

SPRING 2004

infuse

Features

03 **INTERNALIZING THE PASSOVER**
Following the crowd is easy, but is very dangerous.

04 **SPRING HOLY DAYS OF GOD** *Obedience is of paramount importance, which includes God's Holy Days.*

06 **PENTECOST** *Did you know Pentecost is observed by many mainstream Christian churches?*

08 **IT'S THE SABBATH, NOW WHAT?**
Remembering the Sabbath is easy, how do you keep it holy?

14 **SHOULD I DATE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?** *It's not always possible to find someone to date who is in the church.*

Highlights

07 **CROSSING YOUR PERSONAL RED SEA** *How the adventures of ancient nomads can help you today.*

11 **YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**
Open your "pre-approved" account with God today.

12 **DO I MATTER TO GOD?** *God hears your prayers.*

12 **BY YOU:**
Poetry--Trust by Amy Hunt

13 **MOVIE REVIEW**
Timeline

13 **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS** *Is it okay to defend oneself from an attacker? What are grace and faith?*

16 **HEALTH FOUND IN ALL AREAS OF LIFE** *Health means more than simply the absence of disease.*



The Spring Holy Days are upon us and there is much to be considered. It is a time to thank God for delivering us out of the bondage of slavery, which is sin, and focusing our thoughts on our Savior Jesus Christ who is our Passover.

It is easy for me to recall the aroma and nostalgia of childhood Holy Days with my family and friends. It was the new dress my mother would make me and the delicious food on the Night To Be Remembered, which is the Old Testament Passover and the talks that took place around the dinning room table. It was the fun of balancing raisins on a piece of flat bread and having yet one more piece of my Mom's fabulous fudge.

Today, I continue to enjoy many of the things I liked as a child about the Holy Days and I am blessed to share these important days with my children. However, I do view the upcoming Holy Days, particularly Passover differently than I did as a child. While the Old Testament Passover is obviously a celebration of the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, it reaches far beyond a historical event. Passover is about Christ's sacrifice for the individual and the world. This thought alone puts chills up my spine.

God's Holy Days mean more when a person has some clear understandable information. The writer's for this quarter's issue of Infuse have met the challenge to help you do just that. Within these articles you will have the opportunity to learn about God's spring Holy Days, the Sabbath and dating.

In order to achieve anything worthwhile in this life, one must have God's Word in his or her heart. I pray these articles not only lead you to have a desire to soak up God's Word, but that they help you begin to develop a lasting relationship with your Creator.

God bless you,

Noni McVey
Editor in Chief

**How You Can Contribute
to the Summer 2004
Issue of *infuse***

We're looking for articles, short stories, artwork, poetry, essays and reviews from you.

GUIDELINES: Articles should be approximately 500-750 words. All submissions should be centered on next issue's theme of **Love, Sex & Marriage**.

DEADLINE: All submissions must be received by **May 1, 2004**.

If you are interested in contributing to the next issue of **infuse**, contact Noni McVey by writing to infuse@cgi.org or call 831-625-0231.

PUBLISHED BY

The Church of God International

YOUTH MINISTER Loren M. Chamberlain

EDITOR IN CHIEF Noni McVey

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Loren M. Chamberlain, Brian Christensen, George James, Mike James, Ruth Kerr, Carol Mackey, Noni McVey, Anika E. Sandy-Hanson, Bob Swimm

COPY EDITOR Elizabeth McVey

PROOF EDITOR Patricia Chamberlain

DESIGN/LAYOUT Jordana McVey

COVER ARTWORK Vicki Smith

Internalizing the Passover

By Anika E. Sandy-Hanson

The beginning of God's Holy Days often evokes many feelings within us. Sometimes we view them as a great opportunity to be out of school and socialize with our church friends during the week. Maybe, we see the Holy Days as a bit of an inconvenience whose end we can't wait for. These days signal time for cleaning house, abstaining from our favorite leavened food and making up the work missed from school. Do some of us even view these days as a confusing mandate set by our parents, guardians and ministers? Whatever view we may have, it is important to view all Holy Days in the correct perspective.

It is often easier for human beings to just participate in traditional practices rather than try to internalize them. Following the crowd in this arena is just as dangerous as following our peers in harmful activities. It is true that on the surface we may not understand how following the Holy Day commandments without internalizing them can be harmful to us, but read to understand the point.

It is often easier for human beings to just participate in traditional practices rather than try to internalize them.

In Exodus 12 the Passover commandments were handed down to Moses and Aaron, they then passed them down to the rest of the people. This is the first example of following the crowd. The Israelites were given the commands directly;

however, the scripture shows us that many Egyptians also chose to follow the instructions given by the Lord. They did not follow the rest of the country. Instead of looking to their Pharaoh for instruction, they realized the God of heaven was the one to follow. Due to this internalizing, a "mixed multitude" left Egypt along with the Israelites (Exodus 12:28). In this account the Egyptians made the difficult choice and internalized God's commands, rather than just doing things the old way.

Many Israelites followed the crowd. They kept the Passover as commanded by Moses, but did they really internalize it? To answer this question, let's examine what they did soon after keeping this sacred feast. Exodus 14:10-12, "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." Is this the reaction of people who truly believed that God is Almighty? Could they have kept the Passover with their whole hearts or were they simply doing what they were told?

The evidence seems to show us these people were not

completely sold on the might of God; in fact, many accounts lead us to believe most Israelites never really understood and internalized the Holy Days, commandments and general teachings of the Father. Instead, they were tossed to and fro according to where the rest of the nation went. If the King and other people followed God, then they did too. If there



was rampant sin and disobedience, then they were to be found in that group. Only a few Israelites had true, personal relationships with God. It was this ingredient that allowed this select group to stand up and choose God even when the choice was hard.

This personal relationship is what each of us needs to develop. We have to prove the truth of the Sabbath, Passover and the other Holy Days. In these modern times we have examples of individuals who were given the truth, but when church leaders presented other alternatives, they followed that crowd. There is no way to determine if these individuals ever believed the truth, but we do

continued on **page 17**

Spring Holy Days of God

By Loren Chamberlain

Jesus Christ paid this death penalty for us. God our Father loved the whole world so much He was willing to allow the life of His own son to be sacrificed to pay the debt that no one was capable of paying and still live (John 3:16). God's Holy character is so consistent there could be no other way for him to extend mercy to us.

To those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, obedience to all that He taught is of paramount importance and necessary. Jesus spoke to His disciples and told them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have *Commanded* you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (age)" (Matthew 28:20).

When the New Testament is read it is found that Jesus Christ, His Apostles and Disciples never observed Sunday, Christmas, Easter, Lent, or Halloween as days of worship. In fact you will not find them even mentioned in the Bible except as pagan ceremonies not to be taken part in. It is for this reason, and many more, that the Church of God continues to observe the Seventh Day Sabbath and Holy Days instituted by The Lord God, and these it will be found are mentioned prolifically in the Bible. In scholarship it is widely acknowledged the early Church continued to observe the annual Holy Days of the Old Testament: "In the early Christian Church the propriety of celebrating the festivals together with the whole of the Jewish people was never questioned, so that it needed no special mention" (The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 1, 628).

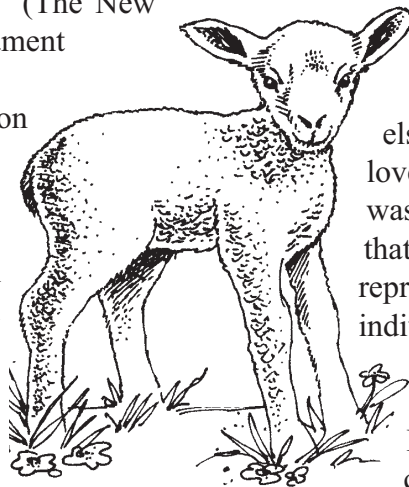
The annual Holy Days function in a similar manner as the weekly Sabbath in that they outline God's plan of salvation for the individual and the world. Like the weekly Sabbath, each is reckoned from sunset to sunset. A complete summary of the Sabbath and the Holy Days of The Lord are to be found in Leviticus 23:1-36.

Passover

The bread and wine which Jesus instituted at His last supper and are taken yearly by the Church today, are explained symbolically both by Jesus Himself and by the apostle Paul. The wine represents the shed blood of Jesus who gave Himself as an offering to pay for all the sins of mankind. John records for us, "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). That full and complete sacrifice makes it possible for one to have any and all sins forgiven upon repentance. The wine also represents the New Covenant made between God and the Christian by the blood of Christ.

The bread represents the body of Jesus which was torn and beaten for us all, in Christ's ultimate sacrifice for mankind. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). For a fuller understanding read all of John chapter six. The eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine represent partaking of the eternal life only God can give. The beaten body of Christ also represents the stripes He took on His back enabling us to claim the gift of divine healing for our physical infirmities (Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24).

The purpose of the foot washing ceremony as explained by Jesus Himself was to show true humility and the proper sense of service (John 13:12-17). No one can be greater than His Lord, who is Jesus Christ; yet Jesus was the greatest servant of all and gave more than anyone else for mankind. This Spirit of Christian love and service is expressed symbolically by washing another person's feet and then allowing that person to reciprocate. Thus, the Passover represents Christ's sacrifice for all—both the individual and the world—and pictures the initial step in salvation. Only through acceptance of this sacrifice can one repent and be forgiven. Repentance is the first stage in individual conversion.





The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is symbolical of the continual removing of sin from the spiritual sphere of one's life and the continual practicing of a new godly way of life, represented by Christ who was unleavened, that is, without sin. The apostle Paul stated, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, (sin) that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

As the Hebrews prepared for their exodus from slavery in Egypt, they were commanded to prepare bread without yeast ("unleavened bread") because they didn't have time to wait for it to rise. Yeast also was a symbol of sin, so they were commanded to clean all of it out of their houses (Exodus 12:15; 13:7). Therefore, today as a symbol of sin, followers of Christ remove yeast from their houses as a physical reminder of removing sin from their lives. It is a further reminder that we should have nothing to do with the sins of the past ("old leaven").

The Old Testament Passover lamb was slaughtered on the 14th of Nisan. It was eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (representing hard bondage) on into the evening. That night the death angel passed over, spared the Israelites who had put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts, and slaughtered the Egyptian firstborn. This began a period of seven days of eating unleavened bread. The 15th and the 21st days were Holy Days on which no work was to be done. The intervening days were not holy days, but no leaven was to be eaten or any leavened products to be in the houses. It was on the Sunday during this period that the first sheaf (omer) of the new harvest was offered as the Wave Sheaf offering. Jesus Christ is the Wave Sheaf offering! Only after this offering could the spring harvest begin (Leviticus 23:6-14).

Pentecost

Also known as the Feast of Weeks, this festival took its name from the manner in which it was determined. Rather than being celebrated on a particular calendar day, it was counted seven weeks or fifty days from the Wave Sheaf Day that occurred during the days of Unleavened Bread, hence the term "Feast of Weeks" in the Old Testament and "Pentecost" (Greek "fiftieth") in the time of the New Testament. It marked the end of the spring harvest. The basic instructions for determining the date of Pentecost are clear in (Leviticus 23:15-16). The count begins on a Sunday and ends on a Sunday. The New Testament Church of God began on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came according to the promises Jesus had made. "But ye shall receive "Power" after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing might wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting" (Acts 2:1-2).

The *Sheaf* had to be made up of the "firstfruits," the very first of the harvest to be reaped. The *Sheaf* had to be offered first before the rest of the harvest because it symbolically represented Christ. "Christ [is] risen from the dead, and become the *Firstfruits* of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The apostle James tells us "Of His own will begat He us with the word of Truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18). Therefore, Pentecost, or Firstfruits portrays to us the first part of the spiritual harvest of souls, the calling out of God's Church, a small group of people and a small first harvest. **I**

V I S I T
infuse.cgi.org

for more articles, including the
article by Loren Chamberlain titled,
"The Passover Lamb."

Pentecost

By Mike James

Like all the other Holy Days, Pentecost is full of rich meaning and symbolism in God's plan for humanity. In this brief article we will scratch the surface of the themes and meaning within this festival. We will begin by addressing the various names for the day. Then we will look at some controversy about its observance. We will see what the significance of the day may have been in the Old and New Testaments and conclude with its future application and how you may be able to help your friends look at the other Holy Days by discussing Pentecost.

Pentecost has many names. Pentecost is a Greek term that has to do with the number of days (50) counted forward from the Days of Unleavened Bread to determine which day will be Pentecost. Another name for this festival is the Feast of Firstfruits. It gets this name because in the late spring (May/June) the Israelites would harvest the firstfruits of their crops. This Holy Day is also referred to as the Feast of Weeks because it takes seven weeks from the Days of Unleavened Bread until Pentecost. Like the Days of Unleavened Bread, there is some controversy over Pentecost.

The point of contention centers on how to interpret Leviticus 23:11. This scripture tells us to begin the 50 day count to Pentecost after the Sabbath that occurs during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The problem is during the Days of Unleavened Bread there is a weekly Sabbath and also the Holy Day Sabbath for the First Day of Unleavened Bread. The two major groups of Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus were divided on this issue. The Sadducees believed the count should begin after the weekly Sabbath while the Pharisees believed it should begin after the annual Holy Day Sabbath. After the destruction of the Temple in 70AD the Sadducees became less influential and the Pharisees view became more popular. Today the Pharisees' view is used.

One of the themes of Pentecost in the Old Testament deals with the law. Although a scripture that

unequivocally states it cannot be found---many scholars believe the law of God was delivered to Israel on the Day of Pentecost after Israel left Egypt. This idea seems to coincide with what happened on the Day of Pentecost in the New Testament church.

In Acts chapter 2 we read the account of the Holy Spirit coming upon the early church for the first time after the death of Jesus. The connection here with the law is that now Christians have a greater ability to observe God's laws because of our access to the Holy Spirit. Jesus allowed himself to be sacrificed to create a way for everyone to receive God's Holy Spirit.

Like all the other Holy Days, Pentecost also has a future application. We can find evidence of this in scriptures like James 1:18 where Christians are likened to firstfruits. When this knowledge is combined with our

understanding of the first resurrection for those who are true believers (I Corinthians 15) with the fact there will be a latter resurrection (Revelation 20) for the rest of the dead, the picture begins to become clearer as to what God is doing. God will raise some people to life earlier (firstfruits) than others. But the implication is if you have firstfruits you will have to have latter fruits. The latter fruits are addressed when we study the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

Unlike the other Biblical Holy Days Pentecost is observed by mainline Christian churches too. This has a lot to do with the fact Pentecost was the day the New Testament church began. But this could be a good point to raise with friends you have in other mainline Christian churches. You may want to ask them why they only observe Pentecost and not the other Holy Days which all originated in the same context. Showing your friends scriptures like I Corinthians 16:7-8, where Paul addresses his need to observe Pentecost about 30 years after Christ's death, may help support your case for observance of the other Holy Days which are addressed in the New Testament. Best wishes in trying to make others aware of the fact they can become firstfruits. ■



Crossing Your Personal Red Sea

By Ruth Kerr

How do the adventures of ancient nomads help you today, in the 21st century? The answer may surprise you.

The Churches of God spend a lot of time focusing on the Exodus account this time of year. But how is the Exodus – and the crossing of the Red Sea – relevant to you, today? After all, the Exodus was over 3,000 years ago. Why should you care about it now?

One reason is the Bible says the ancient Israelites faced trials as examples for us (I Corinthians 10:6).

“Big deal,” you might say. “Examples of what? How does a bunch of ancient people crossing the Red Sea help me when my parents are getting divorced? Or when I watch my best friend become more involved with drugs? What do those Israelites have to do with my life?” In short, everything.

First, let’s establish two facts. The Bible tells us:

1. God knows the number of hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30). If God knows how many hairs you have, He knows you by name. He knows your interests, what makes you laugh and the burdens you carry.

2. God looks after everyone – even simple wildflowers that live only a few months during the summer (Matthew 6:28). He makes sure these flowers have everything they need to live out their meager four-to-six-month lifespan. If God can provide such care for a plant, how much more is He willing to care for you?

God may not change an “F”

to a “B” on a chemistry test, and He may not return lost books to the library, but He is willing to help you through some of the toughest trials of your life. How can you know this? He’s already proven it to you – by

God gave Israel during one of their darkest hours. These are lessons we can draw upon when we’re facing a Red Sea crisis of our own.

For example, Morgan’s first lesson is: “Realize God means for you to be where you are.” God knows your family life is in turmoil or that your best friend is in trouble. Remember, if He knows you by name, He knows your worries. He may not solve the situation immediately, but He may have a purpose in letting you “sweat it out” for a bit. After all, if it were easy to cross the Red Sea, would it be obvious to the Israelites that God intervened? Moses told them, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today” (Exodus 14:13). When the Israelites saw the sea disappear, and then re-appear to swallow Pharaoh’s army, they had no doubt it was God who saved them (Exodus 14:31).

God is prepared to do the same for you, if you will let Him. Who knows how God may act on your behalf? But if He chooses not to act, it doesn’t mean He’s ignoring you or He doesn’t care about you. If He doesn’t remove your trials, He will lead you through them. After all, the Israelites still had to walk across the Red Sea. God didn’t magically transport them to the other side. Morgan’s Rule #8 is: “Trust God to deliver in His own unique way.”

Sometimes our times of crisis are opportunities for God

continued on page 17

The Red Sea Rules

- 01** Realize that God means for you to be where you are. (Ex. 14:1-2)
- 02** Be more concerned for God’s glory than for your relief. (Ex. 14:3-4)
- 03** Acknowledge your enemy, but keep your eyes on the Lord. (Ex. 14:5-9)
- 04** Pray! (Ex. 14:10)
- 05** Stay calm and confident, and give God time to work. (Ex. 14:13-14)
- 06** When unsure, just take the next logical step by faith. (Ex. 14:15)
- 07** Envision God’s enveloping presence. (Ex. 14:19-20)
- 08** Trust God to deliver in His own unique way. (Ex. 14:21-22)
- 09** View your current crisis as a faith builder for the future. (Ex. 14:30-31)
- 10** Don’t forget to praise Him. (Ex. 15:1-2)

The Red Sea Rules: 10 God-Given Strategies for Difficult Times by Robert J. Morgan, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001.

leading ancient Israel through the Red Sea.

In his book “The Red Sea Rules: 10 God-Given Strategies for Difficult Times” (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), author Robert J. Morgan lists 10 valuable lessons

It's The Sabbath, Now What?

By Noni McVey

The fourth commandment says, “Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Remembering the Sabbath is easy; the tough part is how does one keep it holy?

In my youth, I thought it would be great to have an appendix in the back of the Bible with two columns. One column would give what is permissible on the Sabbath and the other would give the non-permissible. Today, I realize how silly it was to think that. The Bible provides a principle for everything encountered in life. It is our responsibility to take the time to read, study, pray and meditate on God’s Word. Taking this approach will equip us with the proper knowledge to decide for ourselves what is or is not permissible on the Sabbath.

What is the Sabbath?

God gave the Sabbath as a gift to man. It was instituted at creation when God rested from His work (Genesis 2:1-3). The purpose of the Sabbath is to give much needed rest to the mind and body and at the same time enrich the soul. The Sabbath by definition is a weekly Holy Day, a day of solemn rest, an appointed feast and a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:3). In addition to rest, it is a time set aside to spend with God in worship. The Sabbath allows time to focus on the Creator God and look forward to a new creation when God’s Kingdom is established on earth. Through God’s gracious gift of the Sabbath, He, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed for yet another character building opportunity for each of us. Making personal decisions about what one will or will not do on the Sabbath is one way each individual may develop godly character and the mind of Christ.

The importance of the Sabbath is revealed in many places in the Old Testament. God set the example for the Sabbath. It is the day God “rested” and ceased from His labors of creation...”and was refreshed” (Exodus 31:17). God gave a clear example here, He rested from His weekly labor therefore man should rest from his weekly labors too. What should one do on the Sabbath? Rest from his/her weekly work.

Jesus and the Sabbath

In the New Testament the principles of how

to keep the Sabbath were given by Christ. As Christ’s ministry approached, the Sabbath had become a burden, not a joy due to man’s rigid legalistic and exaggerated interpretation about how the Sabbath ought to be observed. Fortunately, for all of mankind, Jesus came and clarified the “spirit” of keeping the Sabbath.

During Jesus’ time, there were religious leaders who on many occasions claimed Jesus had violated the Sabbath. In Mark 2:23-28, Jesus and His disciples plucked grain and ate it on the Sabbath. This was allowed in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 23:25). So why is it Jesus was considered a Sabbath-breaker? The religious leaders deemed what one could do on the Sabbath. Picking grain was in the non-permissible column of their ledger. Reaping and rubbing loose grain was considered a violation of the Sabbath. How did Jesus respond to His accusers? He showed how ridiculous their laws were. Jesus told the story of David eating the forbidden showbread in the temple. Afterward, Jesus made the point that God created the Sabbath for man’s benefit, not for His. God does not get tired. Therefore, he does not need to rest (Isaiah 40:28). Jesus’ point to the Pharisees was they were making their laws about how to keep the Sabbath more important than the purpose of the Sabbath.

Another forbidden Sabbath law was not to treat a person’s sickness if that individual was in no immediate danger. In Matthew 12:9-14, Jesus healed a man with a



withered hand on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, He used the analogy of pulling a sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath day to show there is nothing wrong with relieving suffering on the Sabbath. One would surely help an animal so why wouldn't a person's life be just as important? The Pharisee's were so concerned about their rules, they forgot about loving their fellow man. Jesus' examples of what He did on the Sabbath certainly indicate that physical activity is not prohibited. Doing good and serving others in need is not wrong on the Sabbath. What is wrong is pursuing one's own business interests.

What can I do on the Sabbath?

The Sabbath is not a day about what is or is not permissible. It is a day when we don't have to perform certain daily requirements. In other words, the Sabbath has set us free. We are not in bondage to the responsibilities of the workweek. For one day out of every week God has given us the liberty not to worry about all the things we worry about for the other six days. Every Sabbath is a blessing and should be approached from a positive point of view.

In my youth I focused on what I couldn't do, today I think about all the things I get to do. It is not the job of the church, the ministry or other individuals to create a handbook for Sabbath observance. The church and our ministry teach the broad principles and it is up to each of us to apply those principles as we meet each situation.

When deciding what my activity for the Sabbath day will be, I have found asking the following questions

helps make the decision easier:

- 1) Will the activity be a joy and a blessing to those around me?
- 2) Is the Sabbath activity a delight or a burden?
- 3) Is the activity drawing me closer to God?
- 4) Will this activity violate the spirit of the Sabbath?
- 5) Does it bother my conscience?

With these questions in mind, I evaluate each activity and situation I run into on the Sabbath.

Many turn to Isaiah 58:13 to prove one should not take personal pleasure in the Sabbath. Over the years, I have heard the list of activities one is not to participate in. Activities such as watching television, swimming, going on a bike ride, listening to music, reading the newspaper, taking a walk, visiting with friends who are not in the church, playing a game with one's children or having marital relations. Using this list as an example, I ask myself my five questions. My conclusion, none of these activities violate the spirit of the Sabbath as long as I don't abuse or overdue anyone of them.

There is no simple solution or formula to apply to what one can or cannot do on the Sabbath. God gave us His law, principles to apply and a mind to decide with. Facing difficult decisions throughout your Christians walk is inevitable. How each situation is handled is what will determine the quality of the character you are building. Whatever you decide to do on the Sabbath, be sure your activity shows respect and love toward God and make it a day of delight. |

Serving Your Community

- Project Linus is a non-profit charity that provides blankets to children
- between the ages of 0 to 19 who have been through a traumatic event.
- A traumatic event might be the loss of a loved one, a house being
- burnt down or have a deadly illness, etc. It was appropriately named
- after the adorable security blanket-toting character from the Peanuts
- comic strip. Blankets provide a sense of comfort and warmth to children
- during difficult times. All blankets are new, handmade and washable.
- There are over two hundred and fifty chapters of Project Linus across
- the country. Every February chapters hold a Blanket Day for their local
- area. If you are interested in helping your local chapter visit Project Linus'
- website at www.projectlinus.org for a chapter list.



Feast of TABERNACLES '04

P e n s a c o l a , F L

COME
JOIN
US!

For this year's Feast of Tabernacles 2004 the place to be is Pensacola, Florida. Why? Because we're putting together a once in a lifetime event for all teens and young adults. You're invited to come and be a participant.

It's called Infuse 2004 Feast of Tabernacles. Pensacola, Florida is where the first infuse church services will take place. We not only want to provide a

great time for all who attend, but we want you to have the opportunity to interact with young people who have the same faith as you, hear sermons that touch your lives, provide group discussions, uplifting music and so much more.

Infuse 2004 Feast of Tabernacles is designed to show you how your faith commitments have an impact on your life.

See you there!

Your Relationship With God

By Brian Christensen

Most of us have seen or received offers in the mail advertising a “free” gift or a “free” account with a credit company. All you have to do is call a number or fill out a card to activate your account. Most of these are marketing ploys to entice people to buy something or pay higher interest rates. God, however, has established a very real and powerful “account”, or relationship, with us. This relationship has the power to protect you from harm, heal you when you are ill, help comfort you in pain and guide you through difficult decisions. These are just a few of the benefits He can offer you. God has countless numbers of angels that can help carry out any of these tasks. In fact “all things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27).

God does not want your money. All you have to do to activate your relationship with God and maximize its potential is to pray (Matthew 7:7). It is even a “toll free” call from anywhere in the world. We have numerous examples in the Bible of people going to God in prayer and for many different reasons. Some for praise, others for healing, guidance, or forgiveness. It is even “ok” to just say “hi” or “thank you” to God. Whatever the reason, God is and will be there for you. You may not like the way He guides you or gets for you what you want; however, He always has your best interest in mind. Just as with a close friend or family member, the more you talk to God, the closer you will come to know God and appreciate His love for you.

Jesus tells us how to pray, and it is quite simple. He says we should humble ourselves before God, and ask all things in His (Jesus) name (John 14:13). You can always pray quietly in your mind and no one will ever know you are talking to God. Jesus also teaches us that children of Christian parents receive blessings on behalf of the parent. As we grow and mature we must develop our own relationship with God (1 Corinthians 13:11). This relationship will become deeper and eventually bless our children and our family. It’s not easy, as trials are necessary to build our character. However, the power and wisdom of God is awesome. Prayer is the best way to start the relationship and unleash that power.

I developed my relationship with God long before I was in the church or even knew the truth. I was probably 14 or 15 and liked animals very much. I

discovered an article on backyard habitats for wildlife, and decided to build a bird sanctuary in the corner of my yard. I built a path, put up some posts, sank a small pool in the ground for a water pond, and built three to four bird feeders. This required lots of food, so each night I would fill the feeders. It was on these nightly trips I first began speaking to God. It was a little awkward at first, but soon I was talking to God, through my thoughts, as if He were a friend on the phone. I would share events of the day, thank Him for something good that happened, ask for help on a test, tell Him about girls I liked and asked Him for His help in rejecting drugs and alcohol.

One night, I was out with friends having a blast, when all of a sudden some weed came out and was being passed around. The pressure was very heavy and persuasive. I called on God to help and prayed for his strength to resist being a part of this drug scene. After they all spouted off, I finally told them I didn’t like the taste or the smell, but I wouldn’t stand in their way. It was quiet and then they all said “ok” and continued to smoke, and left me alone. We continued our fun, talking and laughing. I thought it was hilarious to watch them, but thanked God for His help. I also enjoyed being out with my friends at parties, however, there always seemed to be pressure on me to drink. Alcohol appeared to be very strong and I did not want to lose my senses and control. I was always nervous when I would first arrive, that’s when the pressure was heaviest. I would ask God to please help me to be strong and let the others there understand, not force me or be violent towards me. Again after the first waves of pressure, most would back off, and we all could have fun. I realize everyone’s situations are different and some events are harder to overcome, but what is important is when things turned ugly, I wasn’t alone and neither are you!

So open your “pre-approved” account with God today. There is no cost and 0% interest; you can even transfer all of your balances or troubles to Him. Customer service is available 24 hours a day, “toll free” from anywhere. The cost of:

A notebook...\$2.00 A new Bible...\$30.00
 Going to the Feast of Tabernacles...\$1,000.00
 The benefits of having an endless
 personal relationship with God...*priceless.*

Do I Matter to God?

By Bob Swimm

I remember the winter of 1955 as if it were yesterday. It was another time in another religion—an entirely different world I was to discover in God’s Church. There had been a horrible argument between my parents, at what was supposed to be the merriest and happiest time of the year, and they did not speak for nearly three months. The tension in the house was overwhelming, my stomach churned constantly. It was too much for a seven-year-old little boy to cope with.

One particular evening, on the way to my bedroom, Dad stopped me on the landing and said, “Your mother and I are splitting up!” I was crushed. My little world, as I had known it was over. What was going to happen now?

But even at that young age I did have a relationship with God. I believed in Him. I trusted in Him. All night long, or at least it seemed like all night to me, I prayed [they were Our Fathers, Hail Mary’s, and Glory Be’s]. The next morning Mom met me in the hall and told me that she and Dad made up last night.

When Jesus’ disciples asked Him who would be greatest in the Kingdom, Jesus set a little child in their

midst. Jesus told them they and all would follow to this day that it would be necessary to have the converted, simple, innocent, and humble attitude of a trusting child—the same attitude I had the night I went to bed

with tears welling in my eyes for my parents to mend their marriage.

Later, when Jesus’ disciples tried to shoo away the little ones, Jesus fussed at them and demanded them to bring the children to Him. He then blessed them (Matthew 19:14). I’ve never been blessed to have children, but one of my favorite duties as a minister of Jesus is to hold an infant or toddler at the Feast for the “Blessing of Little Children.”

Our great creator God heard the pitiful cry of a frantic little boy endlessly sobbing Hail Mary’s in 1955; will He not do likewise for our more knowledgeable children, teens and young adults in 2004?

As I learned so long ago and, as did David anciently, “Find out for yourself how good the Lord is” (Psalms 34:8).



“What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?”

Deuteronomy 4:7

TRUST

By Amy Hunt
Bend, Oregon

- Trust is a big thing in a human’s life
- Sometimes you wonder if you can trust your friends
- Sometimes you can sometimes you can’t
- But there is one person you can trust
- God
- God will always be there for you
- When you pray to God thank Him for listening
- And know He will always be there for you

Timeline: A Review

MPAA Rating: PG-13

By Carol Mackey

Timeline is about an organization, ITC, which is funding an archaeological dig. Somehow, through a device that is suppose to “fax” objects from one place to another, a wormhole is inadvertently found at an exact moment in time. This period is tied into the archaeological dig the ITC is funding.

A suspicious archaeologist tells his son he is going to find out what is going on. But, the archaeologist gets sent back to 1357. In an effort to bring the archaeologist back, rescuers are sent to the turbulent year of 1357 when England and France are at war with each other.

Most riveting in this movie (besides the superb acting) was the reaction to violent situations by the characters. For instance, the female rescuer is forced to kill someone in order to free everyone else. When she kills the English guard with an arrow, she is revolted and visibly upset. Later in the movie, she told one of the other characters, “I killed a man” and cried exceedingly. In another instance, one of the male characters had to kill another English soldier. He was also visibly shaken and became ill.

These events were like a breath of fresh air. For once, Timeline is a movie that does not glorify killing. Most action/adventure movies nowadays have characters who show no remorse for taking the life of someone else.

This made me think of the sixth commandment, which says “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). So many of the moviemakers glorify such a horrible act, and desensitize viewers as a result. These moviemakers glorify hate, which is equivalent to murder, according to Jesus “But I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment...” (Matthew 5:22).

The movie’s characters were given a large dose of reality and were humbled and changed by it. It was very compelling to witness. I have seen a lot of movies, but never one that gave me such a connection with each character. I sympathized with them, cried with them, and cheered for them.

Timeline was a movie that went against what Hollywood usually dishes out. It did not glorify killing, did not have vulgar language or nudity. It was simply a movie about courage, bravery and the importance of love. **I**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q Does Matthew 5:38-42 mean that if someone attacks me or takes my belongings, I have to stand there and take it? Is it wrong to defend oneself from an attacker?

A Matthew 5:38-42 is Jesus’ response to the notion that the “eye for an eye” law permitted personal vengeance. It did not. Rather, it was directed to the judges (Exodus 21:22-25), and was simply another way of saying that the compensation for a wrong done to a person must match the damages. Jesus’ directive to “turn the other cheek” can be understood two ways: First, it can be understood as a hyperbolic way of expressing how far a person should distance himself from seeking personal vengeance (and remember, personal vengeance is very different from self defense), just as “tear it out” and “cut it off” (versus should distance himself from sinful behavior). Second, Jesus may be speaking of situations in which resistance would only result in further damages (compare with verses 25-26). In any case, Jesus is not forbidding self-defense.

Q Ephesians 2:8-10 says that salvation is by grace and through faith. What are grace and faith, and how do they relate to “good works”?

A Read Ephesians 2:8-10. God’s grace is His divine favor, His merciful kindness toward us. Faith may be defined simply as trusting belief in God and His promises. Salvation, then, is available to us only because of God’s merciful kindness. We obtain it by trusting in God and the provisions He has made for us. This trusting belief, or faith, always manifests itself through the actions of the person possessing it (see Hebrews 11). That’s what Paul means when he says that God’s people are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Should I Date Outside the Church?

By Carol Mackey

This is a question most people in the church have asked time and time again.

It should be preferable to date someone in the church, but sometimes that is not possible, because depending on where you live, there may not be any singles attending. It is frustrating at best, when it seems like everyone is married. The single person may have to look elsewhere, but we all need to be on guard as to what we may be up against.

For some answers, we can turn to what Paul spoke about relationships.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul advised, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” “Unequally yoked” means to not be tied together in our relationships with persons who

are unconverted. This also holds true with dating. For instance, if a woman in the church were to date a man outside of the church, he would not understand the beliefs

that compelled her to abstain from the levels of intimacy that our society has so embraced. Also in this situation, the man could place a lot of pressure on the woman to conform to this way of life, a

life contrary to what God desires. The same holds true with a converted man and an unconverted woman.

From my own experience, dating someone who does not hold the same religious convictions can be damaging

to your faith. When I was 19, and had my first knowledge of the truth, I fell in love with a young man my age who happened to not be in the church. He was studying to be a minister, and he and I attended the same college. All during this relationship, he constantly tried to convince me I was in a cult, and that I needed to go to his Sunday keeping church. I tried to explain to him the beliefs I held, but he wouldn’t listen. So, predictably, the relationship ended in about four months, and I was devastated. As a result, I was confused, blamed God for everything, and fell away from the church. It was many years later that I came back to the church permanently.

That kind of situation is what makes some potential relationships just outright dangerous to the converted. Satan will use whatever means to disrupt your walk with God.

It is not a sin to date outside of the church, of course, but you have to be prepared for some resistance to the Truth, because there is no guarantee that it will be accepted or even tolerated.

The best action to take before even going on your first date, is to tell him/her how you believe. In this way, you can know beforehand whether or not you’ll even go out, based on the reaction received. This saves a lot of heartache and misery in the long run. **■**



DATING

When you decide to marry someone it is important for you both to have the same religious beliefs. This will build the foundation for a stronger union. When dating an unbeliever ask God to open the heart and mind of that person to His ways. If the unbeliever is “the one” God has made for you to marry then God will make him a believer.

When looking for your future spouse keep in mind the fruit of the spirit. In Galatians 5:22 we are told that, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” These are qualities a person who walks with God possesses. Remember that, “every good tree bears good fruit, every bad tree bears bad fruit” (Matthew 7:17).

Health Found In All Areas of Life

By George James

Many of us may think of health in a singular way, but there are many applications of this word. For instance, health used to be thought of as merely the absence of disease and still is by many. On the other hand, a deeper analysis on health reveals it encompasses so much more.

Health has several facets and can intertwine with nearly any area of our lives. This is good because changing times and a more complex age should require a more sophisticated definition of health. As this article proceeds we'll be investigating six facets of health, and the term "wellness" will be used interchangeably with health.

Of course, most naturally, wellness consists of a physical component. Fitness has five components: cardiovascular endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, body composition and flexibility. Each of these areas measures a specific integral element of fitness. Here are the definitions

Spirituality is the area of our health that provides for a purpose and meaningful existence in life.

of each from the textbook Core Concepts in Health. Cardiovascular endurance is the body's ability to perform prolonged, large muscle, dynamic exercises at moderate-to-high levels of intensity. Muscular endurance is the ability of a muscle or group of muscles to remain contracted or to contract repeatedly for a long period of time compared with muscular strength, which is the

amount of force a muscle can produce with a single maximum effort. Body composition is the proportion of fat and fat free mass in the body. Finally, flexibility is the range of motion in a joint or group of joints. All of these may be improved with various forms of exercise, but physical wellness is more than exercise. Nutrition is also an extremely vital area in maintaining one's physical health. Also, remaining celibate till marriage, getting regular check ups from the doctor and staying injury free, all fall in the category of physical health.

Thesedaysweoftenhearabout self-esteem and self-confidence. Both are very important aspects in the area of emotional wellness or health. The ability to maintain a strong state of mind in the face of life's myriad supply of adversity will always prove significant. Other attributes of emotional wellness include, a positive outlook, accepting oneself and being honest to others.

Yet another facet of health is intellectual wellness. This encompasses a mind that has a continuous desire and need to be educated and to learn more. Also, being open to different ideas, and challenging the status quo through intelligent questions are other means to gain additional

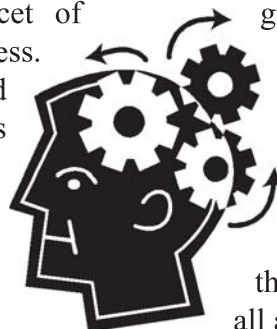
personal growth and development.

Spirituality is the area of our health that provides for a purpose and meaningful existence in life. It is here we find answers to why we exist and appropriate behavior to our surroundings. Plus, spirituality builds a bond between humankind to share with each other. Spirituality can be expressed through our belief in God and all that entails.

Having good wholesome and meaningful relationships is a satisfying component of wellness. It is a basic need we all have to reach out and connect with others through various relationships. We are social beings designed to communicate and to be intimate.

Finally, environmental wellness details one possessing a personal concern for problems with pollution, food supply and violence in society. What is important here is how we go about solving society's ills individually and in concerned

groups. So there we have it, health and wellness being exhibited in every facet of life. Yes, health expands into the physical realm but then it delves even deeper as it touches our innermost thoughts and beliefs regarding all areas of life. Thus, complete health enables us to become complete individuals. **■**



continued from **page 3**

have a scripture that exemplifies this phenomenon.

Matthew 13:20-21 reads, “The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.” This entire parable gives us a script for how we should operate.

There are three possible ways for us to react to God’s commands and truths. We can be:

- 1) on the path, where Satan snatches the truth,
- 2) on rocky places where we only believe for a time,
- 3) in thorns where other cares choke our belief, or
- 4) on good soil where we produce fruit and multiply (Matthew 13:1-23).

It should be our goal to grow in good soil, well nourished through Bible study and prayer, and protected and groomed by God’s love. During this Holy Day season we should ensure we spend time internalizing God’s Holy Days for fruits that will last a lifetime. ¶

continued from **page 7**

to reveal Himself strong on our behalf. Oddly enough, this is one of the meanings behind the unleavened bread we eat during this time of year. “Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days [said Moses to the Israelites]. ... It shall be as a sign to you... for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt” (Exodus 13:7-9).

You can bet your Red Sea crisis will make you stronger, too. Morgan’s Rule #9 states: “View your current crisis as a faith builder for the future.” You may not feel strong when things seem to be getting worse and you think you can’t face another day. But God knows how much you can take and He promises He won’t give you more than you can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). As grim as it sounds, sometimes we can withstand more than we think we can! In times like this, it helps to remember what holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl observed: “God does not waste suffering.”

Ask God to show you the way through your personal Red Sea. (Rule #4: Pray!) God found a way for the Israelites, and He will surely find a way for you. ¶

Proverbs 8:22-36

“I, wisdom, was with the Lord when he began his work, long before he made anything else I was created in the very beginning, even before the world began. I was born before there were oceans, or springs overflowing with water, before the hills were there, before the mountains were put in place. God had not made the earth or fields, not even the first dust of the earth. I was there when God put the skies in place, when he stretched the horizon over the oceans, when he made the clouds above and put the deep underground springs in place. I was there when he ordered the sea not to go beyond the borders he had set. I was there when he laid the earth’s foundation. I was like a child by his side. I was delighted every day, enjoying his presence all the time, enjoying the whole world, and delighted with all its people. Now, my children, listen to me, because those who follow my ways are happy. Listen to my teaching, and you will be wise; do not ignore it. Happy are those who listen to me, watching at my door every day, waiting at my open doorway. Those who find me find life, and the Lord will be pleased with them. Those who do not find me hurt themselves. Those who hate me love death” (NCV).

• • • • •

infuse.cgi.org

• **Visit Infuse online for more articles, great discussion forums, new friends and back issues.**

• Infuse forums is the place to talk. Make friends with people who love Jesus, just like you. Ask questions, give opinions, help others or tell us how your day was. You can even ask a minister a question and if you want, can do so anonymously.

• • • • •