

SPRING 2009

infuse

gentleness, self-control.

Against such things
there is no law.

Galatians 5:23



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→ From the Editor



I'm not a forest kind of person. Not in a literal sense, because I love nature. What I mean is that at times, I can't appreciate the forest because I'm too busy looking at the trees. God has been teaching me how to use the wide lenses and the zoom feature in life. Do you ever get this feeling? A notion that you're missing something really big but you don't know what it is, why you feel the urgent need to "get it", and how to see what God is trying to show you before you miss it completely? God made me realize that I was feeling that way because I was trying to look at what I wanted to look at, rather than what He wants me to see. I'd love to say that once I came to this realization, I immediately turned my head and yielded my will to His. In reality, I only made the switch once God revealed that I could not enter into His joy without walking along His path. This means that I have to look at the whole forest so that He could show me all the trees and all the paths that were available.

Since our God is an AWESOME God, I know that he is not a God of coincidences. Sometimes, as believers, God allows us just a glimpse at how amazing he is; He lets our human minds appreciate how mysteriously He works. It can send shivers down our spines when we finally see how He planned all these little "isolated" incidents to bring us to one great destination. Well for me, I'm learning to thrive in that feeling. The feeling of being yielded to God's plan, of knowing that everything happens for a purpose, of striving to be totally yielded to him, and of patiently rejoicing in what I'm working on right now. That's a switch from always looking to my goal, which I always want to achieve as quickly as possible.

In my new role as editor of the Infuse magazine, it's left me awe-inspired to realize that the lesson I'm learning is being taught through this new responsibility. I remember Noni, my predecessor, sending an email to the writers and telling us how powerful it is to read the articles in their original form. I appreciated her encouragement, but really didn't appreciate the magnitude of her words until I experienced the process myself. The talent that's expressed on these pages is ridiculously God-breathed. From the articles to the artwork, I pray that every reader will be as blessed as I have been and will be able to take little pointers to help them overcome sadness, depression, impatience, and all the other darts that Satan tries to throw our way. I especially pray that we realize he wants to trick us into believing we ARE the negative emotions and habits with which we struggle. However, the reality is vastly different, Jesus is THE Way, THE Truth, and THE Life and with him we may stumble, but if we turn to Him right away, we don't need to fall. Even if we do fall, He will pick us up and dust us off cause that's just the kind of God He is.

Now that I'm learning to see the forest, I can still appreciate the trees. I know that God's plan is much greater than anything I can think, ask, or imagine. I may not have all the answers, but thank God, He does. All I need to focus on is asking, seeking, and knocking (Matthew 7:7-8). I thank God for all the wonderful, supporting people He has divinely appointed into my life including my husband, Herb, who is the strong and silent type. My daughter Brea who is the sweet and curious type. My brother Steve, my mother Mom (Hannah), Noni and Jordana McVey and what I call the McVey/Chamberlain/Barnett clan. My new right-hand man, our layout editor, Caine Wilkes; our newest artist, Tobias Eggleston (thanks for the awesome picture of the cat); all the writers and contributors for this issue; Mr. Vance Stinson, who devotes his time every issue on doing the second edits; Mr. Mike James, the coolest minister who, through action, reminds me that above all, we are servants; and Mr. Charles Groce, who supports this ministry and all who strive in its shadow.

I can't believe Noni spent years doing all this work each issue and then turned right around and started it all over again. Then again, I guess that is the true attitude of a servant-leader. Thank you to everyone who is accompanying me in this journey of servant-leadership.

My heart leaps with joy
At the sound
Of soldiers marching
To battle

Love,

Anika Sandy-Hanson, Ph.D.

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When Was the Last Time You Had a Bowl of Fruit?

By Jen Fink

When was the last time you had a bowl of fruit? Or bit into an apple or enjoyed an orange on your lunch break? Why did God choose to call the various attributes of His nature “fruits”? Since God created us as physical beings, He knows that we relate to what is physical. Thus, sometimes He uses physical things to help us understand the spiritual. Let’s take a look at some of our favorite fruits and apply the spiritual principles.

Love - The pomegranate is a heart food. It contains antioxidants that help make the heart healthy. The heart is life-giving just as love is life-giving. God must have loved pomegranates as He had them carved into the pillars of His temple (1 Kings 7:42) and embroidered in the hems of the garments He wanted his priests to wear (Exodus 28:33).

Joy - How many times have you peeled an orange and been squirted with juice in the face? Oranges are bursting with joy. The vitamin C in it makes you healthy and energized and the colorful color is bright and sunny.

Peace - Ever curled up with a good book while you ate a banana and then fell asleep later? Bananas contain tryptophan. Tryptophan helps the body to produce serotonin, a chemical that helps calm the brain and create a stable relaxed state of mind. This becomes a bad fruit if you use the peel to make someone slip!

Patience - What fruit comes packed with a pit in the middle? Cherries! It takes longer to eat a handful of these so you must have some patience.

Kindness - Grapes come in bunches so they are easy to break off and share with your hungry friends. Just beware of the bad fruit which are the grapes of wrath!

Goodness - What looks like a miniature baby porcupine on the outside and is green with goodness on the inside? A kiwi! Cut it open and it looks like a big eye. The eye is the light of the soul. What we allow ourselves to see affects the goodness of our soul.

Faithfulness - How about a slice of cantaloupe? It takes a bit of faith to pick a cantaloupe because its outside doesn’t always give away how good the fruit is on the inside. It may look good on the outside and be bad on the inside just like the bad fruit of deception.

Gentleness - Hold a ripe peach in your hand and if you press too hard it may bruise, so be gentle!

Self-Control - Eat this juicy fruit too fast and you end up with a mess and a stomach full of watermelon seeds! And although the seeds won’t sprout in your stomach, you might end up with a stomach ache! It’s best to take it slow and enjoy!

So why did God call his attributes “fruits” of the Spirit? First, let’s consider how physical fruits grow. Some grow on trees (they enjoy hanging around!). Some grow close to the ground and some grow on vines. Regardless of how they grow, they always have to be attached to the main plant or they will die. We must be attached to God. As John 15:4 says, “Remain in Me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

But what makes the fruits grow? A combination of sunlight, nutrients from the soil, and lots of water. They are affected by the environment. If it is too cold they freeze and don’t ripen. If there are bugs they get holes in them. Too many chemicals and their growth may be stunted. As physical beings we may have no control over our environment, the people we have to interact with, or the circumstances that we find ourselves in. However, we can always rely on God’s Spirit as our life-giving sunshine, soil, and water. He will help

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Thinking Spiritually Al

By George James

In history, phrases, metaphors, and imagery of the heart have been rich aspects of poetry and literature. The strong imagery and inspiration created by the heart in fiction also extends itself outward into a real world of human emotion and communication. In our communication we hear, "My heart is broken," or "I knew it in my heart." The use of the word "heart" has the tendency to magnify our expression. In Hamlet Shakespeare wrote, "In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart." The indication here is that there is something deep within the heart. Is there something deep within the heart? If so, what exactly is it?

Authors like Shakespeare and Dickens, among others, use the heart in their writings. Is it merely out of the notion that the heart strikes an emotional response in the reader and we can all relate to some physical thing that beats within us... or is there something more profound? Other writers who tap into the matters of the heart include those from the Old and New Testament. For instance, the heart is expressed through love (Deuteronomy 6:5), being enlightened (II Corinthians 4:6), obedience (Psalm 119:112), faith (Nehemiah 9:8), fear (Jeremiah 32:40), trust (Proverbs 3:5), and deceit and wickedness (Jeremiah 17:9). Believe it or not, the heart also thinks (Matthew 9:4). Of course, we think of the brain as the thinking mechanism and not the heart. Scientists and physiologists, many of whom are evolutionists, have taught that the brain is the thinking mechanism of the human body and thinking simply cannot exist anywhere else.

Some of our readers may recall a book published by the Church of God International (CGI) in 1996, *You Can Take it With You!*, authored by Garner Ted Armstrong, in which he expounds upon the human spirit. Needless to say, the author's ideas and concepts in this area are the same ones the CGI (and many other Sabbath-keeping organizations) holds as truth. In the study of the human spirit there are two Hebrew words that are often identified—*ruwach* and *neshamah*. *Ruwach* can mean wind, air, anger, courage, and mind. On the other hand, *neshamah* can refer to vital breath, divine inspiration, intellect, and conscience. All of the above can refer to a spiritual essence, but where does the human spirit reside? Garner Ted Armstrong would have answered "in the brain" because that is where we think. Many modern-day Sabbath-keeping organizations would answer

the same way. To the reader the author of this article asks "What does the inspired Word of God actually say?" Garner Ted Armstrong used to challenge his audiences and listeners to find the phrase, "immortality of the soul" or "immortal soul" in the Bible. Likewise, the author of this article would like to challenge the reader to find in the Bible where it suggests that, "The human spirit resides in the human brain." According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible there are no scriptural references to the brain. On the other hand, there are over 900 references to the heart.

Why the Heart?

The heart has a great deal of mystique and grandeur for several reasons. It is an amazing organ that continues to work whether we are running, sleeping, or relaxing on the couch. Also, it adjusts on its own to our current level of activity. The heart will beat 100,000 times a day, which equals forty million times a year. Additionally, it pumps two gallons of blood per minute all through a vascular system that extends an astonishing sixty thousand miles. In Leviticus 17:11 we read, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (NKJV). Yes, the blood brings life to the physical body carrying with it oxygen and other vital nutrients, but it is the heart that pumps that blood to extraordinary measures.

Distinguishing Between Brain and Heart

Psychology, once regarded as a branch of philosophy, today is considered a science that endeavors to understand human behavior. The brain is an item of close inspection in this field because it is believed that here all emotions, thoughts, decisions, and attitudes have their breeding ground. In scientific establishments it is understood that evidence does support the brain to be a thinking mechanism. The Holy Bible suggests the heart to be a thinking mechanism too. In Proverbs 23:7 we read, "For as he thinks in his heart so is he" (NKJV), and in Luke 5:22 it asks, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?" (NKJV). Are we to take these verses for granted because the Bible is being metaphorical or overly imaginative about the heart? Or should we take them very seriously because God Almighty has something very meaningful and profound to teach us about that pump he placed in the center of our being?

out the Heart

Once again, it appears that our meager scientific attempts are finally catching up to the creation of Jesus Christ. In the 1970s, physiologists, John and Beatrice Lacey made fascinating discoveries regarding the brain and the heart. In this period, it was understood in science that the heart and brain were connected through the nervous system. It was also believed that the brain was the master of the body and when the brain sent neural signals to the heart, the heart would automatically obey. The Laceys observed that the heart and brain communicate back and forth and that the heart does not always listen to the brain. Rather, IT causes the brain to obey ITS command. The heart appears to have a mind of its own. Put another way, it appears that we accumulate knowledge and ideas through our brain, but it is the heart that makes the final decision on a matter. For example, the Pharisees used their intellect and brain to understand the Sabbath day, but their hearts did not understand the true meaning of the day.

More recent research by Childre and Martin suggests that the brain is quick to react to the world around us, but sometimes our emotional reaction can be way off-base. They found that this disconnection may be because we are reminded of a negative experience in the past that seems similar to our current experience. However, it is the heart that can enable us to gain a whole new perspective on any situation and therefore give us the chance to judge the situation or circumstances more accurately.

In closing, the author wishes the reader to understand that the heart is also a powerful ingredient in understanding the human spirit. It is through thinking with the heart and brain that we can reach our highest Christian potential. The heart does appear to have a greater role in human development. After all, in the developing fetus it is the heart that forms before the brain and therefore leads the way in this amazing, creative process. |

Love Love

By Rebbeka Lien

Hi Everyone! Just a little about myself; I am a German-born, Taiwanese woman living in Los Angeles. At 20 years-old, I'm going to a fashion school in LA, hoping to be Christ's witness in the arts and fashion industry. I found out about *Infuse Magazine* on the Internet and upon reading it, I felt a strong desire to share God's awesome work in my life. There is much to be shared and I pray that I can be a blessing to you!

On the Topic of Love

Out of all people, I think I am most unqualified to talk about love. When I was young, I had a monstrous and ugly temper. I was the witch of the family, even at the age of five. However, Christ came into my life and drastically changed me. A lot of what I will be talking about comes from real life experiences, especially those in the fashion industry and in the real world. I always saw Jesus as someone who hung out with sinners, prostitutes, outlaws, and tax collectors, so I have always viewed myself as a missionary, hanging out with the sinners of modern times.

If God is Love, Then God is Loving Through Us

I think most people view Christianity as a religion based on rules and regulation. If that was really true, I would probably be an atheist. I like to challenge traditions and regulations. When I was young, if teachers and parents asked me to do something, I would ask "Why?" I needed to understand why something had to be done the way it was supposed to be done. Happily, Christianity is not about rules and regulation. Following Christ means "loving because He first loved us." Following Christ means that if you were to do anything on the outside, that on the inside your motivation is love. Doing anything without love is meaningless.

However, loving others seems difficult. I used to think that loving meant listing out all the things I could do for other people. That ultimately resulted in me exhausting myself and feeling bitterness in my heart. I always felt guilty if I wasn't "loving" enough; it seemed like I didn't know how. What exactly does it mean to love? I came across the verse "God is love." Did you know that if you are a believer in Christ, then Jesus is in you? Meaning, every time you are with someone, sitting next to them, or talking to them...they are also hanging out with Jesus? I know this seems scary, even creepy, but it is so true and freeing!

One time I was at Starbucks and overheard this girl say that she also went to my school, The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. In an attempt to plug in my laptop, I ended up sitting in front of her. Sensing that the Holy Spirit was leading, I said to her, "Sorry, I overheard

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us to overcome these odds and produce the best spiritual fruit that we can. We must stand firmly rooted, and let God create in us those fruits in due season. At times we may feel that we are not bearing enough fruit. But if we persevere we will get past that cold, dormant state (our winter) until we reach our spring.

Our fruit depends on God and is proof of our relationship with God. If it is good fruit that we bear, we are feeding off the life-giver. Matthew 7:7 states that every good tree bears good fruit. The spiritual fruit that we bear comes from the hidden seeds we have sown and is the outside manifestation of that harvest.

So the next time you eat your favorite fruit, think of how important the spiritual fruit are to our eternal health and well-being. The physical fruits we eat must be ripe and not spoiled. When they are good, they give us nutrition and something bright and fun to look at. Each are very unique. When we water our seeds our spiritual garden grows fruit that can be seen in us and in our actions. The hidden character becomes visible and reveals all the effort you put into growing your fruit.

So enjoy every bite of that bowl of fruit! Think of the spiritual meaning and get busy planting your spiritual garden so that you and others around you can enjoy that life-giving spiritual fruit! |

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that you went to FIDM; I also go there!" From there on, the conversation kicked off and continued for an hour. She basically shared her whole life story with me, including the physical abuse she had experienced from her boyfriend and the family problems she was having. I had learned to listen intently. In fact, I hardly spoke except to share about my similar family background of having a single mother. Upon leaving, I gave her my number and said my goodbyes. What shocked me was what happened when she said, "I really like you! You are such a nice person; thank you for talking to me." I knew right then, she had experienced a part of who Jesus is—love speaks louder than words.

How to Love?

Experiences like that show me as long as we are abiding in Christ, daily walking with Him, love becomes natural. We cannot love by our own strength or efforts; we need Jesus' power—we need Christ in us. As a result, when we ask God daily to guide us and obey whatever He has put on our hearts, we will love without even knowing it. What does that look like? That means daily checking your heart, reading His Word, and hanging out with Him.

Please feel free to email me: rebekkalien@gmail.com, or check out my website: <http://rebekkalien.wordpress.com>. I pray that God will continue to reveal true love to you. I believe it will take a lifetime for us to understand only a hint of God's amazing and everlasting love. |

GOTTA LOVE



By Sarah Hoeck

Two choices.

Walking down the path of life, you've come across a fork in the road. Now you have to decide which road to take. The road to the left is wide and paved. The one on the right is narrow and unpaved, more like a dirt trail than a road.

But how do the two different paths look down the way? Well, if you happened to have wings, be a bird, or have a helicopter or airplane handy, you could fly overhead and go down the way to see the condition of the paths. You would see that the one on the left, the wide paved one, is winding, with many curves and twists, and leads through many different places. It is free of nearly all obstacles and has practically no potholes, no ditches, and nothing to confuse you.

The one on the right though is straight and narrow. There are some obstacles on the path where it looks nearly impossible to get around. There are many potholes and some are quite large too. Also, there are some ditches to the side of this narrow dirt path. The path does not seem to be the most accommodating course.

Two choices. Two different paths.

Okay, so now the conditions of the paths are known, but where do they ultimately lead? To what do they show the way? Again, imagining that you could fly, you fly further down and over the paths. The further you go, the further the paths get from each other. And finally each reaches its own destination. Each leads to its own city; the names of which were in bold print next to the front gates. The city to the left, with its near-perfect road, seems on the rundown side, not extravagant, more like unpleasant. But the city to which the dirt path leads is truly extravagant, beautiful in every way.

As you are overhead, pondering these cities, you see the people who traveled the different roads as they arrive at the ends of the paths. The people who took the straight and narrow dirt path on the right, upon seeing the name of the city, jump up and down with joy, sing aloud, and rejoice. But the people who traveled the nice, paved, winding path to the left have an entirely different reaction upon seeing that name of that city. Some stand speechless, some cry and sink to the ground, some scream, some plead, and others turn to run.

WE THOSE POTHOLES



They try to go back down that beautiful road, away from that city, and to the other path. Unfortunately, they can't seem to get anywhere.

You are puzzled by this turn of events. What is happening? The people who chose that left path had seemed so happy along the way, with such easy lives, and now, they were running. Why? What could this road lead to that was so tear-provoking, frightening, and rendered people speechless? What could be so awful about this city? What was causing all the weeping and gnashing of teeth? Then, taking a closer look, you understand. Those people trying to run can't, for it's too late. Although it was always possible, they never attempted to change to the other path until now. They could have switched paths any time before, but they made their decision. Now, they see the results of their choice. The ending is so dreadful, so different than the other.

The name of the city to the right is ETERNAL LIFE; the name of the city to the left, ETERNAL DEATH.

Two choices. Two different paths. Two entirely different destinations.

Now, I know and you know that life doesn't actually work this way; this situation doesn't actually work this way. You can't actually see the paths, and you don't actually choose a literal path, but instead, a way of life. That's what the paths represent: the way you choose to live your life. At the time of a decision, sometimes it isn't as clear as "here are your choices. Make your decision now." Sometimes we decide without actually knowing that we did. Also sometimes we think we chose a certain way, but instead we're actually traveling on the opposite path, to the wrong destination. Well, how can we determine that we are on the right path? How can we be confident that we're walking down the narrow path of righteousness?

By examining ourselves and determining whether or not our walk is conforming to God's direction. But how do we determine that? How can we be walking according to the course of God?

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."
(Galatians 5:22-26) NKJV)

This is how we walk conforming to God. It is not enough to cease from evil and ignore the flesh, we must learn to do well and listen to God. The Fruits of the Spirit are part of their character, part of their personality. Correction: it is their personality. That's the way you know them, by their fruits. Having all the fruits also means having faith in God; knowing that all things can be done by Him and that He can save us.

We also know we're on the straight and narrow path if it is "lit up" with all of Christ's attributes. We are not under the death penalty of the law anymore. Now, this does not mean that we don't have to follow God's way; it means that instead, by having the fruits of the Spirit, we are following God, and therefore we gain God's mercy. Now we can have everlasting life, which is only obtained through Christ's blood.

As Lee Ann Womack sings in her song "I Hope you Dance," "Never take the path of least resistance." The path of least resistance is the path on the left, the one that's paved and spacious, the one with virtually no obstacles or potholes. But it's also the one that leads to death. Don't take it. Yes, sin may seem to be the easy way, the path of least resistance. It's easy to sin. It's easy to hate, to be mean, to be harsh, to be perverted, to be uncaring, to be uncontrolled, to be wicked, and to indulge in other sinful habits. It's not as easy to be loving, joyful, peaceful, and Godly. It's not as easy to have the fruits of the Spirit. It's more difficult to overcome the obstacles and walk around the potholes; it's more difficult to walk down the straight and narrow dirt path.

But it's worth it. There's that freedom and in the end, there's eternal life, the ultimate goal. So, step to the right, keep walking on that trail, and don't stray. For on this path, you will accomplish the true meaning of life and all it has to offer. You'll give more to others, make them happier, and get more out of life. And in the end, you'll get life, everlasting life; you'll be with God forever: the ultimate, perfect gift. |

The Art of Patience

Lessons In God's Perfect Timing

By Emmanuel Donkor

It is an important virtue a person can live his life by. And it is often said that a person is able to “move mountains” when he or she nurtures this virtue in his or her daily life. Great men and women have gone ahead to fulfill their eternal purpose, leaving their legacies for the rest of humanity because they were people who understood and indeed lived their lives on it. On the other hand, many people with promising futures have missed out on the opportunity to achieve great things for themselves and for humanity because they lacked this virtue.

The likes of Esau and Saul were not fortunate because their lack of this virtue led to their downfall—one missing out on the opportunity of heading a huge and blessed family and the other missing out on establishing a dynasty. Patience is the virtue being referred to here. So what is patience? What does it mean, especially as Christians, to be patient?

There are many definitions and explanations of the word. People's experiences with patience often give them an interpretation and definition of the word. The various definitions include “the capacity for calmly enduring pain and trying situations, capability of accepting delays and having tolerance and even-tempered perseverance” (*Collins English Dictionary*). Certainly, from the above explanations, patience often means not having what we want when we want it. And in some cases, never having what we want.

For Christians, patience means having the ability to wait for the fulfillment of God's promises when both internal and external conditions suggest otherwise. It is the conscious acceptance of God's promises that allows us to wait confidently for their fulfillment. When we make a conscious decision to put our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, we become His sons and daughters and receive His promise of eternal life. In addition, physical and spiritual blessings become ours as co-heirs with Jesus Christ and as heirs of Abraham. This is great news. It is refreshing to hear that God can supply all that we would ever need according to His riches in heaven. How He does this is not for us to figure out. As the Creator of the universe and all that is in it (Psalm 24:1-2 NIV), His ways are far higher than our ways and so are His thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). What He requires from us is to put our faith in His authority to deliver. Another piece of good news, He knows what is best for us. As the one who formed our bodies and had a plan and purpose for our lives before we

were even conceived and given birth that is very assuring. He also knows, when, where, and how His plans for us would be fulfilled. Potentially, what this means is God determines how our lives are planned out. He launches us into our purpose when the time is right; that is when all the conditions needed for the fulfillment of our purpose have been divinely aligned. The story of Joseph and his rise to prominence in Egypt as recorded in Genesis chapters 37-50 illustrates this truth. God had a purpose for him when he first dreamt. Even though his brothers hated him for having those dreams, which would see him “rule” over them, God used those experiences in Egypt to speed up the fulfillment of His purpose for Joseph. It may have taken a while, and at times the dream may seem to have been forgotten considering what Joseph had to go through; however, God knew what was going to happen in the end. And that is exactly the way He has planned our lives.

God's Timing and Our Impatience

So what happens when our dreams and aspirations are not going the way we have planned? What happens when we do not get what we want? We live in a generation where people are more interested in instant success, and in gaining recognition and all the trappings that go with it. Sadly though, this attitude has gradually crept into the body of Christ. It is almost as if the church has been gripped with the celebrity culture prevailing in the secular world. Rather than getting caught up in this “microwave” life, we ought to totally surrender our lives to God knowing full well that He's got our best interest at heart. This means we have to be prepared to accept delays. We have to be prepared to endure pain and trying times as part of the preparation towards our purpose. God knows us more than we know ourselves; therefore, he often disciplines us, sharpening the rough edges of our lives so that we will be ready to be launched. In some cases, he puts a stumbling block in our way to stop us from veering off our main course. In either way, He has our interest at heart. All we need to do is put our faith in Him and wait patiently as He sharpens us. This can often be painful and unpleasant, but nonetheless, they are experiences we need to go through.

The God of Times and Seasons

One of the characteristics of God is that He works according to times and seasons. As Solomon reiterates in



Ecclesiastes 3:1, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." We celebrate Thanksgiving in November and that is because of the time of year. We do not celebrate Thanksgiving in July. Also, during the season, the clothes we wear are totally different from the ones we wear in July. Similarly, God works with times and seasons. An understanding of this characteristic of God will greatly encourage us to stay in God. When things are not working the way we want, it is probably because the season is not right for God's purpose. During this period, the ideal thing to do is to stir up our faith in God's authority through His Word (Bible) and waiting patiently through thanksgiving and praise as Abraham our forefather did (Romans 4:18-24 NIV). Eventually, when God's timing was right, Abraham and Sarah received the promise—Isaac.

We also need to know when to take action in fulfilling our purpose and what God's timing is. God, in His infinite wisdom, has entrusted some aspects of our life's purpose into our own hands. Right at the beginning of creation, God gave people the ability to choose between serving Him or allowing Satan to dominate their lives. He also endowed man with everything he needs to accomplish his purpose on earth. What God wants from us is our reliance on Him to create the environment for the accomplishment of His purpose for us. He also wants us, with our gifts, talents, and abilities to be able to walk in our purpose. Proverbs 16:1,9 says, "To man belongs the plans of the heart but from the LORD comes the reply of the tongue... In his heart a man plans his course but the LORD determines his steps." God wants us to plan our course and He will determine our steps. Perhaps, many of us have not realized our fullest

potential yet because we have not fulfilled our part of the agreement—planning our course. In the other extreme, when we fulfill our part of the bargain, we are simply too impatient for God to determine our course. We need to surrender our course to Him and wait on Him to put us into our stride. This is what it means to have patience.

So how do we know when to trust in God for His eternal purpose versus when to take matters into our own hands? Because He created man for His glory, every purpose, dream, and aspiration should ultimately bring glory to Him. Indeed, when we have planned our course, He determines its fulfillment,,when it is in line with His will.

God's Lessons On Timing

As the Architect of the universe and everything in it, which includes humanity, God wants us to know the following truths about Him and His relationship with us:

- He created us in His image and likeness for a purpose. And that purpose is to manage the earth (Genesis 1:26-29).
- Because He created us, He knows what He has prepared for us. In fact, He knows the intimate details about us (Jeremiah 1:5; Psalm 139). All we need to do is rest and have faith in Him.
- God knows the plans He has for us even when this fact seems afar off (Jeremiah 29:11-14).
- Even though it may seem like you are being swamped by difficulties, God is still there putting the environment right for the fulfillment of your purpose (Isaiah 43:1-3).
- Your plans may seem a long way from fulfillment, leading you to wonder whether they will ever come to pass (Habakkuk 2:2-3). In such instances, God says yes, your vision will be accomplished.
- For some of us, He is waiting for us to present our plans to Him (Proverbs 16:1,9).
- The ultimate goal of our visions' fulfillment is to bring glory to Him.
- Some of the vision may not be fulfilled; if that happens, it is for a good reason since it may not be in accordance with His eternal purpose.
- While we are waiting for Him, we need to encourage and stir up our faith in Him and His word.

Remember that He has our whole life in His hands and so we can safely rest with the knowledge that there is hope for our future. He cares. i

Early Voices for Patience

by David W. T. Brattston

The good health of faith and the soundness of the Lord's discipline do not accrue easily to any person unless patience sits by his side. Patience is so set over the things of God that a person can obey no precept, fulfill no work well-pleasing to the Lord, if distant from it. The good of it, even they who live outside it honor with the name of highest virtue (Tertullian *On Patience* 1).

How can a person train him- or herself to be patient and thus wait for God's perfect timing? How can a Christian produce and increase the virtue of patience in his or her daily walk with the Lord? Written in the early A.D. 240s, Origen's *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans* contains many ideas and pointers on how to foster and develop patience. The virtue of patience, he wrote, does not come all at once into a Christian's makeup, nor is it acquired just because the Christian wills him- or herself to be a patient person. Although the will to be patient is indeed necessary and must precede actual patience in a person, patience comes only after much effort, watchfulness, training, and practice. There may be lapses during this patience-building endeavor. It is like acquiring wisdom or chastity. Merely willing oneself to be chaste does not make a Christian totally chaste, i.e. free from temptations to lust. We must pick ourselves up after each lapse and must resume working to become chaste or patient.

Calamities in one's life, continues the *Commentary on Romans*, help foster patience in one's Christian life. Losses, illnesses, and bodily afflictions in righteous people enable them to build up virtue. Misfortunes train them to resist their desires to be impatient or unchaste. They learn to harness their lust or impatience, keep in check excesses of Christian liberty, and destroy other desires opposed to self-control.

In interpreting Romans 12:12 ("Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction") the *Commentary* reveals a link between such joyfulness and hope. The Christian who is joyful in hope does not absorb

him- or herself in the present world but remembers that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Therefore, he or she is patient in afflictions, knowing they will soon pass and be rewarded. Indeed, "keep looking to the currently unseen world of heaven rather than the currently seen world here below" is a frequent theme in Origen's writings. Patience, says the *Commentary*, helps conform a soul to the future world.

More specific advice on acquiring patience comes from other early Christian authors. One such method is imitating Christians who are already patient. James 5:10 tells us to take the Old Testament prophets as "an example of patience." Polycarp was a pastor-bishop in Turkey who had associated with the Apostle John. Some biblical scholars also believe he was probably "the angel of the church in Smyrna" addressed in Revelation 2:8. This early church father cited as examples both the apostles and the saints of his own time who are not mentioned in the Bible. This indicates that we can be edified by the examples of Christians of our own day. Another exercise in developing patience is merely listening with attention while the Bible is being read during a church service. Do this instead of engaging in private conversations in the pews. Origen suggested this in a sermon preached at about the same time he wrote the *Commentary on Romans*. Citing Romans 12:2, he prescribed renewing one's mind through training, meditating on the Word of God, and properly interpreting God's commandments. By reading the Scriptures every day a Christian makes daily progress, acquires greater knowledge and understanding, and renews his or her soul daily. Origen wrote that because some individuals are mentally deficient, not all minds are capable of being renewed to the point of understanding all knowledge. However, he believed that all Christians can be renewed to faith, self-control, and patience.

Tertullian wrote that we should

develop patience by remembering and living the Beatitudes in our lives outside church (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23):

For whom but the patient has the Lord called happy, in saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"? No one, assuredly, is "poor in spirit," except the humble. Well, who is humble, unless he is patient? For no one can abase himself without patience, to bear the act of abasement. "Blessed," says He, "are those who weep and mourn." Who, without patience, is tolerant of such unhappinesses? And so, to such "comfort" and "laughter" are promised. "Blessed are the meek": under this term, surely, the impatient cannot possibly be classed. Again, when He calls peacemakers the "sons of God", we ask whether the impatient have any affinity with "peace". Even a fool may perceive that. When, however, He says, "Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven," of course it is not to the impatience of exultation that He makes that promise; because no one will "be glad" in adversities unless he has first learned to disdain them, no one will disdain them unless he has learned to practice patience (On Patience 11).

Like Origen, Tertullian was a church father; Origen served in Egypt, then Palestine, while Tertullian lived in Tunisia. Tertullian wrote the above quotes around A.D. 200, a generation earlier than Origen, but their message is the same.

How can you tell whether you lack patience and are taking things into your own hands rather than waiting for and trusting God? According to Tertullian, you can know by examining what you wish to accomplish (your goal) and the means you plan to accomplish that goal. We are possessed by sinful impatience if the object or the method violates general Christian principles. For instance, we must not plan to take revenge to "right" an injustice done to us. Instead, we must be patient enough to wait for God to avenge it, and us, in His own due time (Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19; Tertullian *On Patience* 8, 10, 15). I

SUFFERED

Cordel Reid

There once lived a man who lived a life of grief
To Yahweh he prayed and yearned for relief,
His burden was great for him to bear,
But to none of his friends his pains could he share.

People thought he had lost his mind,
But to his point of view none like him one could find.
He really thought that he was cursed,
Because no one could see and understand his hurt.

Yahweh, he knew, understood his pain,
By calling on Him, his tongue he did not refrain.
Worthy he was, though not sure of his destiny.
Yahweh said this man's zeal is strong and also his humility.

Job was that man, who the devil tried to destroy,
By playing with his faith as if it was a toy.
Harsh, prolonged, and severe was His testing,
But his wife was unable to make him give up on his King.

Job remained strong and stood his ground,
Even though his burden was so profound.
He did not give up on Yahweh; Yahweh gave up not on him.
Yahweh took his pains and turned them into blessing.

Attention teens of CGI!

There is a new opportunity for you to keep in touch with each other between Feasts and to talk about issues that are on your mind. The Church of God, International Has started up a **new teen forum**. All you need to do is register and you will be able to talk to CGI teens across the country and world!

You can access the site at
www.cgi.org/infuseteen/forum/
or you can access it through a link on the main CGI page at www.cgi.org. For more information you can email Drew DeJarnette at CollegeDrew@gmail.com.

It would be great to have you come join us!

“One of the most sought luxuries in the world!”

By Jeremy Brown

In this article I hope to inform you of how to accept the peace that all mankind has sought since the beginning of existence.

In mankind's search for a great life, peace, in my opinion, is one of the most sought states emotionally, physically, and mentally.

Peace is a very important state when it comes to living a happy life. All our country's Presidents and leaders of many other nations seek peace, but none have ever been able to perfect that goal. We can mention a few months or years when there has been peace; but we all want an eternity of peace; this will only come with God's kingdom. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27 NKJV).

Mankind has tried many ways to accomplish the peace we dream of, but could it be we are seeking peace in the wrong places? Can there be peace on earth without Christ intervening in worldly affairs? "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..." (Romans 5:1 NKJV). As I stated earlier, many of us seek peace in the wrong places such as in money, our jobs, and many other facets of life.

As many people have witnessed over the past year (2007-2008), some of us base our peace on our money; however, we are blind if we do. Many of the world's retirement plans and numerous other investments have lost more than \$2 trillion in value. Do we deserve to have "In God We Trust" on our monetary bills if we have always trusted in money, rather than in God? Many people are lost in these times of turmoil. In contrast, Jesus tells us "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 NKJV).

As stated in Romans 5:1, by having faith, we will have peace in God through Jesus Christ. In my opinion, if you read the Bible and trust in the word of Jesus Christ, then you know of the things that must take place, because of mankind's unwillingness to trust and obey our Lord Jesus Christ. "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end

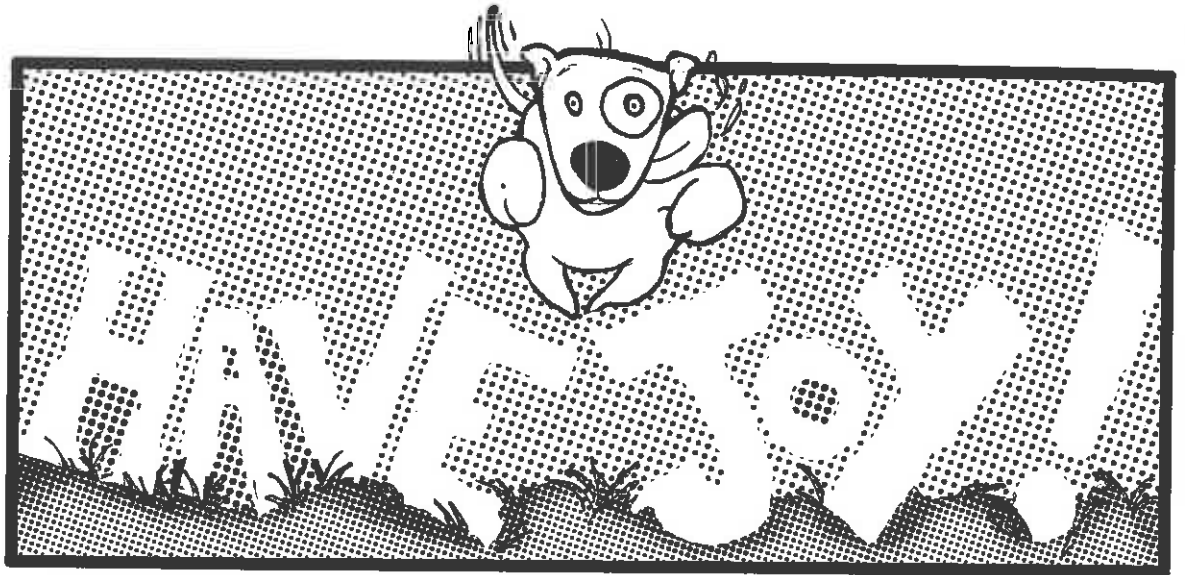
is not yet" (Matthew 24:5-13 NKJV). In a way, shouldn't our hearts be at ease, since we know what things must come to pass? "Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be" (Matthew 6:19-21 NKJV).

What is inner peace? Having inner peace refers to the state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord or stress. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3 NKJV). Having inner peace is generally associated with bliss and happiness. "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6 NKJV).

There are three areas in our lives in which we should constantly seek peace; with God, with our fellow man, and with ourselves. We remain peaceful with God by believing and trusting in Him. "Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble" (Psalm 119:165 NKJV). To be at peace with our fellow man, we must not allow strife to be a part of our relationships with other people. To maintain peace with ourselves we have to refuse to live in guilt or condemnation. We must recognize that God is greater than all our sins. This kind of peace does not come through drugs, alcohol, sex, wealth, or entertainment. It is a supernatural (not worldly) peace that is a gift to God.

"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5 NKJV).

"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:30-33 NKJV). I



By Mike James

Is it sometimes difficult for you to have joy in your life? Do you get depressed at times and does it take time for you to snap out of it? In this brief article on joy, we will address what joy is and look to the Bible to inspire us to maintain joy in our daily lives.

Joy can be defined as intense or ecstatic happiness. At first glance, I think most people do not feel intense happiness at all times. But I believe as a Christian, knowing what we know about the plan of God for mankind, we should have more intense joy more of the time. What we know is that at some point in the future, God will raise up the dead, who are true believers in Him, to everlasting life (I Corinthians 15). We also know that those who have never truly known Christ will also be resurrected at another time in the future to have an opportunity to follow God (Revelation 20). If these people do follow God at that future time, they will also gain everlasting life (John 6:44-47). Now that information should be enough to bring anyone joy. But God also provides us with help in maintaining our joy.

In fact, one of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22). Baptized and believing Christians are told in God's Word that God's Spirit can help us in being joyous. Part of our problem is that our carnal nature sometimes gets in the way of allowing God's Spirit to work in us to a greater extent. Something that helps me maintain my joy is reading God's Word on a regular basis. Being reminded of the promises God

**My brethren, count it
all joy when ye fall
into divers temptations;
Knowing this, that the
trying of your faith
worketh patience.
James 1:2-3**

has made to us and the future kingdom He will bring to us helps me maintain my joy in spite of negative things that may happen in day-to-day life. Regular church attendance also assists me in maintaining my joy. It has also done wonders for my joy quotient for me to be inspired by fellow believers and their testimony about overcoming obstacles in their lives. One great example from the Bible to help you maintain your joy could be the apostle Paul.

Take a look at II Corinthians 11:24-33. Here you will read about all the things Paul went through in order to preach the gospel. He endured shipwrecks, beatings, a stoning, floating on the open sea without a raft, hunger, thirst, lack of sleep, danger from forces out to find and capture him, and much more. Despite all these trials and tribulations, notice that Paul still had joy as you read II Corinthians 2:3. Paul obviously went through more than most of us will ever have to endure. Yet he was able to maintain his joy. This should be an inspiration to those of us who get down from time to time because of life's circumstances. Just remember what Paul had to endure and it may lift your spirits.

James 1:2-8 is another scripture that is very important in understanding this subject. Here we read that we should be joyful in the face of trials. Now at first glance that might not make sense, but as we read on we begin to understand why. Facing trials tests our faith and having our faith tested will develop perseverance in us. When you develop perseverance this trait will help you finish the work you need to do. In the case of a Christian, the work we need to do is maintaining our focus on Christ and getting into God's kingdom. We need to be positive and sure about our calling and get rid of doubt from our minds.

Most people can be joyful when things are going good and you are having all your needs met. The true test of whether or not you are truly happy and joyful is when you can maintain your joy despite the negative circumstances that may be in your life. Can you maintain your joy despite the loss of a loved one, a job, an important material possession? If you can, this is a good sign that your main focus is on God and the joyful

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→ Feature

maintaining

Self

Control

By Dale Dupont

Maintaining proper self-control is much like eating right; you are what you eat. What you eat affects your mind and body. This is also true of the information you put in your heart and mind. It is written in Proverbs "for as a man thinks in his heart so is he." Proverbs 23:7 So we need to put good things, as God defines what is good, into our hearts and minds and reject the wrong. Remember, Eve was deceived by getting information from the wrong source then ate the wrong food. Adam then sinned by acting on bad information from his closest friend, He too ate wrong food. Bad information and bad food are a lot alike, both may seem good, but they can kill you.

God instructed Adam and Eve in the right way to live. They were without sin until they listened to and acted on knowledge that was not good. They broke God's rules. It is written; "My son, forget not my law; but let your heart keep my commandments: ²For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. ³Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of your heart: ⁴So shall thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. ⁶In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:1-6

Daniel was a young person in a pagan land, yet he was able to follow God's word. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Read Daniel 1: 8. Young women should read about Sara, Mary, and Ruth. All these faith-filled women are listed in the genealogy of Jesus our Savior.

In Philippians, Paul wrote to the church about prayer and what we should be thinking about "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things

are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:6-8). So how are you doing according to Paul's guidelines? This can be answered with a quick check to see what entertains you. In 1Corinthians 13:6, we are told that the true believer emulates love, which "...thinks no evil; ⁶Rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth"

True, it's hard to always eat right and breathe clean air; in fact, it is impossible. So it is with always thinking right. God says there is no one who does not sin, but we must learn to sin less. David was inspired to write, ³⁷Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" Psalm 119:37 and "but let them not turn again to folly." Psalm 85:8. There is this rule that what you see, hear, and think about goes into your memory, then later you act on what you allowed in. It's a lot like your computer. To avoid this trap, we can look to Jesus' example. He used scripture to answers all of Satan's temptations in Matthew 4:3 "but He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

David knew about self-control and his heart. King Saul tried to kill David and he took David's wife Michal and gave her to another man. David had enough self-control to not strike back at Saul. He even mourned when Saul died. However, David did not have a completely clean heart all his life. Later when he was king, David was not doing what was right. He was being lazy and not going to war as he should. He let himself look at another man's wife. You can read the story in 2 Samuel 11. Thus, all that Saul had done to David, David did to one of his own servants. Perhaps this is because in his heart David still remembered the input from Saul. This is part of the reason we need to forgive those who have wronged or hurt us, to remove their bad example from our hearts. It is part of self-control to clean our hearts by confessing to God and forgiving others.

David wrote, "Trust in him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah." Psalm 62:8 Selah means think about this. Read Palms 51. Isaiah also wrote about this same process; ¹⁸Come now, and let us



Self Control

By Evelyn Anderson

“**K**eepest thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23, KJV).

Only a wise God would know enough about His creation, mankind, to design a written plan to control one's impulses, desires, and emotions. The book of Proverbs gives a practical and positive instruction for successful daily living.

What hinders living a life of true self-control is sin. Once sin came into the world mankind became enslaved by it (see Genesis 1 KJV). Sin distorts the lines between right and wrong and drives people to react in a particular way. Everyone has an interpretation of right or wrong behavior and has a personal moral arc that motivates one's actions. The boundaries in this area are widened or narrowed along individual perspectives. There is a line in an old song that vaguely comes to mind, “if this is wrong, I don't wanna do right.”

If one can say that wrong may be considered right or what is right considered wrong, by what barometer does one use to gauge the truth? What mirror or lens is there to peer through that exposes our true selves at any angle? And, who on earth is truly capable of enacting judgment upon another human being? (See John 8:7 KJV.)

If one needed to seek out an argument on the importance of self-control, one would only have to examine the current state of affairs in the world today to see that things are out of control. This is evident in television programming and advertisements saturated with provocative images. On the Internet, where practically anything goes, perversion is rampant. Our newspapers and newscasts are dogged by headlines and constant breaking reports on greed, corruption, and crimes of abuses against the most vulnerable in our society. No matter where you live or work, there is always the threat of danger from the world around us. It is apparent that the decisions that we make and actions that we take in the course of a lifetime have broad-reaching consequences for the masses.

Our lives are so intertwined that a complete stranger who is angry at the world can be motivated by an impulse to do harm and change another person's life for the worse, while someone motivated by kindness can anonymously give away a fortune and change someone's life for the better. Yet even the person who has done an act of kindness can still struggle with secret urges, fighting desperately to maintain self-control. A life without self-control can be chaotic, bitter, and self-destructive.

Though we see much evidence in our world that would seem to

reason together, says the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. ¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.” Isaiah 1:18-19. We tell God everything that is in our hearts and God then takes away the hurt and the sin. To help us live like Jesus, He gives us good things such as self-control and peace. It is not really possible to be self-controlled when you are a slave to sin. David, Solomon, and Paul wrote that it is important to remember God is the Creator, to honor Him and thank Him for His marvelous works and great mercy (Psalm 104 through 107, Ecclesiastes 11 and 12, and Romans 1 and 2).

Forgiveness and peace work together in our hearts so we may be self-controlled. We know Jesus spent much time in prayer with God. In addition, He loved God the Father, not the things of this world; He had perfect self-control.

Our level of self-control reflects what we have in our hearts. It is God who helps us to have clean hearts and every good gift is from Him. God also protects us from evil, shows us what is good, and gladly cleans us from every sin we admit. Ultimately self-control is something we learn from God as we put love into action. Like all of God's gifts, we must go to Him and ask for and seek what we need. Then we can say, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13 |

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HEROIC LIVING

By Loren M. Chamberlain

The Bible is full of heroes; to mention a few, there's Joseph, Moses, and Esther. At some time or another everyone has had thoughts of being a hero, but generally speaking it does not happen to us, or does it?

There is a way that we can all be heroes in this life, though we may not think or look at it as being very romantic.

JABEZ

In the Bible, there is a story of a man named Jabez. The Bible tells us "Jabez was more honorable than his brothers. His mother named him Jabez, saying, "because I gave birth to him in pain" (1 Chronicles 4:9). Not a very good way to begin life, causing great pain to one we all love so much, our mothers. However, Jabez cried out to the God of Israel praying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain" (1 Chronicles 4:10). The scripture goes on to say that God granted his request.

Jabez was more honorable than his brothers in that he prayed God would bless him and keep him from evil so he would not cause anyone pain. The pain his mother suffered in bearing him must have been a family story told many times, otherwise Jabez would never have known of his mother's suffering. Because God honored his prayer, it opens our eyes to the fact that we too can pray for God's blessing on our lives, our motivation being that we can use God's blessing to be a blessing to others.

Jabez is remembered more for his prayer rather than a heroic act. He asked God to bless him, help him in his work, be with him in all he did, and keep him from evil and disaster. Notice that by praying in this way, Jabez was allowing God to take his rightful position as Lord over his family time and recreation.

Because sin abounds in this world, we need to ask God to

keep us safe from the unavoidable evil that may come our way, remembering also to avoid the evil motives, desires, and actions that may begin within us. Our prayer then ought to be that God guard our thoughts and actions. One way to begin to utilize His protection would be to fill our minds with positive thoughts and attitudes.

JOSEPH

When Joseph was a prisoner and slave in Egypt, he could have seen his situation as hopeless. Instead, he did his very best with every small task that was given to him. Because he diligently expressed and demonstrated a positive attitude, he was soon noticed by the jail-warden who promoted him to prison administrator. Whenever we have a problem with our work, home, or school life we must do our best, as Joseph did. God, when He sees our efforts, can reverse overwhelming odds in our lives. "The LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden" (Genesis 39:21).

MOSES

Moses had a positive attitude and when the people were hostile and despairing, Moses encouraged them to watch the wonderful way God would rescue them. When it looked as if they were trapped (a feeling we have all experienced in life) Moses called upon God to intervene. Though we may feel like we are being chased by a mass of evil, we must not give in to our human weakness. We need to stand firm and see the deliverance that the Lord our God can and will accomplish, if we remain faithful. "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today" (Exodus 14:13).



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future He promises us. There is nothing wrong with being sad over important losses we may experience in life. But we can't stay down if we truly believe what God has in store for us.

I'd like to make one last point on this subject. It has to do with a postcard I once received from someone. The card had "have joy" written on the top of it and a small dog leaping in the air. Have you ever seen a dog jumping up and down when its provider enters the room? I have held onto this postcard so I never forget to maintain the attitude of a dog, which enjoys the simple little joys of life. If one of God's creatures can maintain a joyful spirit for simple little pleasures like food, water, and the love of its master, can't we as Christians maintain our joy for the stupendous wonders God has in store for us? |

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contradict this claim, it is clear that we must examine ourselves through the lens of a higher power—an omnipotent God.

We don't know what each day brings and how we will react to a given situation. In my own life, I can attest to matters that have had a significant impact that I wish I would have handled differently and used more self-control. In some areas, I had no self-control, nor did I want to spend the energy to try and fight my urges. There was a time when I could not see past my own desires no matter who it hurt. This was the creed upon which I lived my life until I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

The day that I came to God, He showed me that He already knew who I was. His Word was the mirror, the lens, upon which I could see my true self. My innermost cravings were exposed like a vampire to sunlight. The beauty of God, for me, was that for every fault and every problem He had the answer.

Where I am weak, He makes me strong, and He does it in the private sanctity of our personal relationship. Many people around me now interact with a better person. My impulses and emotions no longer bear down on me like wild horses. I am divinely directed by a guide who is a lamp to my feet. While I cannot say that I am sinless, I can say that I am sinning less.

If you struggle with the ability to regulate or govern yourself, and the lines between right and wrong behavior are blurred, I offer to you what someone once offered to me—an opportunity to see a true reflection of yourself through Jesus Christ. |

ESTHER

While God is not directly mentioned in the book of Esther, it is obvious that Esther expected Him to deliver His people. Esther believed in God's care and because she was willing to act at the right time, God used her to save His people. Esther called for a fast and asked the Jews to pray for God to be with her on her dangerous mission. "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." We will find that in the O.T., prayer always accompanies fasting (see Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9; Ezra 8:21-23).

CONCLUSION

The world demonstrates a very selfish attitude toward others. Save your own skin and watch out for number one are popular mottoes. The attitude of Joseph, Moses, and Esther stand in sharp contrast to the world's selfish outlook on life.

Just where is our real security? While we are quite aware there are no guarantees of security in this life, we should also be aware that real security must be found beyond this life. We will find that only when our security rests on Jesus Christ and God the Father and their unchanging nature can we truly face the challenges life is sure to send our way.

We must know in our hearts, God is involved in our lives and is working behind the scenes for our good. God has put us in the position we find ourselves in, not for our own benefit but for a much more glorious reason. He has put us here to serve Him. We must be willing to let God be our ultimate security. Obeying Him in our daily responsibilities is heroic living! |



YOUTH MINISTRY

By Stephen Scale

Today the Youth Ministry of the Church of God International in Jamaica is a vibrant group of about 30 young people partaking in a number of activities, providing service to our church, building bonds, and growing spiritually. It was a long and difficult journey to where we are today. Here is our story...

The Beginning

We started as "The Youth Group," just a set of young people of the Church of God, International who came together under the supervision of a dedicated sister from the Women's Committee. It was not enough; we yearned for a more unified, more intense movement. In an attempt to achieve this, a chairperson, a president, and a board were instituted. To reposition the group as a serious movement, our name was changed to the "CGI Youth Ministry."

As young people, we tried to define ourselves not just by a name or by words, but with action. Out of this came various accomplishments, which included projects for the elderly, weekly Bible studies, youth trips, a dance group, choir gowns we designed, tributes on Mothers' and Fathers' Days, and youth activities at the Feast of Tabernacles; the most important being Youth Morning—where the youth take charge of the church services.

Challenges

As we grew in numbers, spiritual interest started declining, a phenomenon that was unfortunately contrasted by an increased participation in secular youth activities. By this time the responsibilities of the Women's Committee had expanded and covered far too many groups including the children, the Sabbath school, the youth group, and the women of the church, as well as major church events. As a result, our youth group was not provided with adequate attention, guidance, or leadership. This caused major frustration for some members of the board who in turn resigned without replacements; this left no official leaders for the group at the end of 2002.

Our ministry became essentially dormant and the Youth Choir became the only youth group still running. However, God was on our side and saw the potential in his young people. Chinese Food Night has always been (and continues to be) a major youth activity during the Feast of Tabernacles. At the

2003 event, an initiative to revive the ministry was led by a few youth members who had shown themselves to be head-strong and dedicated. In December 2003, their efforts resulted in the election of Kadeen Bell and Eliud Ramocan as youth leaders; their tenure was to last two years.

A New Era

During those two years we made many new developments and accomplishments as a ministry. We established the Stay-In-Touch Week (SIW) programme; its purpose was to maintain some form of communication between two or more members once per month. We also launched visitors' days, creative workshops, leadership training seminars, a pamphlet writing project, a Churches of God Youth Connection (CGYC) Programme, fundraisers, speech/presentation training programmes, the CGI Youth Evangelism Ministry, and the CGI Youth Ministry awards.

The CGYC Rap session is an annual event designed to bring together members of various church groups including the Church of God, International (CGI), the United Church of God (UCG), and the Living Church of God (LCG). During the sessions, young believers come together and discuss practical issues relating to young people (for example, sex, marriage, and choosing careers). This soon expanded to the Apostolic Brethren of Christ; an extension to the CGI located in St. Catherine.

As with life itself, things do not always go smoothly. We had constant challenges such as poor attendance for spiritual events—it was poor on average but we tried to work with those who attended or showed an interest on a regular basis. The participation level of the SIW programme decreased as the coordination became unstable and its financing became increasingly more difficult.

At the end of 2005, Kadeen Bell and Eliud Ramocan's tenure came to an end and the newly elected leaders were Jade-Anne Bell and Andrae Dennis, two other strong and dedicated members of the Ministry. Under their two-year tenure, new accomplishments spanned the adoption of a Children's Home, a spiritual accountability partnership programme (APP), more productive evangelism programmes, and the coordination of social events specifically geared

towards youth in the church who had not yet committed to Christ and the beliefs of the church..

During this period, we faced a major challenge with growing disparity among our youth. As each youth member grew up, an increasing lack of interest in the ministry began to show. We feared a repeat of what happened in previous years. However, through perseverance and prayer and fasting, the leaders stayed their course. At the end of their tenure two new, faithful, strong leaders were chosen to continue fighting the battle for Christ.

Natalie Simmonds and Stephen Scale were elected in 2008 and are the current leaders of the ministry. Under their service the group has had tremendous growth and at present has approximately thirty members, ages 13-25 years. Along with accomplishments mentioned above,

a few of the young men in the Youth Ministry have had the privilege to begin and to continue delivering sermonette presentations to the wider church congregation.

Our Future

For 2009, a new vision was established for our Youth Ministry: *"To be a unified ministry of young people passionately fulfilling the mission through creative service and growing in Christ."* The goals of the ministry now fall under five basic categories of evangelism, bonding (building relationships among the members), networking with other churches (locally and internationally), spiritual growth, and fundraising.

Thus, the Youth Ministry pushes on and the story continues... I



FOR JONATHAN'S SAKE REAL KINDNESS

By William C. Summers

There's a story I believe is the greatest illustration of kindness found anywhere in the Bible. It is the ninth chapter of 2 Samuel, just twelve verses, but a whole encyclopedia of inspiration.

Israel had gone through years of war and fighting the countries surrounding them. God had given them glorious victories from time to time, punctuated with some serious defeats. David's life had been endangered many times. His own king, Saul, had tried to kill him several times. David had opportunities to kill Saul on numerous occasions but could not in good conscience do so.

Finally, the wars came to an end; King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed. Now Jonathan had been David's best friend. As King, David stepped out on the veranda of the palace, which overlooked the city of Jerusalem. Gazing out across the rooftops he could see a goodly portion of his kingdom. His mind began to go back to earlier days when he and Jonathan roamed the country side together. He felt gratitude welling up within his heart for God's gracious watch and care for him. He remembered Saul, but perhaps recognized he was ill when he sought his life. He felt grateful for having known Jonathan.

The thought came to him, "Is there anyone left of Saul's family to whom I could show my gratitude, for Jonathan's sake?" He summoned Ziba, King Saul's former servant, and put the question to him. Ziba responded, "There is one grandson of Saul, son of Jonathan, who lives away out in Lo Debar." That was about as far as one could travel without getting out of the country. It was really in the boonies. Far out!

"Bring him to me," commanded King David. When Mephibosheth was brought to the King, he fell on his face, but David assured him he was in no danger—just the opposite, in fact. David told him he was restoring to him all of his grandfather's possessions, all his vast land holdings, his cattle,

donkeys, and sheep (and everything else he had owned). This also included Ziba and his fifteen sons and twenty servants. Ziba, his sons, and servants would work the land, and all that the land produced would go to Mephibosheth. For the rest of his life he would also eat at the King's table as one of David's own sons.

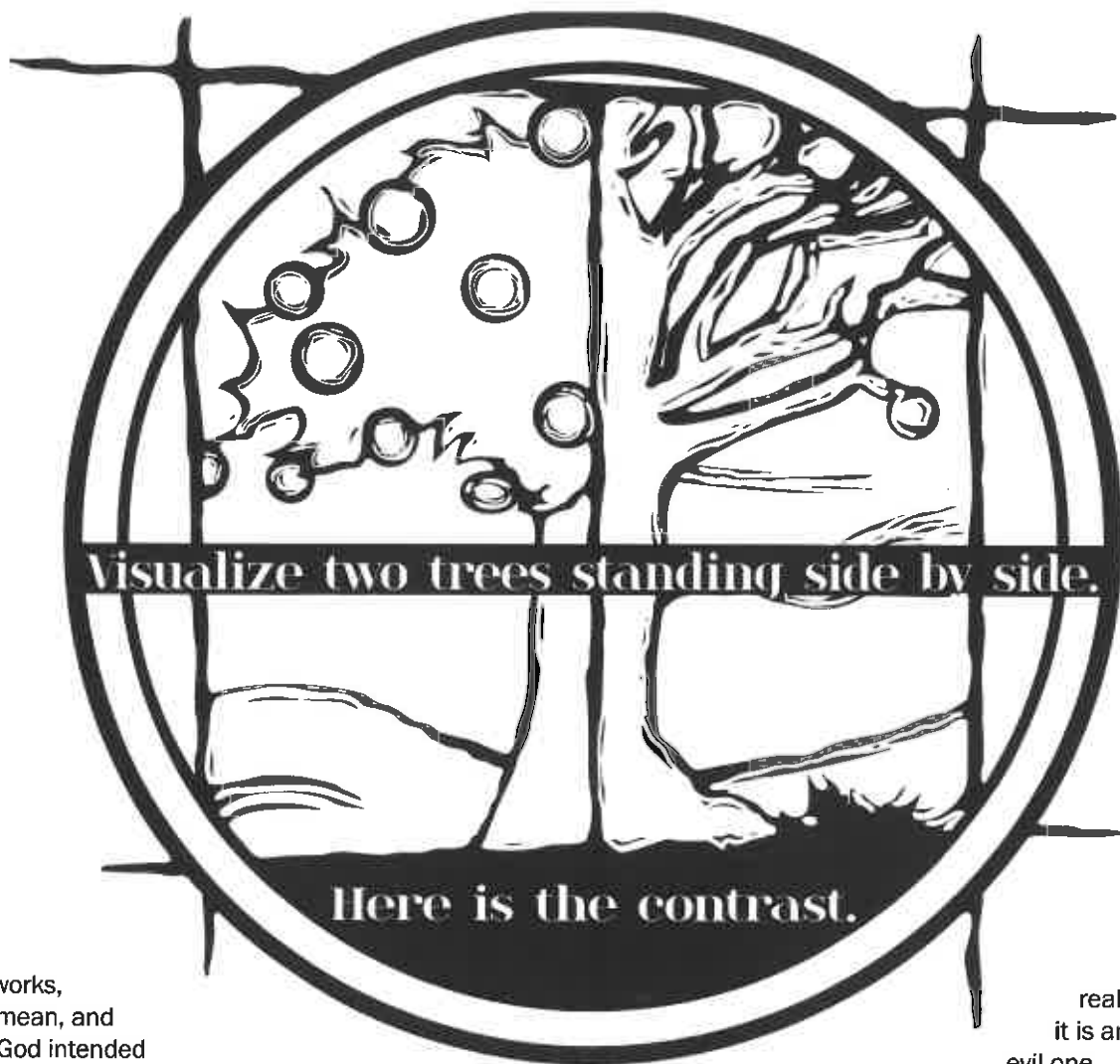
The Bible tells us that Mephibosheth was a small child when King Saul was killed and David took the throne. In an effort to hurriedly get the child out of the city to safety, his caretaker dropped him, which crippled him in both feet. This rendered him useless as far as any kind of work was concerned. He had nothing to contribute to David's welfare. His presence was all he had to offer. The only motivation for the King's actions was his kindness. What Mephibosheth received from David could not be earned. He could never pay for that. David showed an act of not only kindness, but of grace, unmerited and undeserved.

Kindness is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). This brand of kindness is real, prompted by the Holy Spirit in one's heart. Visualize two trees standing side by side. Here is the contrast. One tree is covered with beautiful delicious looking fruit. Let's name them: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Now look at the other tree. It also has fruit (works), but they are not beautiful. Instead they are mean, angry, and destructive. Their names are: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, etc. (Galatians 5:19-21).

The important thing is that you can choose which tree you want to be like. The good tree, bearing all kinds of good fruit, which are delicious and good for you, or the bad tree producing all sorts of ugly, foul smelling, and destructive fruit. The choice

**KE
ESS**



is yours.
By choosing the good tree, you can become, through the help of the Holy Spirit, the kind of person who bears good and beautiful fruit. Or you can choose to be like the other tree, producing all the evil works, which will make you bitter, mean, and contrary to everything that God intended when He created you.

We were all crippled by sin and we can do nothing for God. Like Mephibosheth with David, we need to let God do something for us, such as healing our deformities and bringing us into a personal, right relationship with him. We must recognize that God has saved us from the wrath to come, and has made us His children. Many people are kind to others in various situations. Some out of pity, others hoping it will secure their salvation. However, the Bible makes it very clear that works will not save anyone (Ephesians 2:8-10). Christians do good works such as kindness, because they are already saved and are children of God. The Apostle Paul said "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Someone may do what is viewed as a good work, but in

reality it is an evil one.

How can that be?

This is because a work is determined to be good or bad

by the motive which prompted it. If a person decides to do a random act of kindness for someone, he may be attempting to secure favor in the sight of that person. Or he may want to appear as good or earn the praise from others. It all comes down to what made him do it, his selfish desires or the Spirit of God within him.

Let's all make a total commitment to God (Romans 12:1-2). After you have done that, read Matthew 22:36-40 and begin loving God, and your neighbor, as much as you love yourself. When you do that, random acts of kindness will begin flowing from you, like water from a spring!!!

→ Feature



BE

By Brian Christensen

“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). Jesus spoke these words to the people of Galilee and they were captured by Matthew for us to live by. In order for His Spirit to dwell and grow inside of us, we must continually strive to become like Jesus. Jesus is perfection and His perfection saved our lives. Jesus is gentle; therefore we know gentleness is an important part of our spiritual life. He tells us to take His yoke upon us so we can find peace and rest. So many times we take on the yokes of this world and bear their heavy burdens. Sometimes it can happen slowly and we don't even realize it until we are separated from God. We must learn to shed these burdens and give them to Jesus because He will free us from them. A relationship with God changes meaningless, wearisome toil into spiritual productivity and purpose. Having a gentle Spirit is important for us to maintain. It will allow us to think clearly and ponder our actions before we take them.

Remember the Sabbath

It is also symbolic that Jesus spoke these words on the Sabbath, just prior to walking through the grain fields with His disciples. The Pharisees tried to condemn the disciples for picking and eating grain on the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:1-8, Jesus tells the Pharisees He is Lord of the Sabbath and proceeds to show them that the disciples were hungry and were not harvesting the grain; they simply picked enough

A GENTLE GIANT

to satisfy their immediate need. The Pharisees could not and would not see beyond their law and technicalities. They had no room for compassion or gentleness. Think about the Sabbath and its relationship to the rest of the week. We work hard for six days and are bombarded with demands and worries of this world. The Sabbath is our gentle place of rest. A time for us to put-off the yoke of this world and become closer to God. It is a day of family and fellowship and spiritual growth. It is a chance to renew and strengthen our relationship with God as we prepare for another week ahead. Let the Sabbath be a reminder to us of God's peace and gentleness as we become more like Jesus and live our life as though each day were the Sabbath.

A Minister of Gentleness

Many of us have a difficult time communicating or evangelizing the truth of God. This is a natural feeling and there can be numerous reasons for this. However, one of the strongest evangelical statements we can make is how we act towards others. Our actions speak volumes about our character and faith. If we are showing the fruits of the Spirit each day as we interact with other people, we are promoting the Spirit of God! "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). When people can see Christ in you, you are spreading the gospel. Gentleness can also be important during times of conflict. As Paul told us, we need to be patient with one another and slow to anger. Jesus never resolved any disagreements by raising His hand or screaming. His rod and power came from the truth and the Word of God. Proverbs 15 gives us many examples of the differences between Godly actions and evil actions. The very first verse states "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

A Benchmark

God also tells us to use these character traits, such as gentleness, to evaluate others as we decide who to learn from and befriend. If we want to be more like Christ, we need to learn from and be close to Christ-like people. "By their fruits you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:16-20). Jesus is not telling us to "cut down" every bad person we find, for we must always show our gentleness to others no matter who they are, or we risk becoming like them. He is showing us that a good teacher or friend will lead us closer to Jesus. In contrast, a bad teacher or friend will lead us closer to destruction. Choose them wisely and let their character or fruits be your guide.

Theodore Roosevelt coined the phrase, "speak softly and carry a big stick." He was referring to the strength of the United States and how he, personally did not need to get angry because he had the power of the United States behind him. During his presidency, he was able to settle a bitter strike between coal miners and mine owners, and help resolve a war between Russia and China. He is the only president to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Like him, we should also be gentle; our power comes from the Spirit of God. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all of these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:12-14). I

in the next issue:

MONEY & WEALTH

ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD

Summer 2009



What does God's Word say about money and wealth?

Seeing opportunities when others see roadblocks

Wall Street, Main Street, Church Street... who got us in this mess and who can get us out?

What can a Christian make of the unprecedented economic conditions in our nation and world?

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What young people need to know to practice good financial stewardship?

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