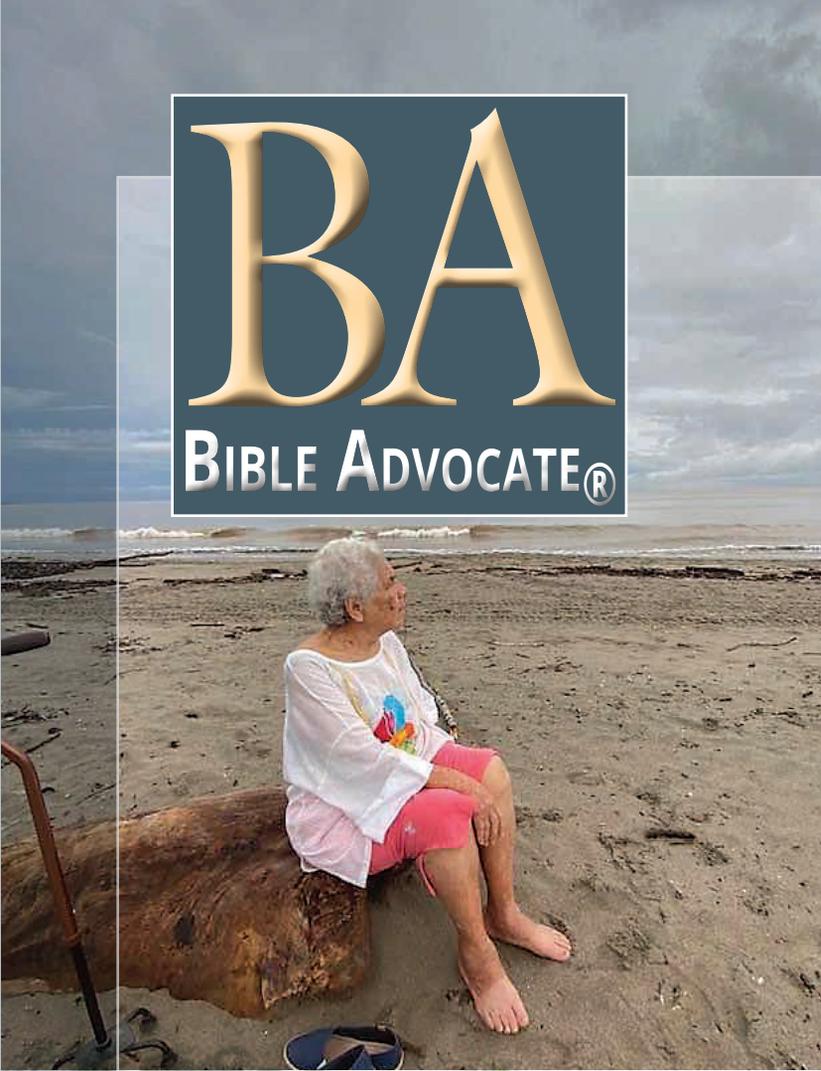


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BIBLE ADVOCATE®

January - February 2025



Kingdom Humility





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2025: Kingdom People



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Double Humble

Welcome to 2025! A new year means a new theme, and we have chosen Kingdom People. Our six issues will survey six key characteristics of King Jesus and of the people who follow Him: humility, service, mercy, wisdom, patience, and faithfulness. There are others to explore, but these six best illustrate what kingdom people look like and how we relate to the kingdoms of this world.

We begin with humility because that is where every believer begins: on our knees before God, aware of our sin, our need, our limits.

We begin with humility for another reason: It is the core disposition of Jesus' own self-identity. Read what He says about Himself: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart . . ." (Matthew 11:29).

Four writers in this issue include this crucial saying of Jesus in their articles. Paul elaborates on it, writing profoundly of Christ's death on the cross as the climax of a two-act work of humility:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Though divine, Jesus descended and "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant." That is Act 1. And then finding Himself in the form of man, He "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death." That's Act 2. As God and man, Jesus was double humble.

"Let this mind be in you . . . Take My yoke." What mind? What yoke? Humility! That is the way of our King and His kingdom. "For thus saith the high and lofty One . . . I dwell . . . with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15, KJV).

Read and enjoy!

— Jason Overman





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Sometimes we need a lower view of ourselves in ways we do not realize.

by R. Herbert

When we think of the biblical concept of rest, we probably think first of the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11) or Jesus' words to His disciples: "Come . . . and rest a while" (Mark 6:31, ESV). But beyond commanding and encouraging this kind of rest (ceasing from activity), the Bible shows that our attitude — namely, our humility — affects our ability to rest.

If we think about it, both these scriptural admonitions to rest

involve humility. We must be humble enough to accept God's command to regularly take a break. We must also understand that we are not so important to the functioning of the world that we cannot step back when we need to.

Deep connection

There is actually a deep connection between rest and humility. We see it in the words of Jesus himself:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29).

Although most Christians know this scripture well, we often miss the relationship it makes between the deep, fulfilling rest Christ promises and the humility He says it is based on.

This principle is repeated often in the Scriptures. Sometimes we see it in the grand sweep of biblical stories. Job, for example, found rest and peace from his trials only after God humbled him (Job 42:16). We can also see the rest-humility relationship in small scriptural details, as when King David wrote, "My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself" (Psalm 131:1, 2).

Pride problem

Hannah Anderson, author of the book *Humble Roots*, clarifies the relationship between humility and rest: “[God] frees us from our burdens in the most unexpected way: He frees us by calling us to rely less on ourselves and more on Him. He frees us by calling us to humility.”

Relying solely on God is difficult for us to do, however. Anderson shows us why.

Pride convinces us that we are stronger and more capable than we actually are. Pride convinces us that we must do and be more than we are able. And when we try, we find ourselves feeling, “thin, sort of stretched . . . like butter that has been scraped over too much bread.” (The Fellowship of the Ring) We begin to fall apart physically, emotionally, and spiritually for the simple reason that we are not existing as we were meant to exist.

Refusing to rest can indeed become a matter of pride — and pride is an unrelenting taskmaster. It is well defined as overestimating ourselves and underestimating God. Only as we learn to humbly put our own lives and concerns aside in rest do we acknowledge the supremacy of God and our dependence on Him.

Right perspective

Ultimately, humility is all about perspective. The nineteenth century clergyman and author Phillips Brooks once wrote, “The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself but to stand at your real

height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatest greatness is.”

Rest not only gives us an opportunity to do that but also helps us do it successfully. Ceasing from activity creates pause to meditate on God and on ourselves. It is often to the degree we rest in our own smallness that we see God more clearly and reap the benefits of the humility He wants us to have.

Sometimes circumstances prevent or delay proper rest, of course. But we must not live this way regularly. Rather, we must see rest as a divinely mandated responsibility, as well as a gift that we ignore to our own hurt. If we live out our days in a lifestyle that avoids or diminishes rest, always struggling to increase some metric of our lives or never quite letting go of our own thoughts and pursuits, sooner or later we will experience the problems that Anderson describes in *Humble Roots*.

Hebrews 4:9 tells us, “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.” Although the rest indicated in this verse is primarily a future one that will be fully realized in the kingdom of God, the principle also applies now. God gives abundant grace to the humble, and that grace includes the blessing of rest. We must remind ourselves that the will of God is not that we should work endlessly in this life and enjoy rest later. We should instead experience the rest and peace in this life that reflect the rest and peace we will have in eternity.

We humble ourselves by resting physically and spiritually. And, as Christ himself promised, as we learn humility, we find rest.

BA

R. Herbert (a pen name) holds a doctorate in biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern languages and archaeology. He writes for a number of Christian venues. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version* unless otherwise noted.

Obedience and Rest

The Bible shows us that full physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual rest is more than just the cessation of activity and a humble attitude. We must get our lives right with God through obedience — the true way to find rest. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of this to the people of his day: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

— R. Herbert



Call to Convention

Information and
registration available at
cog7.org/convention/2025-info

It is my great pleasure to once again extend this call to convention to each member and friend of the General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day). Our 2025 Biennial Convention is scheduled for Monday evening, June 30, through Saturday night, July 5, in Salt Lake City, Utah, at the beautiful convention center sometimes called The Salt Palace.

People attend our biennial conventions for many different reasons. No matter what yours may be, I'm confident that you will not be disappointed.

Do you come to worship? Six major worship services are planned! They will include wonderful music, fervent prayer, encouraging personal testimonies, challenging sermons, and more — all focused on our convention theme: "Engage."

Do you come to learn? As many as thirty individual seminars or workshops may be offered, some in English, some in Spanish, and some in both languages. Artios Christian College will present two seminars in English and then again in Spanish. The first, "Put Me In, Coach — Experience the Fulfillment of Your Role on God's Team," will focus on Artios' equipping model. The second, "Get a Grip on the Grind — A Little Organization Goes a Long Way in Achieving Success," will cover effective church administration. Other workshops will deal with topics

related to evangelism, discipleship, family life, worship, planning and conducting youth camps, General Conference Ministries, and other topics. All of these are designed to help you successfully live as an ambassador for Christ and fulfill the Great Commission Christ has given each believer.

Do you come to participate in the General Conference business sessions? We will receive reports on the state of the Conference, General Conference Ministries, and financials. We will elect members to our board of directors and to the 2025-2027 Nominating Committee. We will also discuss and decide any resolutions and bylaw amendments that may be offered.

Do you come for the fellowship — to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones? They'll all miss you if you aren't there! Do you wish to make this convention a part of a family vacation? Five national parks are located in Utah, and more may be visited in the states surrounding it. You could spend a month there and not come close to seeing all that this beautiful state offers.

Plan now to attend the 2025 General Conference Convention in Salt Lake City. I look forward to seeing you there!

— Loren Stacy
General Conference President



Smoke-Free Living

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by **Stephen R. Clark**

Fires can be fun to be around, but the smell of smoke that gets in your clothing and hair can really stink. It can't be avoided either. When you get close to any fire, you're going to get smelly.

It's the same way when we hit a hot spot in life and get burned — you know, those tough times that generate a lot of heat and someone always gets hurt? It could be a serious argument, a bitter misunderstanding, getting fired from a job, a divorce, or a thousand other situations. Whether we or someone else started the fire doesn't matter. Tempers or emotions flare, humility hardens into arrogance, and the smoke of the event stinks up our hearts and our memory.

For some, the smoke never clears. Have you ever met someone who could talk only about all the ways they'd been hurt and wronged by life? Some people catalog and recount all the wrongs they've ever experienced. Others have experienced one situation that has burned a hole in their soul. In both cases, the lack of forgiveness and healing causes a stink as bad as stale smoke. It's not pleasant to be around.

Fire protection

In the well-known story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3), these three men encountered a hot spot that put them smack in the middle of a literal fiery furnace. In fact, the furnace they were thrown into was so hot, the men who tossed them in died from the heat! Now that's one hot situation.

But the Hebrew boys maintained their cool and came out untouched. Those at the scene “saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men: not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were unaffected, and there was no smell of fire on them” (v. 27).

Can you believe that? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego took a stand for God and accepted the consequences of their actions, while fully trusting in the Lord to take care of them. And He did. But why was there no smell of smoke on them? Because they held no grudge against the king and others who had thrown them in the furnace.

Choices

Life hurts because people are sinful. They will do things to you that will offend you, hurt you, and cause you senseless pain. And you will do things that hurt others. Pain cannot be avoided; even Christians suffer. Paul states this truth in Philippians 1:29: “For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.”

When life and others inevitably hurt you, you have only two choices: forgiveness or bitterness. In other words, you can become smoke-free or stink.

Just as smoking cigarettes leads to cancer and other diseases, carrying grudges, seeking revenge, or withholding forgiveness leads to bitterness. And bitterness will contaminate every part of your life. It will also be offensive to those around you since no one likes to be around a smelly person.

To be physically healthy, you avoid smoking. Being spiritually healthy means being smoke-free in your heart and soul.

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Learning humility in the
Christian walk.
by **Tiffany Watson**

One of the greatest challenges Christians face is the tension between relying on themselves and surrendering to God. In a world that constantly values independence, personal success, and control, it's easy to trust in our own abilities and plans rather than seek God's guidance and will. Society often praises self-made success, leading many to believe that the

more they control their lives, the more they'll achieve.

Yet Scripture offers a different perspective, one that calls us to trust God fully and rely on His wisdom, especially when our strength seems sufficient.

Jesus offers the perfect illustration of what this kind of humility and surrender look like. In Matthew 11:29, He invites us to take His yoke upon us and learn from Him, "for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." True rest and peace, then, come from laying down our burdens and taking up Jesus' yoke. This imagery invites us to relinquish control and surrender to Jesus' guidance, allowing Him

to bear the weight with us. This act of surrendering to God's will brings about the deep rest and fulfillment we seek.

Jesus the example

Jesus is the ultimate model of humility and surrender to God's will. His life on earth demonstrated complete reliance on the Father.

Philippians 2:5-8 reminds us that, despite being in the form of God, Jesus "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God" but instead "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" and submitting to the Father. This passage emphasizes that true greatness in God's

kingdom is rooted in humility, self-denial, and absolute obedience to God's plan.

In moments of prayer, as in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus expressed His deep reliance on God's will: "not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). Even when faced with immense suffering on the cross, Jesus surrendered to God's plan, trusting that it would prevail. His obedience through suffering became the ultimate act of surrender.

Jesus' humility provides a model for abandoning self-reliance and trusting fully in God's will, knowing that He will empower us to fulfill His purposes.

Trap

Self-reliance is a common yet dangerous trap for Christians. It often starts with good intentions: using our skills, knowledge, and effort to solve problems or achieve goals.

However, when we prioritize our knowledge over God's guidance, we drift from the humility that defines kingdom living. Proverbs 3:5, 6 offers a clear warning against this mindset: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."

One of the most striking examples of self-reliance leading to failure is King Saul. Initially chosen by God, Saul disobeyed when he chose to rely on his own judgment rather than follow God's commands. In 1 Samuel 15, Saul's decision to spare the Amalekite king and livestock, despite God's instructions to destroy them, showed his

dependence on human logic. Saul attempted to justify his actions, but his self-reliance ultimately led to his downfall and God's rejection of him as king.

In modern life, depending on ourselves can manifest in various ways, like overworking, neglecting prayer, or making important decisions without seeking God's direction. For example, someone might try to solve financial problems by working more hours, thinking they can fix everything on their own rather than first seeking God's wisdom. These behaviors, often seen as responsible or practical, reflect a deeper issue: our reluctance to surrender control and fully trust God.

True kingdom living requires

Confession requires acknowledging our sins and weaknesses before God, letting go of pride, and admitting that we cannot overcome sin on our own. It is recognizing that we need God's grace and mercy to transform us. First John 1:9 assures us, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This cleansing and forgiveness come when we approach God in humility.

King David offers a powerful illustration of confession and repentance in Psalm 51. After committing adultery and murder, he was confronted by the prophet Nathan. Rather than denying his sin or justifying his actions,

“When we prioritize our knowledge over God's guidance, we drift from the humility that defines kingdom living.”

abandoning the illusion of our control and acknowledging that God alone is our source of strength and wisdom. As Matthew 6:33 reminds us, we are to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," trusting that everything else will be provided when we surrender to Him.

First steps

How do we move from self-reliance to humility? Through confession and repentance.

David humbled himself before God, penning Psalm 51 as a heartfelt prayer of repentance: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (v. 10). David's honest confession opened the way for God's mercy and restoration, reminding us that God is always ready to forgive those who approach Him with a humble heart.

Repentance goes beyond merely confessing sin. It involves turning away from self-reliance and choosing to depend on

God's guidance and strength. In Matthew 5:3, Jesus declares, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Those who are "poor in spirit" recognize their spiritual need and, in humility, turn to God for help.

For Christians, practicing regular confession and repentance is essential for growing in humility. By admitting our limitations and seeking God's strength, we align our lives with His will and draw closer to Him.

Daily surrender

After confessing and repenting, we must daily surrender our will to God — another practice of humility and trust. Every day we are called to acknowledge our dependence on God, release our plans, and seek His guidance in all things. Jesus states this in His teaching on prayer: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven" (Luke 11:2).

There are various opportunities for surrender. One involves trusting God in moments of uncertainty. When the path ahead is unclear or difficult, we tend to rely on our own solutions. For example, when the Israelites were in the wilderness, they grumbled about how they would get food to eat now that they had left Egypt (Exodus 16:2, 3; cf. 14:1-4). God promised them manna every day, but they had to trust Him for it (16:4ff).

Like the Israelites, we must learn to depend on God for our daily needs, even though we may not know how that will happen, and surrender our impulse to control the outcome.

Another key opportunity for surrender is serving others. Jesus modeled this in John 13:14, 15 when He washed His disciples' feet and taught them to do the same. Serving others allows us to

set aside our pride and prioritize their needs over our own desires, reflecting Christ's humility.

Christian community also plays an essential role in daily surrender. Being part of a community offers encouragement and accountability as we strive to live out humility. Hebrews 10:24 urges us to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (NIV), reminding us that surrender is not a journey we take alone.

Daily surrender is challenging, but it opens the way for deeper intimacy with God and a life shaped by His will.

Blessing

Humility and surrender are the foundation of true kingdom living; Jesus showed us that. When we release control and trust in God, we find not only peace but also spiritual growth. Following Jesus' example allows God to work powerfully in our lives.

Surrender is part of God's kingdom, bringing blessings that self-reliance cannot achieve. Let us reflect on areas where self-reliance may be holding us back and ask God to guide us in surrendering those to Him. As we depend on Him more, we will grow into the people He calls us to be — living fully in His kingdom. **BA**

The Disciples' Challenge

The disciples, too, had to learn the importance of humility and surrender.

Peter's confident declaration in Matthew 26:33, where he insisted he would never fall away, shows the human tendency to rely on personal strength. Yet despite his bold claim, Peter denied Jesus three times (vv. 69-75).

This moment of failure reminds us of the limitations of self-reliance. Only after Jesus' resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit did the disciples fully embrace the necessity of surrendering to God's will (Acts 1:8). Empowered by the Spirit, they no longer relied on their own abilities but on God's power to carry out their mission.

— *Tiffany Wilson*

Tiffany Watson
writes from
Delmar, DE.



Questions & Answers



Our local church is looking for our next pastor. How do we choose the right one?

The pastor is accountable first to God and then to the congregation. It is tempting to choose a candidate who can serve the people. A more mature approach is to choose someone who serves God by caring for the flock and teaching them how to make disciples. The following method is a proven process.

1. Develop a plan to identify and vet candidates. Form a pastoral search team and establish the process. For example: a) Create a communication plan. b) Create a job profile. c) Begin networking for candidates, using the district superintendent. d) Screen resumé. e) Begin interviewing.

2. Identify and remove candidates who have disqualifications. A pastoral candidate can be disqualified if he has not learned self-discipline.

Certain things can disqualify a candidate who seems gifted for the job. These things bring reproach upon God and the person's character. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, the apostle lists the qualifications and disqualifications of overseers. Sins can be forgiven, and a single sin does not need to disqualify a person forever. Still, time is needed before returning to the ministry, and such time should be weighed according to the sin. For instance, a candidate is disqualified if he is or has been involved in any sexual relationship outside of marriage and has not experienced true restoration.

Paul goes on to identify the qualifying characteristics of overseers: sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, not greedy, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent, not quarrelsome, mature, able to manage his household

well, and accepted in the community. While some of these are highly subjective, all are from the Word of God and warrant careful consideration. Concern in any of these areas demands outside senior counsel.

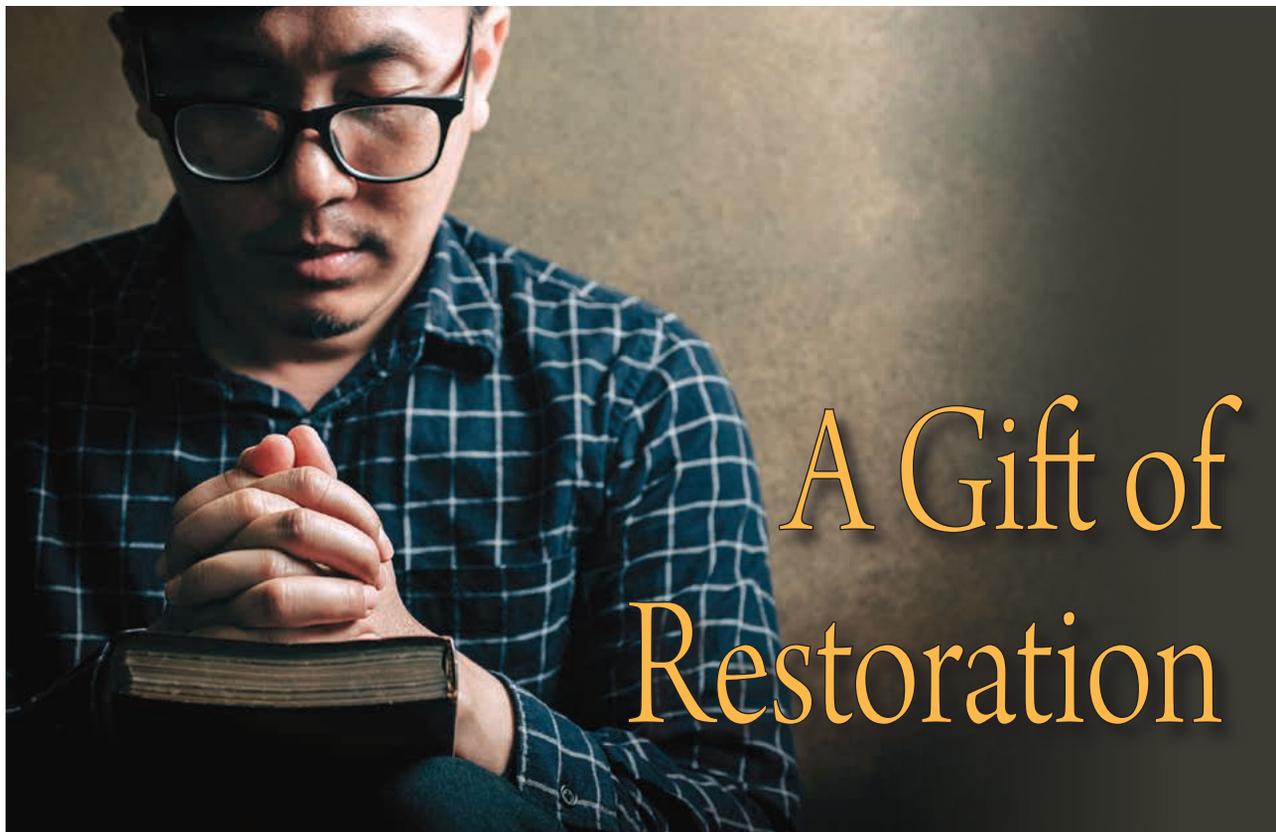
3. Consider the local church's needs. Three primary skill sets usually emerge in a pastor: preaching, pastoring, and leading the church. Usually, a candidate may have strength in one area and acceptable skills in the others. This means the search team should consider the type of pastor who best fits the present and future needs of the local church.

4. Build the metric for identifying the best candidate. Consider the Bible-based standard (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Ephesians 4:12-14; Titus 1:5-9; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2; Acts 20:28-31). Elders are told to exercise oversight and be an example (1 Peter 5:2, 3), to be God's stewards (Titus 1:7), and to "manage" the church (1 Timothy 3). The candidate must be able to fulfill these roles. Jesus sets the example: Follow those in authority, be committed to learning, and be devoted to loving others more than self.

A pastoral candidate can gain skills, but character and values are inherently different from candidate to candidate. So the pastoral search team is better served by understanding the candidate's character and values than by being impressed with his extensive resumé or scholastic brilliance.

Ultimately, be strong and courageous in Jesus Christ and make a qualified choice. Trust God to bless the work, because the church and her pastors belong to Christ.

— Elder Chip Hinds



A Gift of Restoration

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The role of confession in Christian renewal. by Denise Kohlmeier

From an early age, confession was encouraged as part of my religious upbringing. I often felt embarrassed to go to confession, though, thinking I was a horrible person for needing to do this. And I had to do confession publicly by walking through the church's full sanctuary to a small closet-like room. Everyone, I believed, was watching my progress. They knew where I was going, what I was doing. I felt humiliated. But I did it because I was told it was a good thing to do.

It wasn't until later in life when I began to take my faith more seriously, more personally, that I questioned this practice (and many others). I dove into the Scriptures to look for answers.

God enlightened me on the need of and reasoning for confession. He showed me that confession, as I had first experienced, is not meant to be an act of humiliation but of humility. It is not to embarrass but to emancipate. It is not meant to be regimented or ritualistic but be a regular, private examination of one's soul.

Confession, I wonderfully discovered, is a gift — a gracious gift that restores our broken relationship with God and refreshes our sin-weighted souls.

Steps toward salvation

This was the first question I asked: Why do I even need to confess my sins? The answer lies in the opening chapters of Scripture. After God created the first two humans in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-3), He gave them the edict to avoid eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Did they listen? No. They ate and were instantaneously awakened to their nakedness. This one mutinous act ushered in sin, which the Bible calls lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Sin is disobedience, a breaking of God's law.

Because Adam and Eve broke that very first law, they were banished from the garden, becoming physically and spiritually separated from God. And every human born since that pivotal event now bears this original sin

in their spiritual DNA. No human can live perfectly or purely. They cannot keep the commandments of God. We break them daily, whether in thought, word, or deed.

Because of this, we need confession, which means we agree with a holy, righteous God about our spiritual condition: depraved and deserving condemnation. Confession, therefore, is the gift God gave us by which we escape His just wrath and find mercy, grace, forgiveness, and restoration.

One of our first acts of confession, then, is agreeing that God is holy and we are not — that as helpless sinners we need to be saved, that only through faith in Jesus Christ and His atonement is salvation possible. We agree that through Jesus' shed blood are we cleansed from all unrighteousness and made spiritually pure again, and thus acceptable to God.

Another step involves confessing (declaring) that Jesus is Lord and is the resurrected Son of God (Romans 10:9, 10). This verbal declaration announces to others that Jesus is Lord of our lives, that no other person — no ruler, politician, or celebrity — has a claim on our hearts, and that our allegiance belongs to Jesus alone.

Without confession, we are left in our natural, sinful state of depravity, bound for eternal destruction forever separated from God. And while confession is painful, requiring us to lay aside our self-assurance, self-will, and self-righteousness, it is the gift that restores us to an intimate familial relationship with our Father.

Rest for our souls

Are you in need of rest? "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden," says Jesus, "and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29).

Confession emancipates us from all the burdensome sins that weigh us down in shame and guilt. Come to Jesus, who listens without judgment or censure, where others might. In fact, come *only* to Jesus. We don't need to confess to another person, for they cannot give us the supernatural, spiritual rest

Continual renewal

While we find a once-and-for-all salvific rest through faith in Jesus Christ, we will still fall into occasional sin. We are still weak and vulnerable on this side of heaven and miserably prone to wander wrongfully. It is inevitable that we will succumb to the temptations of our own flesh, giving in to anger or impatience, telling a lie, or perhaps committing a more egregious sin.

Then there is Satan, that "thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy" in any way he can (John 10:10). His favorite prey is God's children, from time immemorial. Think of Noah, who got

“ One of our first acts of confession is agreeing that God is holy and we are not. ”

our souls yearn for and so desperately need. Like the Pharisees of old, some will burden us with more works, such as prescribing prayers or recommending service as a means of assuaging guilt.

No, the wondrous rest and refreshment Jesus provides requires nothing but a humble, voluntary acquiescence. And the reward is manifold: We find unfathomable peace, a grace that we don't deserve, and unfailing forgiveness every time.

drunk and lay naked within his tent (Genesis 9:20-27). Think of Abraham, a serial liar (12:10-20; 20:1-18). Think of Moses, who killed an Egyptian taskmaster (Exodus 2:11-12). Or Peter, who was often rash and suffered from foot-in-mouth syndrome (Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 22:54-60).

If the greatest of God's saints fell, most certainly we will too. Hence the need for the continual practice of confession, to receive continual spiritual renewal.

Wonderfully, when we "confess our sins, he is faithful and

just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). God's forgiveness is always available to the humble, sincere confessor.

Relational remedy

While most confessing is done privately, between saint and Savior, in at least two instances

confession is a public matter: when seeking accountability for a certain sin and when we have wronged another person.

Says James 5:16, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." Also, Galatians 6:2 says we are to "Bear one another's burdens." *Burdens*

translates in Greek as "troubles." This could be any manner of trouble, including sin.

God means for us to be in community with other believers. One aspect of being in community is mutual accountability for maintaining individual purity and holiness, which also helps to preserve the unity of the body.

Additionally, maintaining unity means asking for the forgiveness of and reconciliation (if possible) with those we've wronged. While we cannot force forgiveness, we must do all we can to live in peace with others as far as it is possible (Romans 12:18). If the other person refuses to forgive, they then bear the guilt.

God desires that no one should perish but that all should come to salvation (2 Peter 3:9). This requires that every tongue confess His Son as Lord and yield their lives to Him in complete surrender (Philippians 2:11). God also desires a continual, unhindered relationship with His redeemed ones and among each other.

All of this is possible through the gracious gift of confession. May it be an abiding, humble practice among God's people, for the sake of salvific restoration and rest, continual renewal and spiritual refreshment, and harmonious familial relations. **BA**

Get Over Yourself

For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Galatians 6:3).

Perhaps churches could take a lesson from NBA coach Gregg Popovich, who told an interviewer that he looks for people who "have gotten over themselves." If a sports team expects to win, the players must work together. Certainly, some players receive more publicity and become better known than others. Team members also have different personalities and abilities. However, without unity, the team faces certain failure.

Each team player has a unique role to play, a unique personality, and a unique vision for each game's outcome. Yet in the game, those distinctive characteristics must intertwine and conform to the team role, personality, and vision. Every player must remember, as Kentucky's state motto declares, "United we stand, divided we fall."

If we as believers expect to make a positive difference for God in our world, we outgrow the infantile stage of thinking the world revolves around us. We develop empathy for the experiences and emotions of others. We recognize the void in the lives of those who don't know Jesus. We value the gifts of our Christian brothers and sisters, and we work with them to reach our hurting world.

Yes, some believers receive more recognition than others. Yes, we all make mistakes from time to time. Yes, God calls us to personal growth. Yet we grow best when planted together, encouraging, teaching, forgiving, and learning life lessons from one another.

Unity never negates differences. Pursuit of common goals never destroys unique personalities and preferences. Recognition and respect do not guarantee total agreement. Nevertheless, God calls us to work together to extend everlasting love and life.

Let God show you how to pursue the perfect plan for your life individually and as a member of God's family.

— Diana Derringer

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



David Discovers

True Humility



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by **Marcia Sanders**

"So, what are you doing this weekend?" Jason asked David as they headed down the sidewalk toward home.

"I'm supposed to go to . . . oomph!" David gasped as a boy his size raced by, bumping David's shoulder and causing him to fall to the ground.

"What was that all about?" Jason asked.

"I don't know." Jason helped David up, and the two headed home with David limping slightly from a twisted ankle.

"Man!" Jason exclaimed. "You should let that guy have it! Tell him how rude it was to just plow into you like that. Give him a piece of your mind! If you don't, people will walk all over you and run you down like that jerk just did."

"Maybe you're right," David responded. "But I'll have to think about it."

"Huh. If it were me, there'd be no 'thinking' about it. I'd go right up to him and make sure he knew he messed with the wrong guy."

"Maybe I will," said David.

Jason shook his head. "You don't want a reputation of being a spineless wimp!"

With that, David went into his house, and Jason headed on home.

Mom immediately asked about the limp and listened attentively as David explained what had happened.

"I don't know what to do, Mom. I don't want to be known as some weakling who lets people run all over him. In Matthew 11, Jesus said we're to be gentle and humble, but does that mean I have to let people push me around?"

"Well," Mom answered, "what do you think it means to be humble?"

"I think of it as being weak, someone that other people walk over and have no respect for," David replied.

"I see," Mom responded. "Then you see Jesus as weak — someone others walked over?"

"No, not at all! Jesus was one of the strongest, bravest men who ever lived. He endured beatings, insults, even death by crucifixion. How could you even ask that?"

"Because you just defined *humility* that way, and Jesus was described as being meek and lowly — synonyms for humble."

David smiled. "You know, that reminds me of what the pastor said in his sermon last Sabbath about meekness being represented by war horses from the past. Back in the days when horses were the primary way soldiers moved in battle, a good war horse was critical, but only if it always obeyed its master's commands. How long could a soldier last with a horse that wasn't subject to its master? That's what humility means — not doing our will, but God's."

Mom nodded. "Character traits like humility set us apart from non-believers. They show others that we're following our Lord Jesus, not our own will."

David beamed. "And Matthew 5 tells us that the gentle will inherit the earth. That's definitely a goal to work toward!" **BA**

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





Luke — and the believer's proper position.
by R. Herbert

Not surprisingly, humility is displayed in all the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life. For example, although we tend to think of Matthew as the Gospel of kingship — the Gospel that frequently alludes to the messianic kingly role of Christ — Matthew also records many examples of humility in the lives of Jesus and others.

But none of the four Gospels focuses as clearly on the humbleness of God's Son and His teachings on the subject as does Luke.

Life of humility

Luke alone describes the humble nature of Jesus' physical birth. He begins with Mary's affirmation of her humble state (1:48, 52) and continues with the details of Jesus' birth that underscore the relative poverty of His parents (2:24, et al.). Like

Matthew, Luke tells us that Jesus had no fixed home (9:58). But alone among the Gospels, Luke tells us that Jesus' ministry was possible only because of the support of others who were better off (8:1-3).

Only Luke records how Jesus was humbly subject to His earthly parents throughout His early years (2:51), and he gives us dozens of details illustrating Jesus' lowly way of life. One is that, except on one occasion, Jesus is pictured as traveling either by foot or by boat in an age when many — and certainly anyone due respect — traveled by horse or donkey.

Luke also stresses how Jesus lived a life of spiritual humility. This is frequently seen in what the evangelist tells us regarding Jesus' words about Himself (22:27, et al.). It is also seen in the fact that although He was worthy of many titles and was called the Son of God by others, in Luke's Gospel Jesus refers to Himself as simply the Son of Man.

Humble interactions

Luke carefully records details of Jesus' interactions with others who expressed humility. Perhaps the greatest example of this kind of reciprocal humility in the Gospels is the story of the centurion, who implored Jesus to heal his servant. Only Matthew and Luke record this story (Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10), but Luke's additional details are informative.

The Roman officer declared, "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you" (7:6, 7). This story shows his great humility and that of Jesus. Our Lord was willing to go to the sick, rather than have them brought to Him. Luke tells us the sick man was not an important servant but simply a lowly slave (*doulos*).

In similar ways, Luke provides us with many other examples of humility in action — some of them unexpected. For example, although we know Jesus came to serve (Matthew 20:28), Luke repeatedly shows us that His humility allowed Him to be served by others. The evangelist tells us

The Gospel of Humility

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that Jesus attended meals in the homes of others where He was served by the hosts (10:40-42, et al.). He also gives us the story of the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair in an extreme act of service (7:36-50).

In these illustrations, Luke teaches us an important lesson: In our relationships with other people, there is a balance between the humility of serving and the humility of being willing to be served — supporting the needs of others and not being too proud to be supported in our own needs (4:38, 39).

Teachings on humility

Luke shows us that Jesus emphasized the defining character of His disciples as being humility. While Matthew records Jesus' words "those who humble themselves will be exalted" (23:12), Luke gives this same teaching not once but twice (14:11; 18:14), showing its additional importance for his presentation of Jesus' teaching.

Some of Jesus' most

memorable teachings on humility are also recorded in Luke. Early in his Gospel, the disciples argued as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus said, "It is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest" (9:46-50). Luke shows that late in Jesus' ministry the disciples were still arguing in this way, and Jesus re-taught them in even more detail: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; . . . But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. . . . I am among you as one who serves" (22:24-27).

Luke also includes Jesus' instruction to those who picked the places of honor at a banquet: "All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (14:7-11). "And to those who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else," Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector to teach the same lesson: "All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and

those who humble themselves will be exalted" (18:9-14).

Handbook of humility

In both the teachings of Jesus that it records and in examples drawn from His ministry, the Gospel of Luke focuses on humility more frequently than any other Gospel — or any other book in the New Testament. Many additional teachings on humility in Luke do not mention humility directly, but they show how this quality affects every aspect of our Christian lives.

So it is worth remembering: We should turn to Luke if we want a handbook of practical and applied humility. We will also see much more of the message of his Gospel if we remember that even when it is not obviously focusing on this quality, Luke is the Gospel of humility. **BA**

Adapted from the author's book, *Lessons from Luke: Understanding More of the Message of the Third Gospel*, available from FreeChristianEBooks.org. Used by permission. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New International Version*.



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Human

by Loren Gjesdal

Was the apostle Paul ever wrong? We owe much of our theology to Paul's Spirit-breathed exposition of the gospel. Yet there was one time when Paul just might have been wrong. He wrote off a young man, but praise God, Barnabas did not.

Barnabas may not have authored any books in the Bible, but he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to envision who someone might become, despite who they were.

Confidence and conflict

Barnabas brought Paul the convert into the fledgling Christian church while everyone else was still afraid of Saul the persecutor. Barnabas could see the Holy Spirit's transformation being wrought in this man. He could envision who Paul was becoming. We find the record of Barnabas' vision and courage in Acts 9:

When [Paul] came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus (v. 26, 27).

Paul's personal experience of transformation and personal benefit from Barnabas' support should have given Paul high trust for his companion's judgment. Instead, we read something astonishing, yet all too familiar to anyone who has served in church leadership:

Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus (15:37-39).

Evidently John Mark had let Paul down. He had backed away from a hard circumstance, and that weakness led Paul to determine that John Mark was not suitable for mission work. Barnabas, however, saw a young man who needed further mentoring, who was still in the process of becoming God's handiwork (Ephesians 2:10).

Barnabas had seen God at work in Paul, and he likewise saw God at work in John Mark. He knew that Paul was no longer the man he once was, but had become a giant force for the gospel. He believed John Mark could also become a profitable servant in God's kingdom. Many scholars believe this is the same John Mark who wrote the Gospel according to Mark.

Eventually Paul came to agree with Barnabas. He acknowledged near the end of his life from prison that Mark was indeed a valuable co-laborer: "Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service" (2 Timothy 4:11).

Being Becoming

Core mission

We can learn lessons from these early church leaders.

In church leadership, the needs can seem so weighty and the time so pressing, that we forget the core of our mission: to make disciples. We can forget, maybe as Paul did, that discipleship-making is a process of transformation, a partnership between us, God, His Word, and His Spirit. We need to remember that as church leaders, our primary task is developing people, not achieving measurable goals, accomplishing tasks, or pulling off successful events. As Paul himself eloquently described in his letter to the Ephesian church:

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (4:11-13).

As church leaders, our challenge is to picture who someone can become through the indwelling, transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and then help them become a little more like that glorious person each day. We aren't so much human beings as we are human *becomings*: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2).

New perspective

In his sermon "The Weight of Glory," C. S. Lewis challenges us to see people in light of the glory of the Resurrection. He asks us to "remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship." In other words, someone very much like Jesus.

May we as church leaders become a lot more like Barnabas — able to envision who someone is becoming in Christ, willing to invest our time and reputation, willing to go to battle to help

them get there, as Barnabas did for Paul and John Mark.

Along the way we may also need to be like Paul — willing to acknowledge when we have put the tyranny of the urgent ahead of the mission of discipleship — and then extend to some maturing believer a second chance. **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*.



Want to read more articles on leadership from Artios writers? Read the Lead Up section (under Partners) at baonline.org.

Land of the Found



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by **Michael D'Auleiro**

A spiritual journey is intentional. It isn't about following a specific path or counting steps, but rather purposely surrendering to God's will. We don't remain idle. Instead, we keep our hearts open to the call for action and respond when guided.

How trustworthy one must be to free-fall into the unknown. At first, it seems like nothingness. Yet through a life in Christ Jesus, this apparent darkness transforms into radiant fullness. Paul reminds us that we live in God, and God lives in us (Galatians 2:20). When we view ourselves through Christ's eyes, we realize our lonely souls are seen and loved. If He lives our life and hears our cries, can we then not learn to see as He does?

James 4:6 teaches that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Grace, characterized by continuous peace free from sin, contrasts with the suffering caused by human fallacies. The seven deadly sins (pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, sloth, and gluttony) often underpin our struggles. The empty land of idols also leads us astray.

But in the same way behavior does not define a person, so our sins do not represent the soul. While we may miss the divine mark, the Holy Spirit works to guide us back. Humanity's predicament involves seeking a Savior and finding our prayers answered through Jesus. The process of being found often involves experiencing loss, a profound mystery of faith.

Jesus said, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?" (Luke 15:4, NIV). As a shepherd will not leave his sheep behind, so Jesus will never reject you. A lost sheep is not discovered but rediscovered.

We experience death and resurrection when we give our lives to Christ. The spiritual path after that takes work, but it's one we must walk. Rather than seeking the easiest route, we should pursue the highest good. It is tempting to reach for luxuries while refining the soul, but true fulfillment comes from removing impurities and aligning with God's will for our lives. Pursuing the highest good plants seeds of love, faith, and hope, yielding virtues that counteract the seven deadly sins: humility, generosity, chastity, patience, temperance, charity, and diligence. These seven heavenly virtues emerge from a life devoted to Him.

The theologian Augustine was once asked which virtue was first. He answered, "first, humility; second, humility, and third, humility." As a stance that looks up to God, this humility also teaches us to not look down on others who travel this road with us.

Walking this narrow path with humility leads to true liberation. There is no greater freedom than a clear, humble conscience, and no prison like one tangled with entitlement. Thankfully, the path of righteousness shines like the morning sun, growing ever brighter until the full light of day (Proverbs 4:18) — a guiding star that leads us through the shadowlands.

Astonishingly, what was once the land of the lost becomes the land of the found. And in the end, we realize that true freedom was never about escape but transformation — through Jesus, who alone can turn our brokenness into wholeness and our wandering into redemption. **BA**

Michael D'Aulerio writes from Springfield, PA.



Kingdom Humility



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by Emmanuel Selestine

For ages, we have seen rulers rise up, enjoying a place of authority and gaining riches as they oppress the people they should be serving. But as King Jesus knelt to wash the disciples' feet, we see a different type of leader — a servant leader, one who would eventually lay His life down for His people. That is the only kind of leader fit for the kingdom of God. We see this in Jesus' own words: "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11)

Paul instructs us as God's elect to "put on . . . humility . . ." (Colossians 3:12). *Humility*, here and elsewhere, means "lowliness of mind." It is an attitude of the heart. It is not merely an outward show but an inward cleansing of a heart full of pride and arrogance.

There are blessings attached to humility, which Jesus speaks of in the Beatitudes. He says that those poor in spirit will gain the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3). Being poor in spirit is recognizing spiritual bankruptcy. Only these will inherit eternal life. So humility isn't just a good quality to have; it is a cornerstone of the Christian faith. It's a virtue that we should all strive to embody.

When we come to Christ as sinners, we must come in humility. We acknowledge that we are beggars with nothing to offer Him but our sins

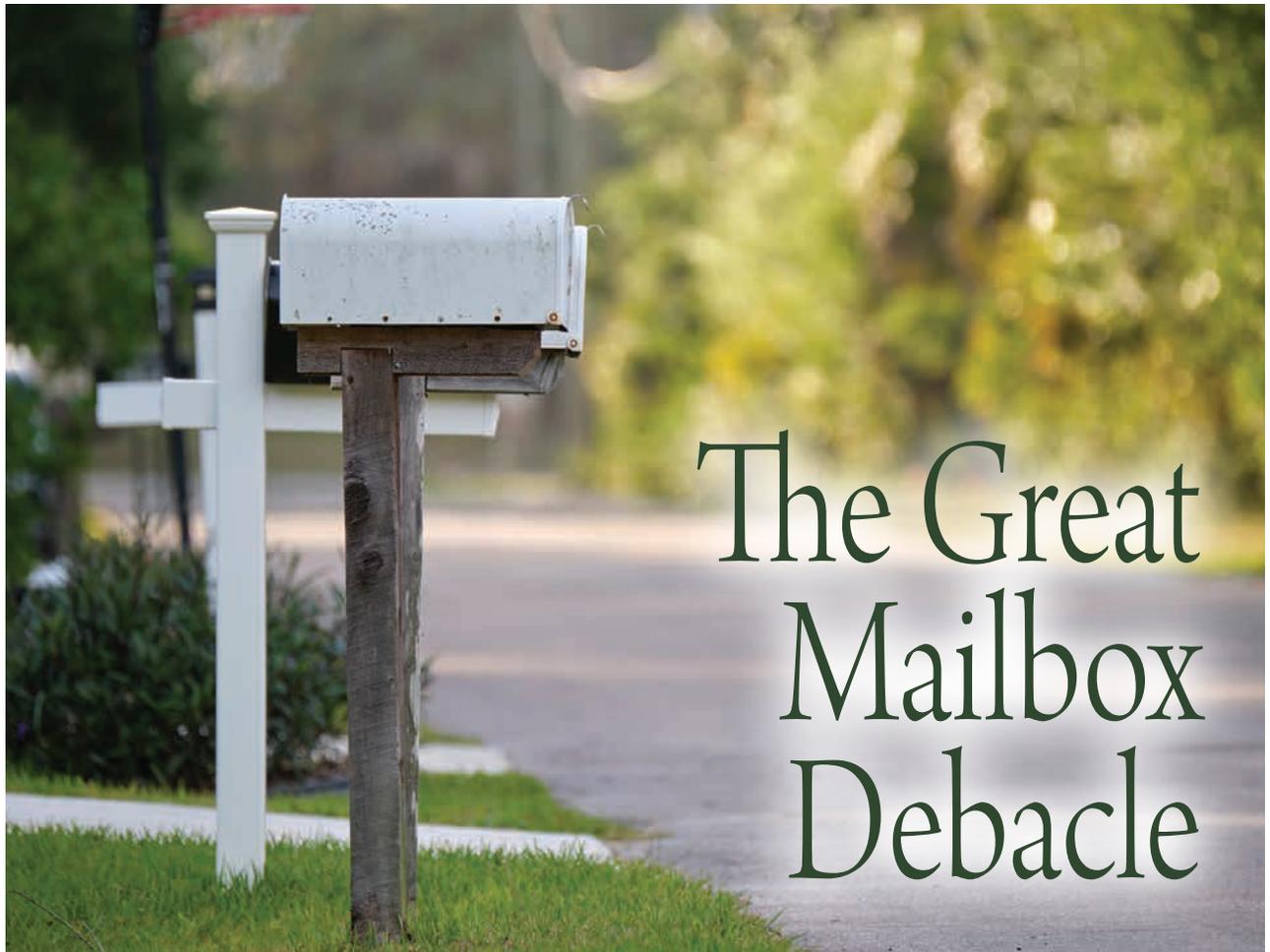
and our need for salvation. We live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). As Paul wrote, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Though a great leader of the church, Paul humbly admitted before the church that he was no different from those he was calling to repentance. Lowering himself to their level allowed these people to hear him. Paul didn't lord it over them, crying down to them, "Repent!" Rather, he cried out to his brothers in love. Being humble makes us usable to the Father because we have the right perspective of our fallen nature. Our only boasting is in Christ Jesus.

God has promised to give grace to the humble but resist the proud (1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 3:34). Therefore, we must put away pride and confess that we need a Savior. If we exalt ourselves, we oppose God. If we humble ourselves, the rewards are great: an inheritance in the kingdom of God — now and forever. **BA**

Emmanuel Selestine writes from Katoro Geita, Tanzania, where he attends the Church of God (Seventh Day) with his wife, Aneth, and their two children, Brian and Mary.





The Great Mailbox Debacle

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A personal lesson in
humility.
by Sarah Schwerin

The day was perfect. From my home office window, the midday sun shone on the bushes out front. A car drove by on the subdivision street. I typed away on my laptop, finishing up an article I'd been writing. Only a couple of items remained on my to-do list.

Another car drove by, then stopped. The mail truck? No, a dark SUV visiting our neighbor. I returned to my work until a loud sound stopped me.

Outside, the SUV sat at an odd angle. Something was wrong. I hurried out the door and down the driveway.

The car's driver had exited. She and I stared at the post

where my mailbox had once been.

She examined her car. "I don't understand how it happened."

I didn't understand either. My neighbor's box hung on the metal pole, while my box lay in the grass. Why hadn't she used her backup camera?

The lady was apologetic and kind. I tried to be gracious as anger and frustration bubbled under the surface.

Tracking down a repair company consumed the rest of my day. I felt resentful and angry at the wasted time. Even though the driver paid for the repairs, her careless blunder ruined my perfect day.

A few months later, I'd pushed the mailbox debacle to the back of my mind. My teenage son and I had finished running errands. We continued chatting as I backed into our driveway.

Then it happened.

I felt a jolt and heard a bang. My heart sank as I looked at my wide-eyed son.

"Did I just . . . ?" I didn't need his answer, and I didn't need to look behind me to see the result of the collision.

Putting the car into Park, I trudged over to the spot of the impact. This time my mailbox and my neighbor's lay on the ground. The empty pole jeered at me. I had caused more damage than my neighbor's guest, and the repairs would cost more than the previous accident.

This time I was angry and frustrated with myself, but also embarrassed. How could I have hit my own mailbox? I had a backup camera. There was no excuse for my careless mistake.

As I explained to my neighbor, then to my husband, what had happened, my problem became apparent: not just my driving but my pride. I thought I was better than the lady who hit my mailbox. I thought I was above making careless mistakes. I was wrong.

James and John

The disciples — James and John — thought they were above making careless mistakes too. They had been called and chosen by Jesus. The brothers walked with Him, listening to His commands. When their Rabbi sent them out, they carried His words and healed others. Imagine their anger and frustration

when a town they went to did not accept Jesus.

Their reply to their Master shows the depth of their indignation: "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" (Luke 9:54).

James and John must have thought to themselves *I would never reject Jesus*. Yet Jesus knew their hearts and the pride inside them. That's why He rebuked them: "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of" (v. 55).

The disciples reveled in their new power and status. I can relate. When my mailbox fell for the first time, I sat behind my desk typing a devotion, secure in

fishermen. But when they had resigned themselves to their lives of second best, the Rabbi of all rabbis, the Messiah, called them. In the process of following Him, however, they forgot Jesus had chosen them when they were nothing. They forgot that Jesus — not the world but the Rabbi who changes everything — called them to follow Him.

When we follow Jesus, we must lay aside our pride by remembering where we came from. When Jesus called James and John away from their fishing nets, He chose them. Not because of anything they had done, but because of God's grace — His undeserved favor. God knows we like to find fault in others, and we forget our ev-

“A life of pride is a heavy burden.
It's a life where we must be perfect.
No mistakes allowed.”

the fact that God had called me to be a writer and speaker. Like James and John, I was so caught up in the excitement of following the Messiah, I had forgotten where I had come from and Who had called me.

In James and John's culture, rabbis chose the most gifted students to follow them. Those not chosen would practice a trade. Since a rabbi had not selected these brothers, they became

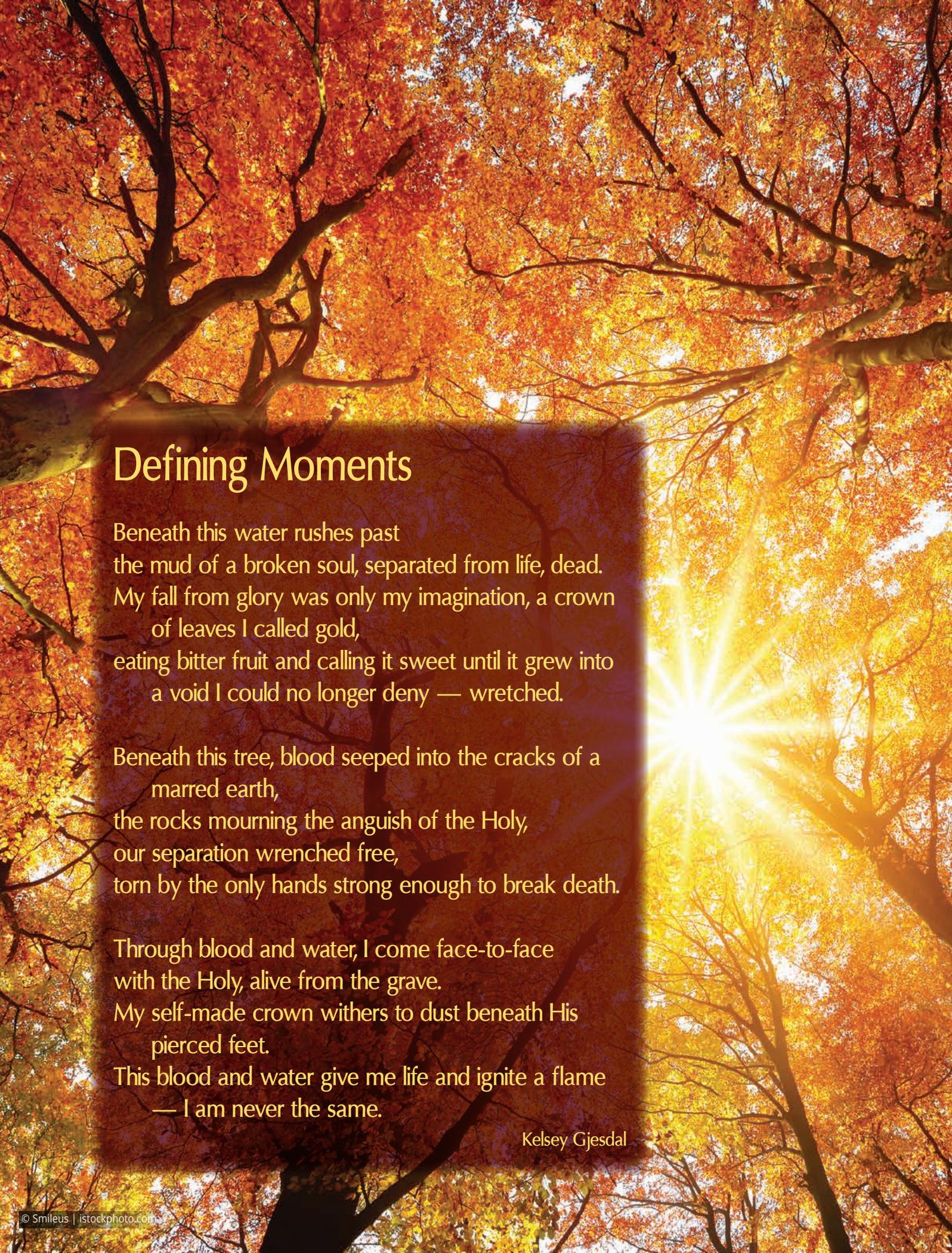
everyday mess-ups. In the middle of our backing over mailboxes, calling down thunder on others, or whatever missteps we may take, God chooses us and calls us away from our prideful lives.

Weight of pride

A life of pride is a heavy burden. It's a life where we must be perfect. No mistakes allowed.

A prideful heart says, "I have

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Defining Moments

Beneath this water rushes past
the mud of a broken soul, separated from life, dead.
My fall from glory was only my imagination, a crown
of leaves I called gold,
eating bitter fruit and calling it sweet until it grew into
a void I could no longer deny — wretched.

Beneath this tree, blood seeped into the cracks of a
marred earth,
the rocks mourning the anguish of the Holy,
our separation wrenched free,
torn by the only hands strong enough to break death.

Through blood and water, I come face-to-face
with the Holy, alive from the grave.
My self-made crown withers to dust beneath His
pierced feet.
This blood and water give me life and ignite a flame
— I am never the same.

Kelsey Gjesdal

Smoke-Free Living

continued from page 7

Ephesians 4:31, 32 states, “Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.”

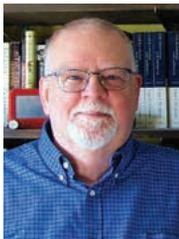
Forgiveness smells like the fragrance after a cleansing spring rain. Soul-healing starts when you let the hurts go. It is an act of great humility.

Clearing the smoke

How do you smell? Is there smoke in your life? Do you carry a grudge like a badge of honor? If so, you’re no martyr but a slave to whatever or whoever hurt you. In Acts, Peter observed of Simon the sorcerer, “For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by wickedness” (8:23). Since sin leads to death, bitterness is just not worth holding on to.

Everyone has to pass through the fire from time to time. It’s the way life is. But just because you get burned doesn’t mean you have to stay in pain. Humbly forgive and humbly be forgiven. Let God clear away every trace of smoke. You’ll feel better and be stronger for that inevitable next time life heats up. **BA**

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



Mailbox Debacle

continued from page 23

all the answers. I would never do what he did. I would never reject Jesus as other people have. I would never hit a mailbox.” A prideful heart is quick to judge, quick to get angry, and quick to say something it will regret in a few moments. Yet Jesus beckons us to lay aside our puffed-up egos and follow Him.

Jesus said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:29, 30).

God wants to take our heavy yoke of pride so we can live a life of humility. A humble heart says, “I don’t have all the answers, but I follow the One who does.” A humble heart doesn’t say, “I would never. . . .” Instead, it says, “I might . . . , but that’s okay because when I mess up, I confess my sins and am reconciled to the God who knows my prideful heart.” A humble heart always puts Jesus first and can see the next step to take.

Childlike faith

The example of an ideal disciple is not James or John or any of the other larger-than-life biblical heroes. It is the example of a child.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted

and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:1-4).

A child must depend on his parents for all his needs. A child observes her parents so that she knows how to behave. He listens to his parents for daily instruction. In their hearts, the parents know that a child doesn’t have all the answers, so they must follow the Father, who always knows the best path to take.

From my office window, I see the black mailboxes on the metal pole. The mail carrier puts some letters in and drives away. I walk down the driveway and open the box. The door sticks and the pole stands at an odd angle now. It was the best the repairman could do after my accident.

The mailbox reminds me that I still make mistakes. Like others around me, I’m an imperfect creation, but that’s okay. My mistakes keep me humble and relying daily on Jesus, my Rabbi, the perfect example of humility. **BA**

Sarah Schwerin writes from Sorrento, FL.



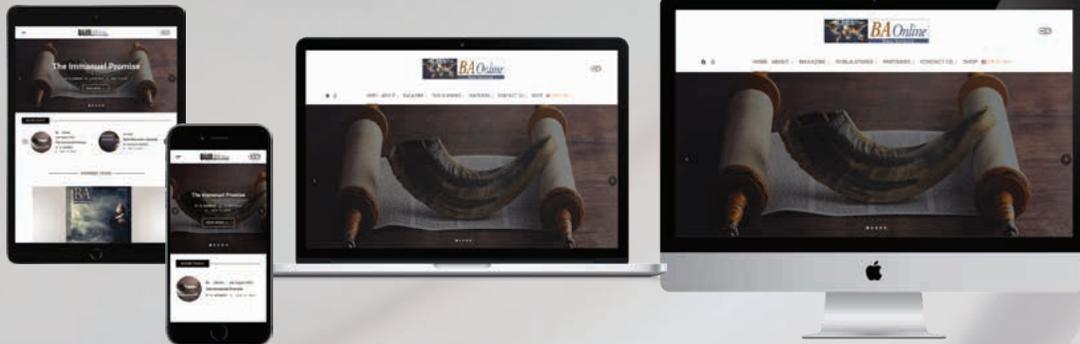


For your listening pleasure . . .

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Read this issue's Online Extra
Turning Humiliation into Humility
by Jon Drury



Artios-Lead Up

If you need resources to focus your leadership and develop your gifts, Artios Christian College has something just for you. Lead Up is a free online resource that provides different perspectives on leadership. Click on and read different articles that can enhance your vision as a leader.

Visit <https://baonline.org/category/leadership/>.

Scholarships Available

If you are a student of Artios Christian College and need a sponsor so you can continue with your studies, we are here to help you.

Visit <https://artioscollege.org/sponsorship/> and find available scholarships that can help you finish your education journey.



Prayer Partners

Become a CoG7 prayer partner! Every two weeks the Conference sends an email with prayers we collect from our members and international brethren asking our pastors and prayer partners to consider.

If you want to become a prayer partner, sign up here: <https://secure.cog7.org/news/>.

If you want us to pray for you, please send your prayers to <https://cog7.org/prayer-request-form/>.

Connect with God in prayer and experience His presence in your life.

Missionary Support

Be sure to pray for our missionaries, for those serving near and far, for eyes and ears to be open to the gospel. Pray for the challenges missionaries will experience today and pray for their families.

Also consider financially supporting our missionaries. When you sponsor one every month, the money goes for travel expenses, training, personal and medical expenses, resources, and materials so they can continue their calling. Just \$40/month helps GC Missions provide missionaries with basic needs and with the funds to continue spreading the gospel.

You can send donations several ways:

- via Zelle to give@cog7.org;
- by check, mailed to P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. Make sure you write "GC Missions" on the memo line;
- online at <https://secure.cog7.org/giving/>.

Be part of Jesus' mission in helping us develop churches around the world!



Branding Videos

Last year, we shared a series of videos on branding in English. Here is the YouTube playlist that explains our brand's purpose and how to use it. Share with your church and family. Spanish videos are also available.





NAMC Gathers in Dallas





The North American Ministerial Council (NAMC) convened in Dallas, Texas, October 28 – November 2. The meeting was attended by licensed and credentialed ministers, local pastors, local leaders, pastors' spouses, observers, and delegates from Guatemala and the Church of God (Seventh Day) International Federation. We sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the success of this meeting, including the pastors from the Dallas area.

The 2024 meeting of our council took the following actions:

- Elected to a two-year term: Daniel Flores as president, Wayne Hrenyk as vice president, and Monico Muffley as secretary.
- Elected to a four-year term on the License and Credentials Committee: David Lozano, Jhabel Chagollan, and Eddie Villalba. The other four members are Steve Kyner, Noe Reyes, Andy Hassen, and Wayne Hrenyk.
- Elected to a two-year term on the Nominating Committee: Santiago Chavez, Ronald Rousseau, and Allo Sanchez.

The council received reports from the License and Credentials Committee, the Committee on Ministerial Ethics, and the Committee on Sexual Harassment and Abuse Policy. Additionally, they received presentations on the role of elders and the CoG7 International Federation. Various





amendments to the NAMC bylaws were approved. New committees were established to conduct studies on three Bible topics, which will be presented at the next two council meetings.

A notable and heartfelt moment during the council meeting was the Pastoral Appreciation segment.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the pastors' spouses who attended this council. They convened daily to listen to the Word of God and engage in collective prayer and activities. On Sabbath, thirty volunteers cared for seventy children. It was a fun-filled event full of Bible learning, and a play about Jesus captured their attention.

Approximately 950 attendees participated in the closing exercises on Sabbath, which included fellowship, worship, and sermons emphasizing Jesus Christ as "the Faithful Witness."

Church of God (Seventh Day), let us remain committed to fulfilling the mission and ministry entrusted to us by the Lord Jesus, bearing faithful witness to the gospel of God's grace.

God bless you.

Daniel Flores
NAMC President

Photo credits: Martin Ramirez, Gabriel Perez, Victoria Capetillo, Jamin Teran, and Karen Padrón



Humble Sandwich

Have you heard of someone being forced to eat a slice of humble pie? Collins Dictionary defines *humble pie* as “humility forced upon someone, often under embarrassing conditions; humiliation.”

A portion of God’s Word might be thought of as a humble sandwich. The “meat” is 1 Peter 5:5b, 6: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you” (ESV except where noted).

Please notice: 1) Humility is a trait we are to intentionally choose and cultivate. (“Clothe yourselves . . . with humility . . . Humble yourselves.”) 2) Our humility is to be demonstrated “toward one another.” 3) Humility avoids God’s discipline (a slice of humble pie?) and brings God’s blessing, “for God . . . gives grace to the humble.” Whereas eating humble pie is meant to take a proud person down a peg or two, eating a humble sandwich brings the promise that God will lift the humble person up.

As with most sandwiches, the “meat” comes between two slices of “bread.” The first might be called self-subjection. First Peter 5:5a says, “Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.” *Likewise* refers to the instruction given to the elders in 1 Peter 5:1-4. Even though the elders are to shepherd the flock of God and exercise oversight over it, they must do so “eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” As under-shepherds

of the church, the elders are to willingly and eagerly subject themselves first to the chief Shepherd and then, as appropriate, to the chief Shepherd’s flock. Likewise, younger men are to subject themselves to the elders.

We find here an expression of the order of authority God designed for His church: Christ over elders, elders over all other members of the body, yet without “lording it over those allotted to your charge” (v. 3, NASB), with a commitment to mutual submission under Christ (see Mark 10:45). One cannot fulfill these commands and examples without humility.

The final slice of “bread” that completes this humble sandwich is in 1 Peter 5:7: “casting all your anxieties on Him [God], because He cares for you” (NASB). This slice might be called “trust in God.” Christlike submission and humility aren’t possible within this fallen world without trusting in God. Self-subjection to others and humility are often viewed as weaknesses to be exploited. Humbly submitting ourselves to others, especially to those who should be submitting themselves to us, can be dangerous! Thoughts about what might happen if we don’t control things lead to anxiety. Peter’s solution? Cast that anxiety on God, the one who instructs our appropriate self-subjection and humility, the one who truly cares for us.

What’s on your spiritual menu? If it isn’t the humble sandwich, it likely will be the humble pie.

— Loren Stacy



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