



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The official newspaper of The Church of God International

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*“Put on the whole armor of God”*

Winter 2022

## Philippine Brethren Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles Face-to-Face at Five Sites!

**F**INALLY, after two years of virtually celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, the Philippine brethren were able to celebrate this year’s Feast in person at five Feast sites across the country. The main festival site is at Summit Ridge Hotel, Tagaytay City. As expected, the atmosphere at all Feast sites was one of excitement and extreme happiness as the brethren were finally able to see each other again in the flesh. It still feels different to have an in-person celebration, as the interactions among the brethren were spontaneous and warm. It was evident that the brethren missed each other so much and were just happy to fellowship with one another, sharing laughter and stories.

### *Summit Ridge Feast Site*

As with all Feast celebrations, the main fare of this Feast were the daily services where hymns of praise and thanksgiving are offered to God and great, inspiring, and insightful messages were delivered by the assigned speakers. The messages covered a variety of topics about...

1) Christian living—highlighting sharing and generosity, not being discouraged in our Christian walk amidst the many challenges and difficulties we all face and being reminded God will make a way for us, keeping and contending for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, reminders on keeping our focus on our Lord and God’s plan of salvation, our role in the preaching of the gospel by the way we conduct ourselves and maintaining harmony among the brethren.

2) The Millennium—what it will be like during the 1,000-year reign of Christ with the saints ruling under Him. A very interesting and insightful take away from one of the messages tackling this subject is the convergence of the spiritual and the physical world. God started off with paradise, the Garden of Eden, when man could commune with God, but that communion was broken by sin. The message conclusively shows that the Millennium will be the restoration of paradise, where man will live with Christ and the resurrected saints.

3) God as the Creator of our bodies and at the same time  
**See 2022 FEAST OF TABERNACLES REPORTS, p. 10**



**Baptism of Adrienne Mirto-Ren, Day 2 of the Feast of Tabernacles, Naga City**



**Baptisms (Oct. 16, Day 7)—Carlo Callos, Bernadeth Nobora, and Joseph Nobora. On the left is Arnel Anselmo (white shirt), and on the right is Rene Corpuz (blue shirt).**



**The Naga Youth Choir providing special music on the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles (October 10).**



**Attendees at the Tagaytay City Feast site, members from the Manila, Alabang, Masbate, and Malolos Churches and guests from other areas**



# An Important Question on Everlasting Life

by William K. Blank



I have wondered for over fifty years why so many Christians believe in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul when the Scriptures clearly state that only God has immortality (1 Timothy 6:13–16) and the soul that sins will die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Genesis 3:22 states: “And the LORD God said, Behold man has become as one of Us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, *and live forever.*” Also, how could eternal life be a *gift* (Romans 6:23) if a person already has it?

It seems that almost all mankind from the beginning of time, including most Christians, believe the devil’s lie that they would not die (Genesis 3:4). Apart from this lie there is not one text in all the Scriptures that even intimates that the soul is immortal. As a result, most of Christianity adopted the most horrible pagan doctrine of eternal torment. If the lost soul is immortal, then obviously it would have to suffer for eternity. When I have asked pastors if they believe in eternal torment some of them have answered affirmatively with glee in their voices, and as I tried to convince them otherwise they have gotten angry. This is almost incomprehensible to me when God Himself says that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11).

Quite a while ago a church I was attending was having a series on cults, and one of the “proofs” they gave that a certain group was not Christian was that they didn’t believe in eternal torment. The concept of eternal torment is diametrically opposed to what is probably the most well known text in the Scriptures: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him *should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

How can anyone believe that God is love (1 John 4:7–16) and at the same time believe that hideous doctrine? In fact, it would not even be just if God made someone suffer for eternity because of a few years of sinning.

The false concept of hell is not supported by the Scriptures. When you see the word *hell*, especially in older versions of the Scriptures, it is translated from the Hebrew word *sheol*, which simply means the grave, or from the Greek word *hades*, which also means the grave, or from the Greek word *gehenna*, which was a place for burning garbage outside of Jerusalem.

The **parable** of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) was not a discussion of the afterlife. The Savior was using the common false concept of hell to

get across the point that if people didn’t listen to Moses and the prophets they wouldn’t be persuaded even if a person rose from the dead to tell them. To believe that this **parable** was an actual description of the afterlife would be ludicrous—as if there could be communication between people in “hell” and heaven.

There are a few misunderstood texts that are used to support the false concept of hell and eternal torment. Matthew 3:12 mentions unquenchable fire. All that means is that it cannot be put out until whatever is burning is burned up. Hebrews 12:29 states that “our God is a **consuming** fire,” which means to burn up completely—to **annihilate**. Sinners are **annihilated** by God’s presence. It is the righteous, not the wicked, that *live with the everlasting fire*. See Isaiah 33:12–16, where sinners are asking, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” and the answer is, “He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly....” Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah suffered the punishment of eternal fire. Are they still burning? Of course not.

Revelation 20:10 says that the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and be tormented day and night into the ages of the ages. (That is what the Greek says.) Verse 15 says that anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. It doesn’t say **they** will be tormented day and night. The lake of fire is called the **second death** (verse 14; cf. 21:8).

The following is a partial list of texts that oppose the doctrines of eternal torment and the immortality of the soul:

Psalm 5:6; 6:5; 9:5–6; **21:9–10**; 37:10, 20, 38; 68:2; 73:27; **92:6–7**; 97:3; 145:20; **Proverbs 12:7**; 19:9; 21:28; Ecclesiastes 9:10; **Isaiah 1:28**; 13:9; 26:11, 14; 33:12, 14–16; **41:11–12**; 47:13–14; 60:12 **Ezekiel 18:4, 20**; 33:11; **Malachi 4:1, 3**; **Mathew 10:28**; **John 3:15–16**; Romans 2:12; 6:23; **2 Thessalonians 1:9**; Hebrews 10:27; 12:29; 2 Peter 3:9; **1 John 3:15**. (The texts in bold are especially significant.)

Many preachers, especially Jonathan Edwards, used and some preachers today are still using the doctrine of eternal torment to scare people into accepting the Savior. As a result a great number of people claim to be followers of Christ because they don’t want to burn forever in “hell” when the true motive people become followers of Christ should be that they have seen a revelation of God’s love. God does not want people to fellowship with who are scared of Him. That is a form of force and true love cannot be forced.

The following is a quote from one of the above texts: “A stupid person does not know, a fool does not understand this: though the wicked sprout like

grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be **eternally destroyed**” (Psalm 92:6–7, Holman Christian Standard Bible).

Most Christians will attest to the concept that the Savior paid the penalty for our sins. If the penalty is eternal torment then He should still be on the cross or burning in “hell.” Otherwise it would be a charade.

Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” That is talking about the **second death** (see Revelation 20:6, 14–15). The death that everyone dies now both Jesus and Paul called “sleep” because it is not final (see John 11:11; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 15:51).

Because of the doctrine of eternal torment, Satan has been very successful in instilling in people a negative concept of the heavenly Father.



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## THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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## 2023 Holy Day Calendar

New Testament Passover (at sundown)	Apr 4
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Apr 6–12
Feast of Pentecost	May 28
Feast of Trumpets	Sept 16
Day of Atonement	Sept 25
Feast of Tabernacles	Sept 30–Oct 6
Eighth Day (Last Great Day)	Oct 7



# The Master's Voice

by Jeff Flanick



I have always been a collector, or as my wife says at times, a hoarder. As long as I can remember I've collected things such as postcards, coins, stamps, sports cards, books, and music. As an avid record collector over the years, I used to peruse the record stores, flea markets, estate sales, what



have you. One of the more appealing and ubiquitous symbols found on old-time 78 RPM records was Nipper the dog. The English dog Nipper served as the model for an 1898 painting by Francis Barraud titled *His Master's Voice*. The image of Nipper listening to a phonograph became one of the world's best-known trademarks and was found on many record labels including RCA Victor and Gramophone.

In **John 10:27** Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (NKJV). Do we hear *our* Master's voice? Do we hear *our* calling? Before I address these questions, some background information is necessary. It is common to think of a person's spiritual journey as being the result of an individual's choice to pursue one. This may in fact be so in most circumstances concerning one's spiritual quest. In Christianity, however, or more accurately, in *genuine* apostolic Christianity, seeking is not necessarily initiated by an individual's desire to find the **True** God. Jesus says in **John 6:44**, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (NKJV). Jesus even reiterated this same point to His disciples after He heard them murmuring about things He had said in the synagogue that day. In **John 6:65** Jesus said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (NKJV). God the Father calls us through His Son Jesus the Christ (Yeshua the Messiah).

Just what are we *called* to? We are called to a relationship with Him! We are invited to be a disciple and enter into Covenant with Him. We are called to obey His instruction and to be a "light unto the world." As Christ said in **Matthew 5:14-16**, "You



are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (NKJV). The key here is to be a good example showing others the way to live in righteous harmony with Scripture. To live in accordance with Torah and follow in the footsteps of Messiah. It is not always easy to do in today's evil world, yet a true follower of Christ must strive to do so continually. Remember what Peter said in his first letter: "but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct" (**1 Peter 1:15**, NKJV).

How are we instructed in the ways of righteousness and proper conduct? Through the process of hearing and understanding what God expects of us as contained in the Holy Scriptures. The New Living Translation interprets **John 8:47** this way "Anyone who belongs to God listens *gladly* to the words of God."

As I have stated previously, at times our English language is an impediment to our understanding of Scripture. In the Hebrew, hearing is more than deciphering the audio sound waves of language being transmitted to us. It is to hear with an emphasis on understanding; and then to act in accordance with what have comprehended.

The website of the *Ancient Hebrew Research Center* says the following: "there is no Hebrew word meaning "obey," there also is no English word for עֲמַל. While this Hebrew verb is often translated as "hear," it means much more than just a hearing or listening, it more means to "hear and respond appropriately." When the Bible says that Moses "heard" YHWH, it means that he heard Him and then acted upon what he heard.

Any of us who have had children can relate to this deeper meaning of the word "hearing." Think of any mundane chore a parent asks their child to do. You can ask your teenage son to take out the garbage multiple times, yet although he definitely heard you, the garbage container still sits there overflowing, waiting for the next item sure to cause an avalanche of trash on the floor. This may be a repetitive pattern causing family angst over a long school vacation's summer break. After a period of time, however, it finally sinks into his adolescent brain that you mean business; and he makes a wise decision to comply with your instruction. Sometime later, you realize there is no longer any more arguing over the task of garbage removal. Upon noticing this new state of affairs, you think to yourself, *I guess he finally heard me!* It is significant to note there was no audio instruction given to your son at the time you became cognizant of this victory in the challenging task of child rearing. The meaning of "hearing" in this instance conveys not only your son's understanding of your request, but more importantly, his *obeying* of your request.

We have not been called by God via spectacular circumstances such as those experienced by our



father in the faith, Abraham; nor by a burning bush such as happened to Moses. We have been called nonetheless. Remember what Isaiah exclaimed in **Isaiah 55:6**: "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near" (ESV).

In the New Testament, **Hebrews 3:15** reads as follows: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (ESV).

When I think of rebellion, I think of our oldest bulldog Frankie. She is one stubborn dog! You may be thinking "she," with a male name Frankie? No, it is not some sort of "transgender dog issue"; we named her after Frank Sinatra, as she had brilliant blue eyes when she was a puppy. Anyway, Frankie marches to her own beat most of the time. When I call her, she *clearly* hears me, yet she looks at me in protest, refusing to answer my calls to come inside.

Considering the awesome calling of God, along with the wonderful opportunity it represents, we should receive it with great joy and urgency, eschewing any tendencies of rebellion—or delay—in responding to our Father's request. As Christ said in **Luke 11:28**, "But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice" (NLT).

I would be remiss not to quote a foundational scripture on hearing the Word of God as told to us by James, the half-brother of Jesus. **James 1:22-25** states, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (NKJV).

My prayer is that all who are called in this present age take the words of our Master and Brother, Jesus the Christ to heart. He tells us the following in **Revelation 3:20**: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (NKJV).

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## Open Church Policy

The Church of God International is an open church.

**W**e have many people attending who are new in the faith. Some will not always keep each of God's laws as they should, and some will not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men. Always remember that you will be judged for what you do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them, set the right example, and please the Father in all that you do.



# Run the Good Race!

by George Roper



In communicating with humanity, God has inspired the writers of the Bible to use many analogies to convey the attributes needed to follow Him. In relaying the need to pursue these qualities within ourselves, no endeavor typifies this aim as applicably as that of running a race. Events centered around running have been held throughout antiquity. Many of these sporting ventures had ceremonial affiliations attached to them in the ancient world, as opposed to competitive implications. Nevertheless, the sporting occasion most recognizable with running a race is that of the marathon.

The contemporary version of the marathon is based on a Greek legend. The tale recounts the story of a Greek messenger tasked with running from the city of Marathon to the city of Athens to notify the Athenians of a Greek victory in war over the Persians. Myth has it that the Athenians were under the impression that the Greek forces had been defeated, giving way to a Persian advancement and an imminent incursion. The messenger's haste was to prevent Athenian counter measures from being carried out in the event of an undefended Persian attack. In order to spare themselves from suffering the brutalities associated with invasion, such as rape and torture, the Athenians were prepared to burn down the city, in addition to mercifully putting the women and children to death. It was the messenger's task to reach the Athenians with the news of the Greek force's success before they carried out their contingency plan.

The messenger's run spanned approximately twenty-five miles or forty kilometers. It is said that upon successfully reaching his destination of Athens, the messenger announced the Greek victory and fell dead.

Today's marathon encompasses a distance of 26.2 miles or 42.195 kilometers. During the 1908 Games in London, the marathon's distance was extended to benefit the children of the royal family. The starting point was moved some distance from where it was originally scheduled to commence to the royal grounds, so that the children could observe the beginning of the race from their window, while the distance to the finish line was also expanded beyond the initial ending point onto the royal estate in order to accommodate the children as well. The additional distance later became the standard measurement of marathons going forward.

Although there are a number of marathons held throughout the world. One of the most prominent of them is the New York City Marathon. The marathon is held annually on the first Sunday of November. It is the largest marathon in the world with over 50,000 runners participating and approximately two million in-person spectators lining the race-course. The New York City marathon attracts an international field of professional athletes, with the first-place prize in the male category earning a \$100,000 purse.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the NYC marathon this year as a spectator. The televised course is lined with lively musical performances and cheering sections. The energy among the onlookers is palpable, as fans position themselves to cheer on family, friends, and total strangers alike. I was situated at the beginning of the 21st mile along the marathon route, as I awaited the leaders of the race to stride through. The professional competitors, who embarked from the starting line first, were led by front-runner Daniel Do Nascimento, representing Brazil. Nascimento led the race much of the way

throughout and had a commanding lead as he entered the 21st-mile mark.

While leading the race in such a dominating fashion, Nascimento was certain to win. There was no question that he had decisively controlled the race for the twenty miles that had elapsed thus far. Nor was there any question that he would be anointed the first-place winner. All that remained for him to do was finish! Finish the race and claim his prize. With favor on his side, Nascimento paced into the 21st mile. As I observed the first-place runner poised to take certain victory run past me, I thought to myself what confidence he must have in the prospect of his finishing with such a decisive showing. Steps later, Nascimento paused in his advance, stooped over, and fell to the ground. Overcome by heat exhaustion and degrees of cramping, Nascimento could not continue anymore. Soon thereafter, other runners overtook Nascimento as he lay on the ground.

In being unable to continue, Nascimento had defaulted from the race, whereby he relinquished his front-runner position. He relinquished his status in the race and he relinquished what was his assured reward of \$100,000 had he continued on. In that moment, it dawned on me the similarities shared between the demands of running a race and the challenges encountered striving towards the Kingdom of God. As Christians, the promises extended to us are assured; however, we too must exert effort to reach our goal. Akin to a runner, the Christian is to remain focused on completing the race and remain wholeheartedly committed to attaining the prize.

Christ stressed to all that would follow Him to never give up. He acknowledged that his followers could experience difficulty and pain in the course of obeying God. In spite of that, we are not to cease or break away from pursuing God and His ways. Instead, we are to look forward to this process of spiritual development being completed and look forward to what we will mature into in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:26–28).

Just as runners in a long-distance race may experience pain that can thwart their progress, we as Christians can interpret the pain that we may encounter in our lives as an incentive to give up. Marathon runners encounter a common impression that is called "the wall." This impression onsets around the 20th mile of the race where one's body signals that it does not have any more energy to continue and is vividly conscious of the pain amassed from a grueling long-distance run. As Christians, we too can hit "the wall," feeling overcome by fatigue and want to give up.

Paul expressed that we recognize Christ's endurance as inspiration to persevere during our own struggles.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up" (Hebrews 12:1–3, NLT).

As with running, proper preparation, training, and diet are necessary to be able to endure in the Christian life. These perquisites entail prayer, study of God's Word, application of God's Word, and repeating this process on a continuous rotation (1 Thessalonians 5:17; Luke 18:1; Joshua 1:8; Jeremiah 7:23; Luke 11:28).

Giving up is not an option.

Although Nascimento maintained the lead as the front runner for twenty miles, that accomplishment becomes void, as he was unable to finish the race. Likewise, our obedience to God must be ongoing. Prior successful benchmarks are not meaningful if the proper behavior is not sustained going forward. God shared this fact with Ezekiel so that he would disseminate it to his audience. God stated, "But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die" (Ezekiel 18:24, NIV).

As is true to long distance running, so too with fostering our relationship with God. Staying committed is essential.

Watching Nascimento fall was heartbreaking. The shortcomings in his preparation and the execution of his race strategy contributed to his inability to complete the race. He showed such promise and came so close to solidifying his position as the first-place winner. Instead, he forfeited a \$100,000 prize. Christ admonishes us not to fall prey to the same shortcomings.

"I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown" (Revelation 3:11, NIV).

Christians are to learn from these comparative examples of running a race by highlighting our need to train and execute in our spiritual lives, so that our propensity for endurance will increase. In continuously pursuing prayer, the study of God's Word, employing the application of God's Word in our lives, and repeating this process, we grow in tenacity.

The ability to endure must be established in order to complete the spiritual race that we are in. Our capacity for perseverance is essential to reach the Kingdom of God. We must live our lives so as not to remove ourselves from contention by abandoning God's way of life and giving up. Paul aptly described the need to prepare and execute through the lens of running a race.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24–27, NIV).

Paul recognized the need to be disciplined in order to live God's way of life and likened it to how an athlete adheres to a regimen. Although the dedication of a runner should be emulated, the pursuit of God's favor and the reward that He will give us is more worthwhile than chasing earthly goals and accomplishments. Our focus must remain on the reward that God is awaiting to share with us. Towards the end of his life, Paul considered this with his protégé, Timothy.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7–8, NIV).

Let us learn perseverance from the examples of long-distance running and share the resolve of athletes in our spiritual lives. In turn, let us run the good race.

# Male and Female He Created Them

## Part 2

by Mike James

### Chapter 3— Uptick in Transgenderism

Gender dysphoria used to be called “gender identity disorder.” It is characterized by a severe and continual discomfort in the biological sex with which you were born.

Most who suffer from this begin to experience it in early childhood. Typically ages are two to four. In most cases—nearly 70 percent—childhood gender dysphoria resolves itself.<sup>1</sup> This issue, historically, has impacted only about .01 percent of the population. Usually the impacted population has been boys. There are other estimates. The Williams Institute at the University of California estimates that 0.3 percent of the US population—or about 700,000 people—is transgender.<sup>2</sup>

In the last ten years this has changed dramatically. Before 2012, in fact, there was no scientific literature on girl’s ages eleven to twenty-one ever having developed gender dysphoria at all.<sup>3</sup> For the first time in medical history, natal girls are not only present among those so identifying—they constitute the majority.<sup>4</sup>

What is interesting about this is what has also been occurring as far as mental health concerns. Between 2009 and 2017, the number of high schoolers who contemplated suicide increased 25 percent.<sup>5</sup> The number of teens diagnosed with clinical depression grew 37 percent between 2005 and 2014. And the worst hit—experiencing depression at a rate three times that of boys—were teenage girls.<sup>6</sup> In addition to this, rates of self-harm among girls aged ten to fourteen are up 189 percent since 2010, almost triple what they were in 2004.<sup>7</sup>

What could be causing these increases in mental health issues among our youth? Some in the transgender community and their supporters believe adults in the community should be affirmed in their transgender identity. This idea has now trickled down to children. Those who believe transgenderism is a reality rather than a mental problem want children to be affirmed for their gender dysphoric thoughts and feelings. This is why over forty-five gender clinics popped up in the United States from 2007 to 2017.<sup>8</sup> It’s why the United Kingdom saw a 50 percent increase in the number of children referred to gender clinics in just one year, from 2011 to 2012.<sup>9</sup>

This affirmation has included a change in language. Transgender pronouns are on the rise in places like college campuses. “Ze,” “Hir,” “Xe,” and others are now used by some to refer to a person of unspecified or nonbinary gender.

Some authorities believe the uptick in transgenderism is due in large part to iPhones. The iPhone was released in 2007. By 2018—a decade later—95 percent of teens had access to a smartphone and 45 percent reported being online “almost constantly.”<sup>10</sup> Tumblr, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube—all very popular with teens—host a wide array of visual tutorials and pictorial inspiration to self-harm: anorexia (“thin-spiration” or “thinspo”), cutting, and suicide. Posting one’s experiences with any of these afflictions offers the chance to win hundreds—even thousands—of followers.<sup>11</sup> Anorexia, cutting, and suicide have all spiked dramatically since the arrival of the smartphone.<sup>12</sup> So has an increase in gender dysphoria in pre-teen and teen girls. Another reason these kids are influenced is through internet influencers.

One such influencer is Chase Ross. Chase is a female-to-male transgender. Chase thinks he helps trans-identified teens and is motivated by this. In his videos he offers breast binders as giveaways. He also reviews female-to-male transgender sex toys, and he offers insight on his medical transition.

Chase’s mom left the family when he was one. He was raised by his father, who he calls his “best friend.” His dad has never had a regular job.

Chase was a boy who always felt a bit different. Then one day, when he was fifteen, he found a YouTube video featuring a trans person.

Chase found the videos interesting. “I was like, ‘What is this? I don’t understand. What is this person?’ And after watching a couple of these videos, I was like. ‘Omigod, everything in my life makes sense.’”<sup>13</sup> At age fifteen, after binging on these videos, Chase decided he was transgender.<sup>14</sup>

The most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-5) shows an expected incidence of gender dysphoria at .005-.014 percent for males, and only .002-.003 percent for females, based on the numbers of those who, a decade ago, sought medical intervention.<sup>15</sup>

In the last 10 years teen gender dysphoria has rapidly increased in the West. In the United States, the prevalence has increased by over 1,000 percent.<sup>16</sup> Two percent of high school students now identify as “transgender,” according to a 2017 survey of teens issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).<sup>17</sup> In Britain, the increase is 4,000 percent,<sup>18</sup> and three quarters of those referred for gender treatment are girls.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Lisa Littman, an ob-gyn turned public health researcher wrote a paper on this phenomenon in 2018. Littman surmised the uptick in girls experiencing gender dysphoria is due to peer contagion—like how anorexia nervosa has spread as peer contagion among young girls.

Why would teenage girls be more susceptible to peer contagion? Many believe

it has something to do with the way girls tend to socialize.<sup>20</sup> Speaking in general, girls and boys tend to communicate with each other in different ways. Most girls tend to reply to each other with validating and supportive statements. Boys tend to communicate in a more questioning manner.

Amanda Rose, professor of psychology at the University of Missouri, stated, “They’re willing to suspend reality to get into their friends’ worlds more. For this reason, adolescent girls are more likely to take on, for instance, the depression their friends are going through and become depressed themselves.”<sup>21</sup>

Co-rumination (excessive discussion of a hardship) “does make the relationship between girls stronger,” Professor Rose said.<sup>22</sup> But it can also have negative consequences. Teenage girls spread psychic illness because of features natural to their modes of friendship: co-rumination; excessive reassurance seeking; and negative-feedback seeking, in which someone maintains a feeling of control by angling for confirmation of her low self-concept from others.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Littmann believes many of the increased number of young girls dealing with gender dysphoria might be using it to cope with real stressors or strong emotions they are experiencing.

Another thing leading more of our children into a trans identity are the Internet influencers. There are a number of social media sites that help our kids discover their trans identity. These websites and trans social media influencers are pushing various ideas to young impressionable minds.

They are telling kids if they think they are trans they are. This is rubbish. Most people (80 percent) who have issues around their gender identity eventually resolve them.

The influencers also promote the idea you can try out being trans and always go back. You can do this with what are called binders. Binders are a spandex and polyester compression garment that flattens female breasts. It turns out that breasts—glandular tissue, fatty tissue, blood vessels, lymph vessels and lymph nodes, lobes, ducts, connective tissue, and ligaments—are not really meant to be squashed flat all day long.<sup>24</sup>

They also push the use of testosterone. Listen to how Alex Bertie, a British female-to-male YouTuber puts it: “I’m officially one year on testosterone. Before hormones, I was struggling with severe self-hate, jealousy, and just the urge to isolate myself from everybody.... Now, a year after starting hormones, I couldn’t be happier. The changes from testosterone really have improved my quality of life and just made such a difference in shaping my future.”<sup>25</sup>

Of course a drug might make someone feel better, but if they are suffering from a mental illness are they really addressing their issue?

The problem here is the YouTube influencers don’t talk too much about serious possible side effects from taking shots of testosterone. Besides pain, there are increased risks of various cancers and prophylactic hysterectomy.<sup>26</sup> But the changes these kids are going through are not only impacting them in negative ways they are also doing the same thing to their families.

### Chapter 4— Tearing Down the Family

Another major issue with the new trans-positive culture is the erosion of the family. Trans influencers are influencing young people to let go of their biological family if they are not supportive of your change.

Rachel McKinnon, male-to-female cycling world champion (competing against biological women, that is) says this: “I want to give you hope that you can find what we call your ‘glitter family,’ your ‘queer family.’ We are out there, and the relationships that we make in our glitter families are just as real, just as meaningful as our blood families.”<sup>27</sup>

So not only is transgenderism attacking the family by limiting some people from having biological children—it is also attacking the God ordained nuclear family by telling kids to create their own families if their parents are not supportive of their change.

The transgender craze is also affecting the family negatively through suicide. Suicide rates among the transgender-identified are, indeed, alarmingly high.<sup>28</sup> If a child is driven to commit suicide due to the mental anguish of this problem, the family is impacted by the tragedy of the death of a child. This can cause issues for parents and siblings alike.

The trans world is using the high suicide rates to argue we need to let kids transition. But many of those who transition often deal with the same mental anguish soon after transition.

Catering to the trans world is harming families in schools also. In June 2019, the California Teachers Association (CTA) approved a policy of allowing students age twelve and up to walk out the door during the school day to obtain cross-sex hormones.<sup>29</sup> How is this affecting the family? The kids don’t require parental permission to do this. In other words some schools are promoting a break between chil-



dren and their parents. And I'm sure promoting the bearing of false witness in some of these cases where kids will not be transparent with their parents on what is going on with them.

Listen to how Judy Chiasson puts it. Judy is the program coordinator for human relations, diversity, and equity for the Los Angeles unified School District—the second-largest school district in the nation. Judy says, “The role of schools has changed.... But schools have expanded to be the hub for a lot more social services and looking more holistically, emotionally, at what’s going on with children.”<sup>30</sup>

Dr. Chiasson comments further: “The reasons that a lot of teachers are hesitant to address LGBTQ issues in the schools, is because they’re worried about what the parents might say. And the parents do call up and they complain and they’re upset. Yes, we serve the community, but in some places, we have to lead the community.”<sup>31</sup>

Did you catch that? A top administrator in the second largest school district in the United States is saying schools, rather than parents, should decide what values are appropriate for children to learn. This is not just a California thing either. California, New Jersey, Colorado, and Illinois all have laws mandating LGBTQ history be taught in schools.<sup>32</sup> This flies in the face of the God-ordained way of parents teaching their children values (Proverbs 22:6). The schools should stick to reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Note another example of how California is helping to erode God-ordained family structure. One of the Ten Commandments is to honor your father and mother. This commandment has several applications, but one of them is that our parents will lead the children and teach them what is proper. But the California Board of Education provides, through its virtual libraries, a book intended for kindergarten teachers to read to their students: *Who Are You? The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity* by Brook Pessin-Whedbee.<sup>33</sup> After parents rallied in Sacramento, this book was removed from the official California Framework in which it was initially included.<sup>34</sup> However, it is still part of the virtual library of books the California Board of Education provides its teachers via teachingbooks.net.

Notice what the book says: “You are who you say you are, because you know best.”<sup>35</sup> Really? A five, six, seven, even twelve-year-old kid knows better than their parents? Of course not, but schools are another influencer tearing away at the God-ordained institution of family (Hebrews 2:10–11; Romans 8:16–18).

Transgender activists are also influencing the schools against the family unit. Groups like the National Center for Transgender Equality and Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) are promoting a policy for schools dealing with transgender youth. In the model policy, “School staff shall not disclose any information that may reveal a student’s transgender status to others, including parents or guardians,” unless absolutely required to do so by law.<sup>36</sup> The policy goes further to state that “it is critical that parental/guardian approval is never a prerequisite for respecting a student’s chosen name, appropriate gender, and pronouns,” even if this goes against the medical and psychological care that the parents are pursuing for that child.<sup>37</sup>

Another facet of the problem is the family itself. Many of the parents of the children investigating the transgender world are not religious like previous generations. These parents are not pushing back very much on their kids when they develop an interest in this area. Many recent surveys are providing proof of less and less of the population believing in God or attending church regularly. Parents initially have the potential to be the greatest influencers of their children. If less and less parents are influenced by biblical principles than their children will more easily move into different lifestyle scenarios.

If all this is not enough there is one more weapon being used that is helping lead more children into gender dysphoria. Many of the kids who suffer from gender dysphoria will eventually grow out of it. A lot of these kids will receive help from the medical community during their period of uncertainty and confusion. The problem today is many in the medical community are now pushing an agenda known as “gender-affirming care.”

The American Psychological Association’s (APA) Guidelines for Care of Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) patients defines “transgender affirming care” as “the provision of care that is respectful, aware, and supportive of the identities and life experiences of TGNC people.”<sup>38</sup>

That sounds good, but notice what the guidelines state: “Psychologists are encouraged to adapt or modify their understanding of gender, broadening the range of variation viewed as healthy and normative. By understanding the spectrum of gender identities and gender expressions that exist, and that a person’s gender identity may not be in full alignment with sex assigned at birth, psychologists can increase their capacity to assist TGNC people, their families, and their communities.”<sup>39</sup>

In other words, go with what the kid thinks is going on with them. Don’t try and influence the kid against their possible misunderstanding of their present feelings and beliefs on their gender identity.

What if psychologists acted this way with anorexia nervosa patients? What if a girl 5’8” tall and 100 pounds tells her counselor, “I know I’m fat.” What if the APA told its doctors to go with the viewpoint of the patient? Imagine this skinny girl is really overweight. Imagine the APA encouraged therapists to respond to such patients, “If you feel fat, then you are. I support your lived experience.”<sup>40</sup>

The problem is many so-called experts are reacting to gender dysphoria in this way. It is amazing what some experts are saying, but there are experts on both sides of this debate.

## Chapter 5— What the Experts Say

First, let’s start with one of the most prominent gender-affirmative therapists out there. Randi Kaufman works at the Ackerman Institute for the Family in New York City. Dr. Kaufman has written one of the most important books on the gender-affirmative therapy titled, *The Gender Affirmative Model: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Supporting Transgender and Gender Expansive Children*.

Listen to this quote from Dr. Kaufman speaking about a gender dysphoric child, “...the child feels like the parent hasn’t understood or recognized who they are, which they haven’t. If a little boy grows up believing that he’s actually a little girl and the parents are calling him John and he wants to be known as Julia, and he realizes ‘I’m really Julia and this is all wrong,’ and the parents say, ‘No, we know better than you,’ I mean think about it: We don’t question an eight-year-old girl who says she’s a girl. Why would we question an eight-year-old who says they’re actually a boy even though they’re assigned a girl at birth, when the child was too young to know or articulate who they are?”<sup>41</sup>

Did you catch what this so-called expert on the subject of gender dysphoria is saying? That what an eight-year-old child feels about themselves is as important as what their God-given genitalia inform us. This expert thinks an eight-year-old knows who they are at age eight! How could this person be considered an expert? Once you take the Bible out of the equation, anything goes (Isaiah 5:20).

Dr. Kaufman went on to say, “But we know that anatomy does not necessarily line up nicely and neatly with someone’s gender identity. A majority of people feel their anatomy lines up with how they identify, but some people do not and that’s a normal variation on the human experience.”<sup>42</sup> A normal variation according to what standard? How people feel or what God’s Word has to say? I think you realize where our cultural standards are going.

There are some problems with what Dr. Kaufman supports which is known as gender-affirmative therapy. One of the principles is that adolescents and teens know who they are. But this is ridiculous. I don’t feel I knew who I was till about age thirty. Not from a gender perspective, but just an adult understanding of myself in life. Everyone is different, but we know for a fact children and teens have not even fully developed in mind or body until late teens or early twenties. No wonder the vast majority who feel gender dysphoric resolve back to their birth gender.

A second problem with affirmative therapy is that it teaches affirming the child or teen or helping with transition will not cause any harm. The affirmative therapists think if a child changes their mind, no harm, no foul. But is that true? Not according to an expert on the other side of the debate, world famous gender psychologist Kenneth Zucker. Zucker calls this an “experiment in nurture” because the family, school, and health care professionals for the child participate in affirming the child’s belief.<sup>43</sup> If the teen or child was not sure of their gender before the process begins, once they receive all this affirmation it may convince them.

Another problem with affirmation therapy is the belief that if you don’t affirm your child, they may commit suicide. This causes some parents to immediately affirm due to this concern. But is this true? There is no doubt that suicide rates for gender dysphoric individuals are much higher than for the rest of the population.

But two questions need to be answered here. Is the gender dysphoria causing the suicides? Is there evidence that affirmation takes care of the mental health issues leading to suicide? The answer to both questions, it seems, is no.<sup>44</sup>

A study by Kenneth Zucker found that the mental health outcomes for adolescents with gender dysphoria were very similar to those with the same mental health issues who did not have gender dysphoria.<sup>45</sup> What this means is the mental health issues gender dysphoric kids have could have led to the suicides rather than the gender dysphoric issue. Many gender dysphoric kids suffer many other mental health issues.

One long-term study of adult transsexuals showed a rise in suicidality after sex reassignment surgery.<sup>46</sup> Another, more relevant to today’s gender-crazed girls, comes from a leaked 2019 report from the Tavistock and Portman Trust gender clinic in the UK, which showed that rates of self-harm and suicidality did not decrease even after puberty suppression for adolescent natal girls.<sup>47</sup>

Affirmative therapy also promotes the contention that the gender identity someone feels they are is immutable. But this is not the case. Several studies indicate that nearly 70 percent of kids who experience childhood gender dysphoria—and are not affirmed or socially transitioned—eventually outgrow it.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike Dr. Kaufman, Dr. Kenneth Zucker looks at gender dysphoria from a different perspective. In 2007, Dr. Zucker oversaw the writing of the definition of “gender dysphoria” for the DSM-5.<sup>49</sup> He also helped write the “Standards of Care” guidelines for the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH).<sup>50</sup>

Zucker’s approach is to look at the whole kid. Some of these kids get into gender dysphoria to cope with trauma and distress. The therapist needs to question the patient’s understanding of gender to figure out why the kid focused on that as the source of their problems. What did the patient think about boys and girls? Why did they think a change of gender would make them happier? The questioning challenges the idea that sex is the source of the patient’s problem.

Zucker was very successful with this methodology. A colleague of Zucker’s, Devita Singh, researched the outcomes in the cases of more than one hundred boys who had been seen by Zucker. In cases in which a child had not been socially tran-

sitioned by parents, she found that 88 percent outgrew their dysphoria.<sup>51</sup>

Zucker believes there are many different things that can lead kids toward gender dysphoria. For example, in one child Zucker treated, the boy's desire to be a girl stemmed from wanting to connect with his single mother, who had briefly left him, to stop her from leaving again. Zucker's therapy for the child addressed his feelings of being abandoned and secondly the gender dysphoria.

Some research has shown that some people with gender dysphoria have certain brain structures that are closer to the sex they want to be than their biological sex. Here is what Zucker has to say about that: "It's completely simplistic to say that there are 'male brains' or 'female brains.'" <sup>52</sup> Zucker believes there is a lot of overlap between physical and behavioral traits of both men and women.

There are a number of professionals who believe gender dysphoria is a mental disorder. They all agree that the current epidemic of gender dysphoria among adolescent girls is unique. They believe that "affirmative therapy" is either a terrible dereliction of duty or a political agenda disguised as help.<sup>53</sup>

Dr. J. Michael Bailey, another expert in gender identity disorders, believes that for teenage girls gender dysphoria is a hysteria much like multiple personality disorder, another historical example of disturbed young women convincing themselves they possess an ailment and then manifesting the symptoms.<sup>54</sup>

Lisa Marchiano is a Jungian analyst, social worker, and a published author. She is skeptical of the surge in adolescents identifying as transgender.

Marchiano says, "I think the human psyche is very susceptible to these kind of psychic epidemics. It happened with lobotomies. It happened with multiple personality disorder. It happened in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Human beings are susceptible to psychic contagion."<sup>55</sup>

Marchiano believes when we experience psychological issues, we want to have others take us seriously. She goes on to say, "So if you manifest [distress] in some novel way that no one's ever heard of before, the likelihood is you're going to be dismissed. But if it fits into a prescribed narrative, the unconscious latches onto that. It has explanatory value for you, and you receive care and attention."<sup>56</sup>

The idea Marchiano is promoting was developed by Edward Shorter a historian of psychiatry. Shorter's idea was made popular by journalist Ethan Watters. According to this idea, patients are drawn to "symptom pools"—lists of culturally acceptable ways of manifesting distress that lead to recognized diagnoses.<sup>57</sup> "Patients unconsciously endeavor to produce symptoms that will correspond to the medical diagnostics of the time," Watters credits Shorter with discovering.<sup>58</sup>

There are examples of other social contagions being spread in this way. Hong Kong had never experienced an epidemic of anorexia nervosa until 1994. At that time local media publicized the death of a girl who had struggles with this issue. Hong Kong had experienced this problem before, but only when anorexia became a "culturally agreed-upon expression of internal distress did it become widespread."<sup>59</sup>

In the same way gender dysphoria has permeated popular culture on the internet, in print media, and on television programs from something rarely experienced to a normative behavior. Once gender dysphoria entered the symptom pool it began to be seen more and more by parents, therapists, and doctors. Or at least so they began thinking.

Marchiano says suicide stats are often used irresponsibly by therapists. "It's being used to force parents' hands to do something that they don't feel comfortable with. When you tell a group of highly suggestible adolescent females that if they don't get a certain thing, they're going to feel suicidal," Marchiano says; "that's suggestion, and then you're actually spreading suicide contagion."<sup>60</sup>

Finally, Dr. Paul McHugh, Johns Hopkins University distinguished professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences has an opinion on gender dysphoria too. He does believe gender dysphoric patients are suffering real distress. But he does not think most have figured out the root cause of their distress. McHugh compares gender dysphoria to anorexia nervosa. Losing weight is not going to solve the problem of anorexics just like changing genders is not going to solve the problem for most gender dysphoric people.

McHugh stated, "Policy makers and the media are doing no favors to the public or the transgendered by treating their confusions as a right in need of defending rather than as a mental disorder that deserves understanding, treatment, and prevention."<sup>61</sup>

McHugh also believes that the profession of psychiatry has been overtaken by the fad of gender dysphoria.

## Chapter 6—

### *The Physical/Psychological Toll*

**A**nother problem that can occur when kids try to transition is damage to their body. Many gender doctors think halting the onset of puberty (ages 8 to 13) is not a big deal. But there are many issues that can develop when you start to mess with the biology of the human body.

Lupron is the primary drug used as a "puberty blocker." It is used for kids who develop much more quickly than their peers, but the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved it to stop normal puberty.

Psychotherapist Marcus Evans says, "The drugs, you know, the hormone blockers, first of all, they say it's a neutral act. What are you talking about? You're going to powerfully interfere with a person's biological development."<sup>62</sup>

Dr. William Malone is a critic of using puberty blockers and hormones on kids.

He says the risks of shutting off the pituitary can be dire, "After a certain period, basically the way to think of this is that the system 'goes to sleep' and at some point it may not wake up."<sup>63</sup>

Many who transition from female to male speak highly of testosterone. They say how much better they feel. They talk about getting rid of their anxiety and depression, but what was really at the root of the anxiety and depression?

Because these are biological women taking testosterone they are getting dosages that female bodies are not meant to handle. This could increase the risk of heart attack. And if long-term use of testosterone increases the risk of diabetes, stroke, blood clots, and cancer.

One other interesting problem for women taking testosterone has to do with endometrial cancer. In a normal woman the uterine lining is managed by the pituitary gland. This gland can stop uterine growth when a baby begins to form or get rid of the lining through a woman's period. Testosterone shuts down the signals the pituitary sends and turns off a woman's menstrual cycle. The problem is if a woman forgets to take her testosterone her ovaries can stimulate sudden growth in the uterine lining. This can increase the risk of cell mutation, therefore leading to possible endometrial cancer.

Because of this suspected risk of uterine cancer, after a woman has been on a course of testosterone for five years, many women find themselves contemplating a prophylactic hysterectomy and oophorectomy (removal of uterus and ovaries), often with the encouragement of their physicians.<sup>64</sup> What happens for these women if they decide to transition back to female as some do? For some of these women the result of trying to transition is sterility.

And for me this reflects something much more diabolical. I believe many of these females are suffering from aspects of mental illness (depression, anxiety, etc.). For various reasons they set out on a path to transition to alleviate the mental turmoil they are experiencing. And a final result for some could be the inability to have children. I believe Satan, the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:1–3), and his minions are battling in our culture and in the minds of these girls to lead them on a path that works against the plan of God. God wanted mankind to produce children (Genesis 1:28). And we are the children of God (Hebrews 2:13). Satan's plans are to work against God and diminish His future family.

Another part of the anatomy impacted in gender transition is the chest. Before getting to "top surgery" many girls bind their breasts with compression sleeves. To some the binding is uncomfortable and can lead to back pain, shoulder pain, chest pain, shortness of breath, and bruised and fractured ribs.<sup>65</sup>

Listen to the insane logic of Dr. Johanna Olson-Kennedy, medical director of the Center for Transyouth Health and Development at Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Commenting on "top surgery" (the removal of female breasts), Olson-Kennedy says, "So what we do know is that adolescents actually have the capacity to make a reasoned, logical decision." She adds, "And here's the other thing about chest surgery: If you want breasts at a later point in your life, you can go and get them."<sup>66</sup>

We need to be careful how seriously we take someone just because they are called a doctor. Another doctor named Patrick Lappert is a plastic surgeon. He does not think breasts can be removed and then replaced and everything will be just like normal. Lappert says, "I can reverse masculinizing your nose, I can reverse masculinizing your jaw; I can reverse masculinizing your hairline, but I cannot reverse a mastectomy. All I can do is make you a new breast mound, but it's not a breast. It's a lump on your chest which looks like a breast."<sup>67</sup>

A breast is a complex piece of the female anatomy. A breast is a series of fibroglandular sections divided into parts. In these parts are lobules connected by ducts. The entire breast works like a water cistern. The breast milk runs through the ducts and out the nipple. The nipple also serves as a sexual zone. To some, like Dr. Olson-Kennedy, there is not much difference between a real breast and a manufactured breast. But others like Dr. Lappert believe eliminating biological capacities merely for the sake of aesthetics is wrong and—in virtually all other areas of medicine—strictly verboten.<sup>68</sup>

"To completely overthrow a natural capacity would be like a person desiring to be blue-eyed, and you deciding the best way to do that is to gouge their eyes out and give them glass eyes that are blue. Now they've got blue eyes, but they're not working. You've robbed them of the capacity," Lappert stated.<sup>69</sup>

Some would argue that cosmetic surgeons do this type of thing. Lappert says even cosmetic surgeons have limitations. "There is no other cosmetic operation where it is considered morally acceptable to destroy a human function. None, there is no cosmetic operation that I could propose in front of a room full of my colleagues where I could say, 'Hey, listen, I'm going to improve this guy's nose but take away his ability to smell.' Or, 'I'm going to improve the appearance of this boy's ears but he's going to be deaf.' They'd say, 'Sir, we'd like to see your credentials.' But in the case of an adolescent girl, surrendering her capacity to breast-feed so that she can appear to be a boy, that's considered morally correct. Forgive me for my skepticism."<sup>70</sup>

Less common than "top surgery" is "bottom surgery" for females transitioning to male. There are usually two options here. Phalloplasty, which is the making of a penis or metoidioplasty, which shapes the clitoris into something like a tiny penis. Phalloplasty is done when the surgeon takes a skin flap from a part of the body (often by de-sleeving the forearm and peeling off skin, fat, nerves and blood vessels). Then the doctor must connect nerves to bring about sensation to the grafted location. Some of the best microsurgeons in the world can do this very well. But not every surgeon is the best in the world. Problems can occur with this complex



surgery.

The radial artery that supplies blood to the neophallus must be connected to the artery in the groin area under a microscope, using sutures about one-fourth the thickness of a human hair.<sup>71</sup> Problems that can occur include blood clots. A clot can cause the graft to fail, creating an open wound that, because of inflammation, cannot be sutured closed.<sup>72</sup> The newly created urethra also can have problems. Leaks can result, leading to urine coming out in a spray. The de-sleeved forearm is not always a pretty sight either.

Of course there are successful phalloplasty’s with satisfied customers, but there are also horrific experiences for some who transition.

One cautionary tale comes from a woman (Blake) who transitioned to a “male.” Blake’s phalloplasty was horrific. Blake’s urethra developed strictures, which required more surgery for a suprapubic catheter to move the urinary flow so the wound could heal up. The suprapubic tube formed sepsis. Then a blood clot caused a pulmonary embolism almost leading to death. Due to her forearm de-sleeving, Blake could no longer lift objects. “My arm is handicapped for life,” she said.<sup>73</sup>

Sepsis also occurred in her urethra. The skin flap taken from the forearm led to hairs forming internally inside her from the forearm flap. “Just imagine an ingrown

hair in your beard or on your leg and multiply that by a thousand.”<sup>74</sup> Also, she now has to sit down to urinate due to urethra failure.

Blake is now very angry. Angry at her surgeon, therapist, and the culture that she says pushed her to transition. “That’s the thing that scares me about our youth. It scares me because [transition] is so glamorized in the news right now. It’s so easy to do, it’s not that big of a deal,” she said. “And it is, it’s a huge deal. And at forty-two, if I thought it was that easy, how is our youth going to be able to overcome something like that? That scares the hell out of me. So for me, was it easy transitioning? No, it wasn’t.”<sup>75</sup>

The biggest and most rigorous academic study on the results of hormonal and surgical transitioning, published in 2011 by Cecilia Dhejne and her colleagues at the Karolinska Institute and Gothenburg University in Sweden, found strong evidence of poor psychological outcomes.<sup>76</sup> This does not mean that the sex reassignment techniques were the reason for the poor psychological outcomes. But it does suggest that those procedures may not rectify the mental health problems associated with transgender people.<sup>77</sup> And if that is not enough to give someone pause to reconsider transitioning sexes please read on.

*To be continued.*

End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth J. Zucker, “The Myth of Persistence: Response to ‘A Critical Commentary on Follow-Up Studies and ‘Desistance’ Theories about Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Children’ by Temple Newhook et al. (2018),” *International Journal of Transgenderism* (May 2018); See also J. Ristori and T.D. Steensma, “Gender Dysphoria in Childhood,” *International Review of Social Psychiatry* 28, no. 1 (2016):13-20 in Shrier, p. xxi.

<sup>2</sup> <http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-How-Many-People-LGBT-Apr-2011.pdf> in Andrew T. Walker, *God and the Transgender Debate*, (Denmark: The Good Book Company/Norhaven, 2017), p. 34-35.

<sup>3</sup> Shrier, p. xxi.

<sup>4</sup> Nastasja M. de Graaf et al., “Sex Ratio in Children and Adolescents Referred to the Gender Identity Development Service in the UK (2009-2016),” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 47, no. 5 (April 2018): 1301-4, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324768316\\_Sex\\_Ratio\\_in\\_Children\\_and\\_Adolescents\\_Referred\\_to\\_the\\_Gender\\_Identity\\_Development\\_Service\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_2009-2016](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324768316_Sex_Ratio_in_Children_and_Adolescents_Referred_to_the_Gender_Identity_Development_Service_in_the_UK_2009-2016), in Shrier, p. xxi.

<sup>5</sup> Brian Resnick, “Have Smart phones Really Destroyed a Generation? We Don’t Know,” *Vox*, May 16, 2019, <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2019/2/20/18210498/smartphones-tech-social-media-teens-depression-anxiety-research>, in Shrier, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> David Levine, “Why Teen Girls Are at Such a High Risk For Depression,” *U.S. News*, August 22, 2017, <https://health.usnews.com/health-care/patient-advice/articles/2017-08-22/why-teengirls-are-at-such-a-high-risk-for> depression, in Shrier, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Shrier, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Campaign, “Interactive Map: Clinical Care Programs for Gender-Expansive Children and Adolescents,” <https://www.hrd.org/resources/interactive-map-clinical-care-programs-for-gender-non-conforming-childr> (accessed October 17, 2017) in Anderson, p. 132.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence S. Mayer and Paul R. McHugh, “Sexuality and Gender Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences,” p.107.

<sup>10</sup> Heather D. Boonstra, “What Is Behind the Declines in Teen Pregnancy Rates?” *Guttmacher Institute*, December 3, 2014, <https://www.guttmacher.org/spr/2014/09/what-behind-declines-teen-pregnancy-rates>, in Shrier, p. 4.

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<sup>13</sup> Shrier, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association,

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<sup>16</sup> M. Goodman and R. Nash, *Examining Health Outcomes For People Who Are Transgender* (Washington D.C.: Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, 2019), <https://www.pcori.org/sites/default/files/Goodman076-Final-Research-Report.pdf>, in Shrier, p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Michelle M. Johns et al., “Transgender Identity and Experiences of Violence Victimization, Substance Use, Suicide Risk, and Sexual Risk Behaviors among High School Students – 19 States and Large Urban School Districts, 2017,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 68, no. 3 (January 25, 2019):67-71, <https://www.cdc.gov/mwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6803a3.htm>.

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<sup>25</sup> Shrier, p. 48.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 50-51.

<sup>28</sup> Russell B. Toomey, Amy K. Syvertsen, and Maura Shramko, “Transgender Adolescent Suicide Behavior,” *Pediatrics* (October 2018):142. Hacsí Horvath “The Theatre of the Body: A Detransitioned Epidemiologist Examines Suicidality, Affirmation, and Transgender Identity,” 4thWaveNow, December 19, 2018, <https://114thwavenow.com/tag/41-transgender-suicide/>. In Shrier, p. 51.

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<sup>30</sup> Shrier, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 245.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>36</sup> GLSEN, “Model District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students,” revised February 2016, p. 4, <https://www.glsen.org/article/transgender-model-district-policy> in Anderson, p. 43.

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<sup>38</sup> American Psychological Association, “Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender NonConforming People,” *American Psychologist* 70 (December 2015): 832-33, <https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/transgender.pdf>. In Shrier, p. 99.

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<sup>40</sup> Shrier, p. 99.

<sup>41</sup> Shrier, pp. 105-106.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 114.

<sup>44</sup> Shrier, p. 117.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Cecilia Dhejne et al., “Long-Term Follow-Up of Transsexual Persons Undergoing Sex Reassignment Surgery: Cohort Study in Sweden,” *PloS One* 6, no. 2 (February 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0016885>. In Shrier, p. 118.

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<sup>48</sup> J. Ristori and T.D. Steensma, “Gender Dysphoria in Childhood,” *International Review of Psychiatry*, 28, no. 1 (2016): 13-20, 10.3109/09540261.2015.1115754 in Shrier, p. 119.

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<sup>51</sup> “Trangender Kids: Who Knows Best?” *This World*; See J. Ristori and T.D. Steensma, “Gender Dysphoria in Childhood,” *International Review of Psychiatry* 28, no. 1 (2016), 15, Table 1 in Shrier, p. 124.

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<sup>54</sup> See , e.g., Clifford N. Lazarus, “Why DID or MIPD Is a Bogus Diagnosis,” *Psychology Today*, December 29, 2011, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/think->

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., Fenway Health, *The Medical Care of Transgender Persons*, Fall 2015, <http://lgbthealtheducation.org/wp-content/uploads/COM-2245-The-Medical-Care-of-Transgender-Persons.pdf>; Frances Grimstad et al., “Evaluation of Uterine Pathology in Transgender Men and Gender Nonbinary Persons on Testosterone,” *Journal of Pediatric & Adolescent Gynecology* 31, no. 2 (April 1, 2018), [https://www.jpagonline.org/article/S1083-3188\(18\)30025-1/fulltext](https://www.jpagonline.org/article/S1083-3188(18)30025-1/fulltext). (“Many FTM/GNB persons on testosterone therapy continue to have lowly active proliferative or secretory endometrium, contrary to our hypothesis. The extent to which this relates to endometrial cancer risk is unknown; however, this data may be important in the assessment and counseling of this patient population with regards to bleeding patterns.”) in Shrier, p. 171.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p. 179.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

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# An Aspect of Discretion

by Michelle Algarra



Confidentiality is one of the treasures an individual possesses. We all possess good and bad secrets, and the contents of our minds and hearts and consciences are something only the individuals concerned and God should be aware of one hundred percent.

One important lesson I learned as a Christian is not to act like a garbage collector when conversing with people, most especially strangers and even church brethren. We all have dark secrets—the rubbish of our pasts, and even sinful proclivities and inclinations we have difficulty overcoming.

Human beings tend to be judgmental, critical, and to a certain extent envious, leading them to ridicule people for the contents of the “trash bag” they may be carrying around as if they had a chip on their shoulder.

Our ultimate confidante is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, not any psychiatrist or psychologist, not one’s spouse if any, and not even the ministers of the church, even if they possess the Holy Spirit. We should, for the most part, only be divulging all our innermost secrets to God as He is the ultimate Judge who is omniscient, or knows all things. He understands all the reasons why we have all these bad experiences, and all the reasons why we committed grievous mistakes and sins we could have avoided, knowing the difference between right and wrong.\*

Revealing terrible secrets from an ignominious past to relatives, friends, and acquaintances can defile a person’s reputation, or taint it to such a degree that the individual becomes seemingly contaminated like unclean meats.

Knowing how to keep confidential information confidential is important in order not to taint the image of the Church of God, the members of which for the most part possess the Holy Spirit.

Revealing any and all bad secrets to people, such as traumatic experiences, and most especially a sordid background one deeply regrets or is remorseful of, and most especially the consequences and reper-

cussions of past mistakes and spiritual failures that may have lingering effects of depression and anxiety, and may even cause a Christian to be subjected to humiliation and degradation, being called filthy names by self-righteous individuals.

Propriety and discretion are important Christian qualities we must develop. The ultimate catharsis is profound and heartfelt prayers to the ultimate counselors, God the Father and the Lord Jesus, not any ordinary human being.

A Christian should keep secret even good experiences regarding one’s life and background, as the positive blessings God has provided may just seem like hot air to people who overhear about these plus factors God has granted one’s life. Revealing material blessings God has provided, accomplishments and achievements, and even psychological spiritual blessings has a paradoxically similar effect as washing dirty linen in public. In the interest of humility, one must also learn to keep quiet about many things in one’s life in order not to appear proud, vain, and self-righteous to people. Do not open your personal Pandora’s Box.

There will always be people “better” than us, and there will always be people “worse” than us—in every respect, even spiritual. One aspect of contentment is being thankful for the talents, skills, abilities, and degree of achievements and accomplishments God has granted a person, and not envying others with superior intellect, material wellbeing, physical endowments, attributes, etc.

We must thank God for the way He has created us and all the blessings He has provided, and give Him appropriate recognition for all of these. All the good traits and qualities that we possess, and all our accomplishments and achievements, whether big or small, ultimately come from God, and not innately from ourselves or our parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

\* There are relative occasions when a person may be able to reveal secrets regarding one’s background, good and bad, to select individuals, provided they will not be judgmental, and are sympathetic and understanding. And also appreciative of the nice qualities or traits other people possess, despite their weaknesses, failings, and mistakes. Sometimes it may be cathartic to expunge one’s conscience of bad experiences in the past towards certain

select individuals, but definitely not anyone. It may provide relief from the psychological baggage one is bringing along from negative experiences in the past. However, from a personal perspective, I believe diplomacy and tact are also important traits and qualities that should be developed, along with discretion and propriety. Each individual possesses varying levels of spirituality, unlike the Lord Jesus, who is ultimate in compassion, understanding, and wisdom. God can provide solutions to any and all problems, and answer prayers based on His wisdom and proper judgment.

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## In Loving Memory

Jefferie H. Neibler

April 1, 1947 – August 30, 2022



Jeff Neibler

Mr. Jefferie H. Neibler, 75, of Kalama WA, passed peacefully on Tuesday, August 30, 2022 at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center with his wife and his son by his side.

Jefferie was born on April 1, 1947 to George and Dottie Neibler in the bustling city of Columbus, OH. After Jefferie graduated from Walnut Ridge High School in 1965, he pursued a degree in Business Administration at The Ohio State University.

After graduation, Jefferie worked for Rockwell International and then continued on to work as a financial planner at Boeing for 35 years until retirement. He was truly passionate about his career and loved what he did for a living.

In 1975, he met his wife to be, Joann, at the Feast of Tabernacles in Niagara Falls. Jefferie and Joann went on to have a son, Steven. They were happily married for over 46 years.

After retirement Jefferie had time to pursue his love of

research in various different fields. He was a lifetime learner and truly enjoyed discovering all that he could about many different subjects. Jefferie also enjoyed coin collecting, fine foods and dining, spending time with his granddaughters and traveling to visit family and church friends all over the country.

From a young age, Jefferie dedicated his life to God. He was baptised into the Church of God in the late 1960’s and spent the rest of his life as a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of the Church. He was an extremely generous and helpful man who loved to share his knowledge of God’s way.

Jefferie was preceded in his death by his parents, George and Dottie Neibler. He is survived by his wife, Joann Neibler; son, Steven (Stacy) Neibler; brother Mike (Robin) Neibler; sister, Cindi (Jim) Mitchell; sister Christi (Jim) Offutt; 3 granddaughters, Cassidy, Makenzie and Elizabeth Neibler; and many cherished cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Services were held at Church of God International, Medina, OH on September 19.



# 2022 FEAST OF TABERNACLES REPORTS

**Continued from page 1**

time our Healer, how that we were all wonderfully made (Psalms 139:14) as evidenced by how intelligently God designed the parts of our bodies as shown in some short video presentations that were part of the message.

4) The central role of Christ in the annual festivals, emphasizing that really Christ is the Way to salvation and in Him is the reality and fulfillment of all of the annual festivals.

5) How we are predestined to glory, explaining that we are predestined to be adopted as sons of God and that predestination is to conform to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).

6) The happiest days of God, all set in the context of family, thus making the message relatable.

7) The grandeur and majesty of the holy city, the New Jerusalem which we all look forward to enter into.

Beautiful and uplifting special music were provided by our talented singers during the first day of the Feast and on the Last Great Day.

**Feast Activities**

An online Youth Game Night was held on the third day of the Feast (Oct. 12). It was the second time this was done using Kahoot™. Those who participated had lots of fun (read: energetic and cheerful participants trying to figure out the answers to Bible-based questions [example: men and women of the Bible]).

On the Sabbath within the Feast (Oct 15), after the service, a Bible Q&A was conducted. Questions were raised and a panel of five ministers answered them. Questions raised included when is one ready for baptism, for marriage, and the assurance that what we keep as the Sabbath day is really the “true” Sabbath day. All five ministers weighed in on these questions, citing scriptures and some citing their own personal experiences. After that, the brethren partook of a sponsored sumptuous dinner. Following the dinner, we were treated to a talent night show, where most of the brethren shared their talent in singing. Everyone had fun and enjoyed the rest of the night.

The brethren used the time there were no activities to fellowship with others, have lunch together, and visit some of the local sites that included restaurants, parks, and amusement centers.

**Other Feast Sites, Baptisms**

What we have described so far are the events at the Tagaytay Feast site. However, we can be sure that these same joys and wonders of Feast-keeping were experienced as well in other Feast sites: Cebu City, Kiara, Naga, and Iloilo City. First day attendance in Cebu was at 52 adults, 3 children; Kiara at 42 adults, 7 children; Naga, 57 adults and children; Iloilo, 19. If we are to combine these with the Tagaytay figure of 137 adults, 13 children, we all had 330 onsite attendees (adults, teens, and children). Considering the circumstances, these are good numbers.

Each of the other four Feast sites had their own activities.

This year’s Feast was made more doubly joyful with several baptisms. They decided to take the

plunge in the waters of baptism after counselling: 4 at Tagaytay, 4 in Naga. Prior to the Feast, 2 were already baptized, bringing the total to 10. The angels had reason to rejoice tenfold (Luke 15:7, 10). The church of the firstborn welcomes into its fold Stephanie Uy, Kevin Uy, Bemar Espiloy, Rhea Necio, Gemma Manahan, Audie Murphy Dubouzet, Adrienne Ren, Bernadeth Nobora, Joseph Nobora, and Carlo Callos.

**Looking Forward**

This year’s Feast observance is a memorable one. It marks the first time that the brethren were able to celebrate face-to-face during the pandemic. The intensity and joy of seeing each other was palpable. After the festivities, the goodbyes became emotional for some. As the traditional closing song “Till We Meet at Jesus’ Feet” was sung, some could not hold back their tears.

This year’s Feast can now be counted as something that will forever be treasured in our hearts. Everyone made it possible—from those who provided special music, to those who shared their talents, to the speakers, to the generous sponsors, the media and technical team, the Festival coordinators and committees, and to all the members

who actively participated in the activities.

We definitely are looking forward to next year’s celebration. For we carry in our hearts that hope that things will be better. Until then, here’s to the *best Feast ever!*

*Ferdie S. Padilla for CGI Philippines*



**The Luntok Family from Naga City attending the Tagaytay City site at the second half of the Feast**



**The Naga City Church on the First Day of the Feast at the Naga City (Villa Caceres Hotel)**



**Naga youth gathered for activity on Day Two of the Feast**

## Poughkeepsie, New York

The Feast of Tabernacles was held once again in Poughkeepsie, New York. Returning to the Hudson Valley of New York for its junior year, the Feast site has become a mainstay for the Northeastern area. Many feast-goers who had attended in prior years returned to this year’s festival. In addition to seeing familiar

faces and becoming acquainted with new ones, a number of activities were held allowing for fellowship.

One of the highlights of this year’s Feast in Poughkeepsie was a chartered dinner cruise setting sail along the Hudson River, taking in such sites as the Statue of Liberty and the New York

City skyline. Although inclement weather proved to be intimidating during the cruise, it could not thwart our resolve to have a good time. The messages throughout the Feast were strong and uplifting, leaving an impression upon the departing attendees of looking forward to returning for next year’s Feast.



# Clearwater Beach, Florida

## Preparing for the Kingdom of God on Earth

by Jeff Flanick and Bill Watson

One of the Feast sites, sponsored exclusively by the Church of God International, was held in Clearwater Beach, Florida. Pastor Bill Watson of the Medina CGI congregation coordinated the eight-day celebration centered at the Edge Hotel on Clearwater Beach from October 10th through 17th. We were so blessed to have this Feast site since hurricane Ian devastated many parts of the Gulf Coast of Florida. Initially, the storm was predicted to directly hit the Tampa–St. Petersburg area, threatening to cancel all the Feast plans in the area, but surprisingly changed direction. Unfortunately, though it was good news for the northern areas of the Gulf Coast, sadly, it turned out to be bad news for cities south of the Tampa Bay area. Our prayers and hopes of good will continue for those affected by this significant disaster.

However, thankfully the weather during the eight-day festival was fantastic! There were many opportunities for getting together with like-minded brethren to experience the joy of fellowship. An example of this was at the Holiday Inn Harbourside Waterpark. It was great fun for those who attended—and, by the way, the kids weren’t the only ones enjoying this sunny-day event.

Mid-week, a congregational dinner at Jimmy’s Fish House was arranged at Clearwater Beach. Then on Thursday evening, a sold-out Catamaran Sunset Cruise with live music and a cash bar was a real social activity highlight and enjoyed by all on board. It was a spectacular and gorgeous sunset evening trip—clearly one to be remembered! Early Friday morning a group set sail for a deep-sea fishing charter in the Gulf.

In addition to the organized events, plenty of small informal gatherings throughout the Feast were conducted. Shopping, dining, and hanging out at the beach or the pool were just some of the activities enjoyed by many festival goers. New friends were made and “bonds” were strengthened and created within the “congregational community” at-large. The Edge Hotel conference room provided a relaxed and comfortable fellowship setting, while enhancing the presentations in a very Floridian environment overlooking Clearwater and the ocean Gulf.

Bill Watson spoke on the first High Sabbath day of the Feast with a message concerning the Feast of Tabernacles as a metaphor for the Kingdom of God. We were reminded this pilgrimage feast is commanded by God, written in the book of Deuteronomy. Bill also added the Feast celebrates the resurrection and bearing the image of the heavenly. We were made aware God is “vetting” us now and watching “how” we respond to our life’s challenges and circumstances. The Feast provides an opportunity for revival of the “inward man” and to improve our dedication and conviction to the destiny God has made available to us.

Bill’s sermon on the first day commenced a thread that weaved around the week’s messages concerning the *subject of preparation* for God’s Kingdom and how we should endeavor to *prepare* for it in our lives mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

On day two, John Nicoletti used hurricane Ian as an example, illustrating the importance of *preparation*. Explaining how some Floridians heeded the warnings and were prepared for the storm while others did not prepare properly, John encouraged us to prepare for not only the Millennial Kingdom but the tribulation (storms) as well. He also asked, do we value our birthright? What will cause us to give up

our inheritance—our careers, a marriage, material blessings? He told us *we invest our time and effort in preparing for things we value*. We should keep that in mind, even when considering the Feast of Tabernacles too!

Robert Balsamo provided the sermon on day three. Robert pointed out we are commanded to rejoice during this time. We should intensely reflect on our calling and remember our *God-given destiny*. Do not look back; instead, continue looking forward. God is now performing a sort of “processing” of human beings (each in his own order). As first fruits He is looking at each of us, considering if we are learning, growing, and—most importantly—*doing!* Will we be able to help in the Millennium? Are we *prepared* to contribute? Do we know the Torah? We must *commit more deeply* to understanding God’s Word. Do we really grasp Christ’s coming “ferocity” to deal with eradicating evil?

On the fourth day, Bill Watson continued the theme of *preparation* for the Kingdom. Bill explored why we should “pro-actively” be preparing. There is

we know what is up ahead!

In Jeff’s presentation, titled “We are Looking for God’s Government,” he examined failed rulers and governments in the Bible and throughout history, demonstrating the need for our Messiah’s return to set things right during the Millennium. He emphasized at Christ’s Second Coming the world will be in a chaotic and ruined condition. Christ will use His “Immortals,” His resurrected elect, to establish order and righteousness on the earth. If we aspire to help restore the world and teach the people God’s way, then we must *prepare now* by governing ourselves properly in this lifetime so we can be qualified teachers and appropriate examples for others.

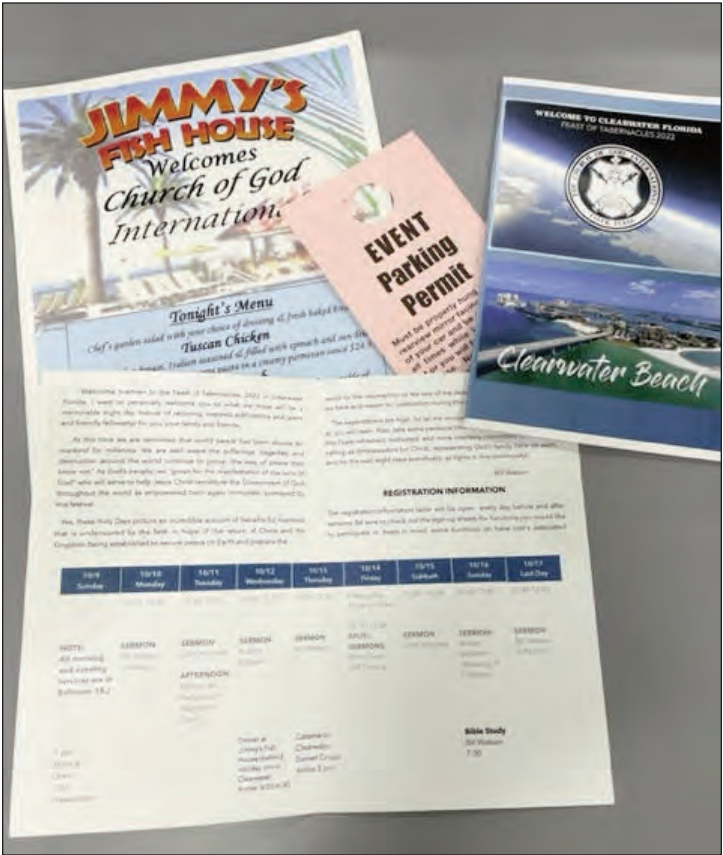
On day six, the Feast opened with a sermonette by Dave Bezon from Medina. Dave discussed the trials people go through and how overcoming these trials not only strengthens a believer’s faith but also *prepares* them for enduring more severe trials in the future. Dave spoke of how the church literature helped him and its value to help others find God’s Truth.

John Nicoletti followed with the main presentation, continuing with his earlier message of *preparation* and the return of Christ. John explained, we should value our future inheritance *daily*. He asked a few questions: “Are we *prepared* for the will of God in our lives?” “Are we preparing for the tribulations?” He then challenged us: “Don’t just say it, *live by it*—surrender yourself to God!” He went on to remind us, it’s helpful to think of what Christ went through in preparing for the difficult times ahead. He then referenced Psalm 116:15: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants.” God does not think like us—remember death is but a “pause.” John referred to Peter’s first letter concerning our spiritual inheritance and our potential suffering along the way. Most people don’t want to participate in the *process*; they just want the benefits of the outcome—and that’s not right. We need to *prepare* and put in the work. John encouraged us, saying, “Pray not until God hears us, but until we listen to God.”

On the seventh day, which was Youth Day, Jaiden Hendrix (*Wayne Hendrix’s great-grandson*) presented a sermonette. Jaiden quoted from the book of James, appealing to “count it as joy when we are tested.” He went on about the “*need to endure difficult times*,” even possible martyrdom. In our darkest hour, remember, God will *never forsake us*. So *prepare* for what lies ahead by increasing our self-control. We can find peace (even joy) while suffering if we put our mind to it. He, too, mentioned it helps to think of what Christ went through on the cross. Jaiden told us, “To love God is to follow His rules.”

The main message this day was given by Robert Balsamo. In *preparing* for the future it is critical to understand God’s plan, along with His Covenant, to minimize the chances of being deceived. Israel and Judah are *still* God’s people, like us, who are grafted in as “spiritual Jews.” Do we fully understand the world (and Satan) wants to destroy the Jewish nation, Israel, and that only the USA stands in the way of this plan to destroy them? Robert also stated, once a believer is baptized they should continue growing in Christ and understanding of the Torah. We should not let sin remain in our lives, as unimpeded sin grows worse. Paul said, commit to running the race we have begun to its full conclusion. God is a worker (a Creator), and we must be workers for good as well.

Saturday evening Bill conducted a Bible study



much more to the Millennial Kingdom than just Jesus returning and everyone becoming “star struck” and “awe-inspired” at Him for all eternity. There is a purpose to be accomplished and we will have tasks to perform if we are deemed worthy to participate in this endeavor. However, before we arrive at the Millennium, we should be prepared mentally and emotionally for the downfall of the USA. The United States remains the sole obstacle standing in the way of a one-world government—so it is a major target for today’s globalist movement!

Split sermons were presented on the fifth day by Medina congregants, Mike Lively and Jeff Flanick. Mike spoke of how we should prepare to deal with living in this present evil world. He emphasized the point “this is not our home!” We understand Christ’s righteous Kingdom is coming; therefore, we need to *prepare* for our role. Our present age is misguided in many aspects, including sexuality, morality, and the leadership of the world’s nations. Even traditional Christianity is misappropriated concerning pagan holidays and basic biblical truths. We need to understand God’s Truths in order to persevere through the days ahead, while learning to be “lights” to the rest of the world. Mike concluded, “*Prepare*,” because

Continued on next page



dealing with prophecy and Revelation based upon a handout provided earlier in the week. Topics covered included the providence of God as seen in modern day geopolitics from Israel’s and Judah’s point of view, with a focus on the Millennium. On a more personal level, brethren were admonished to continue improving their spiritual lives and understanding in order to successfully fulfill the roles of teachers and priests in the Kingdom of God. The world will clearly need servant leaders to assist in reconstructing the earth and restoring the laws of God with Christ’s leadership, combined with His resurrected immortals, paving the way as the Millennium commences.

On the Last Great Day, Bill Watson took opportunity to emphasize how God is fair and just by providing the “rest of the dead” an opportunity to accept Christ as their personal Savior. Bill explained how the world will be at peace, and the Millennium will reflect a societal and social paradise, described by the prophet Ezekiel to be like the “Garden of Eden.” It really did capstone the “Plan of God”—completing His-Story and how He is bringing many sons and



daughters into His Kingdom as immortal beings—*actually born-again* into His Family! It was very encouraging to know our “*unconverted*” loved ones that have died will indeed get their chance to choose life rather than death.

While many of the attendees were from the Medina Ohio Congregation, there were people from as far away as Arizona, Tennessee, Texas, Nebraska, and of course Florida as well. There was a baptism conducted too! Frank Walter, from the Medina congregation, was baptized in the ocean waters of the Gulf; and in so doing, Frank joined Christ’s body of baptized believers—the Church of God. To God be the glory!

What a joy it was, attending the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles in Clearwater Beach! We hope, God willing, more brethren will participate in this commanded holy convocation next year, because attending a Feast of Tabernacles pilgrimage site is definitely a valuable spiritual experience.

So, keep in mind, **Preparation** is paramount in the coming days. As we should be steadfastly praying, studying, and *preparing* for the difficult times ahead prior to Christ’s return, while considering the preparation for the work needing to be accomplished in

the Millennium. So, as stated during the messages, take the time because “one *prepares* for what one values.” (Please note: All of CGI Clearwater’s Feast Sermons are posted for your viewing at: [cgimedina.org](http://cgimedina.org) and on [rumble.com](https://www.rumble.com).)





# St. Petersburg, Florida

The 2022 Feast of Tabernacles in St. Petersburg, Florida, was celebrated once again at the beautiful Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center. The brethren from the Auburndale and St. Petersburg CGI churches, along with members of the Church of the Sovereign God and Church of God in Miami, were able to meet here after a two-year closure because of the pandemic. The excitement of the 70-some attendees was evident.

The brethren were blessed with excellent messages from both guest and local speakers. Our Feast Coordinator, Morgan Pinkerman, opened the Feast on Sunday night by reminding us why we keep the Feast and what we look forward to in the coming Kingdom of God. Our guest speakers, Mike James and Wynn Skelton, provided powerful messages. Mr. James brought to light how Jesus' miracles were a foretaste of God's Kingdom to allow mankind to believe in Jesus Christ and have life ever after. Before leaving to be with the brethren at the Medina Feast site, Mr. James illuminated the Bible's numerous references connecting the Holy Spirit to water. He pointed out that just as we cannot live in this life without water, we cannot live eternally without the living waters of the Holy Spirit. Mr. Skelton, likewise, provided the brethren with two inspiring messages. Mr. Skelton reminded us not to lose sight of our promised land, the Kingdom of God, and how we need to encourage one another so we can maintain the hope of this promise.

We were blessed to also have inspiring sermonettes and sermons by our local speakers. Ben Faulkner emphasized that we keep the Feast so we can learn to fear the Lord. He went on to help us have a better understanding about what it is to fear of the Lord. Mr. Pinkerman presented examples of what we will do as rulers reigning with Christ. Ray Wendle encouraged us to hold fast to God and continue to make ready and prepare the way to the Kingdom of God. Mr. Pinkerman closed the Feast with his message about the hope of mankind and the Great White Throne Judgment. The services were rounded out by a host of insightful sermonettes and inspiring special music.

There were also learning opportunities for our children and youth. This Feast of Tabernacles our young children learned all about Joseph. From his youth in Canaan, to his time as a slave, to being falsely accused and ending up in a prison in Egypt, and to ultimately becoming a powerful ruler, our children learned that God was with Joseph every step of the way. They learned this was all part of our Creator's great Plan to preserve His own nation and the earthly lineage of His Son. Our children ended the week with a lesson about Jesus Christ, who through His love and forgiveness has provided salvation for us all... And as you can see in our pictures, they had some fun along the way!

This year our tweens and teens took a journey through time. They learned that God created appointed times during creation for his Holy Days, including

the Feast of Tabernacles. They discovered that the Feast was celebrated by God's people throughout the ages and will be celebrated it in the future in God's Kingdom. They studied how God used youth throughout history because these youth followed God's instructions, did not give up, and faced their fears. Our youth also used their creativity and made prayer jars to take home to hold their prayer reminders.

Our brethren had many opportunities to come together and rejoice. The Ladies Luncheon started the activities with the theme, "Consider the Lilies." Besides enjoying an Asian buffet together, the women of the church were able to share scriptures they find helpful to cope with the stresses of life. And afterwards, some of the ladies got together to participate in one of their favorite stress relievers, shopping! The seniors also enjoyed a luncheon of fine food and fellowship. Prior to the luncheon, our seniors were reminded of the honor that God bestows on them.

The Family Fun Night brought all ages together for an evening of food, fellowship, and fun! There was something for everyone. The evening started out with everybody's favorite, pizza and ice cream. Fabulous prizes were awarded for the winners of Bible Bingo and Bible Jeopardy. Then we were entertained by the brave souls who sang Karaoke, including several previously undiscovered talents.

Our Friday night Bible study, led by Mr. Pinkerman, even provided us an opportunity to get to know one another better. After using the Bible to illustrate the miracle of our calling, Mr. Pinkerman invited the brethren to share the story of their personal calling. Those in attendance went away inspired by the truly miraculous ways God uses to bring us to His body.

Under the starlight sky of Tampa Bay, our brethren dined, talked, and cruised the calm waters of the bay during our FOT Dinner Cruise. The evening was made even more enjoyable by music provided by the DJ onboard. Some of us took this opportunity to dance the night away.

We ended out last day of the Feast at the bowling lanes. Again, all age groups came together to have an afternoon of fun and fellowship. Whether the ball went in the gutter or made a strike, everyone enjoyed another opportunity of us to fellowship until we meet again.





# Galveston, Texas

The Houston CGI congregation hosted the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles in Galveston, Texas at the Tremont Hotel.

An open invitation was extended to all those who keep the Sabbath and observe God’s Holy Days.

This year’s Feast was attended by several who were looking for a place to be fed God’s Word. As a result, various Sabbath-keepers—true believers all—attended the Feast here, including brethren representing CGI, United Church of God, Feastkeepers of God, Hebraic Roots, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Messianic congregations. These hungry and thirsty believers came from places as far away as Philadelphia, New York, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Oklahoma, and as near as Houston, Texas City, and San Antonio.

The Feast was a wonderful time of fellowship with plenty of spiritual food through enriching messages. Love, compassion, and mercy were extended to all who were present.

We had nearly 80 registered people who wondered in and out throughout the Feast, with the daily attendance around 52–55.

Here are a few highlights we want to mention.

Each day the children, ranging for age 2–17, were taught biblical lessons directed by Kathy Joseph. The children were encouraged to write a short essay about their favorite scripture for presentation. All children wrote daily letters to members who were unable to attend the Feast of Tabernacles for various reasons. Each day the children gifted the adults with gifts they personally made, such as key chains with scriptures on them, and handwritten bookmarks with inspirational scriptures on them. The teens were assigned the task of preparing a two-minute speech on their own topic concerning the Kingdom of God. It was a fun-filled time for all that participated.

The children enjoyed an evening of Putt-Putt miniature golf. All enjoyed an evening at Galveston Pleasure Pier, an amusement park filled with many rides. We cannot leave out the family pot luck held at the beach.

While the children had their fun the adults had a three-day series seminar on “Spiritual Temple Building” presented by Pastor Clifton J. Buchanan.

On the Sabbath we all enjoyed a well-attended love fellowship meal catered by the Tremont Hotel.

On the first day, Mykala Buchanan provided special music, “Alabaster Box,” and her dad, hosting pastor Clifton J. Buchanan, inspired us with a message on the “Secrets of the Holy Days.” We were taught the intricate details concerning Mt. Zion in prophecy. On day two we were introduced to the “Marriage Invitation” by Deacon Albert DeBolt. We received learned about the wedding supper and the servants who have the honor of bidding the invited guests to come. On day three we were challenged to answer this critical question, “Are We One?” presented by Pastor Ray Hall, Sr. We were asked to con-



The set-up crew pauses for a photo.



The group gathers for a photo on the first day of the Feast.

sider if we were all on the same pathway working together towards fulfilling the will of God. On day four “The Fruits of the Spirit” was presented by Deacon Melvin Huntley. We were reminded that God has a standard that we as believers must adhere to. Our calling requires that we must develop as well as produce the fruits of God Spirit in our daily lives. On day five “God’s Infinite Realm” was presented by Elder Ruben Rios. Elder Rios painted a futuristic picture of what God’s Kingdom would look like when we are finally changed and meet him face-to-face. On day six “Trees of Righteousness” was presented by Jacques Russell. Jacques reminded us that we are to be trees planted by the riverside which provide healings for the nations. As a ministry of reconciliation we must focus on our responsibilities to encourage others to grow in the grace and knowledge concerning the Kingdom of God. On day seven “Ambassadors of God” was presented by Jeremy Brown. Jeremy challenged us to remember we are God’s ambassadors on the earth and to be mindful that we represent his coming government, a government unlike what we see anywhere today—a government based on God’s laws, Sabbaths, Holy Days, and of course his grace, mercy, and righteous judgment. On the Last Great Day, Pastor Clifton and daughter Mykala sang a duet, “Shepherd Boy.” Pastor Clifton presented the message, “The Final Judgment.” He pointed out that the adversary will be judged and destroyed, that he will cease to exist and will no longer be remembered; and that ungodly men and angels will be judged by the saints of God as promised in Psalm 149 and many other places throughout the Bible.

All in all, the Feast was a wonderful time of fellowship, filled with Feast-themed, spiritually enriching messages that served lots of spiritual food daily, highlighting the love, compassion, and mercy of God that was extended to all who were present.

We look forward to you joining us again next year for more of the same great times to be shared by the people of God.



Clifton Buchanan



Children’s program, with Kathy Joseph (standing) directing



# Polksville, Kentucky

Ho hum. It's time to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. No, no—this isn't an MSM news report. You will get the truth of how the Feast was kept in Polksville, Kentucky.

After loading our vehicles with clothes and other items we would need during the Feast we took to the road to begin our celebration in Polksville. Once on the road the first thing you notice is the hills of Kentucky. They are awesome. If you aren't excited about the Feast yet I would recommend you read Revelation 21:18–21. When you see those hills and read those scriptures you are seeing the future. Only God could create such wonder.

As we arrived our congregation was pleased to meet and greet some new folks. Some travelled from distance areas in Kentucky and even a few from Indiana. Getting to know each one was a real pleasure.

We began our days with messages that encouraged us to seek first the Kingdom, what it means to fear God, the name of God, man's failure to

put together a world government, awareness of God's universe, and the Last Great Day.

There was one hiccup with our speakers. One speaker became ill and didn't want to possibly pass it around to others. So, we needed help. As always you can count on Mark Schwarzkopf to volunteer. I've been told his arm is getting better. I'm kidding. Mark did volunteer.

Each day after the message we had a catered meal with fellowship. Tuesday evening, we had a meal out, at church expense.

On Wednesday we got an early start and then went to the Creation Museum. If anyone reading this is a University Kentucky sports fan you would have really enjoyed riding this bus. It was covered in Kentucky blue with basketballs and footballs painted as well. Our driver was terrific. So pleasant and calm. Our return trip was in the rain. Lots of traffic to contend with, especially tractor trailers and rude drivers who would routinely cut us off. But he was a real pro and got us back safely.

Just beginning. After a message and meal

Thursday we went to Morehead State University for a tour of their planetarium. Our tour guide is a professor and former NASA employee. We watched Cosmic Journey. It was like getting a view of the Cosmos as God would see it.

Some of us were a little on the tired side and skipped the flea market trip. Flea markets are a big deal in this area, and this was an annual one.

Sabbath was a much-needed day of rest but at sundown we were hyped. Bingo night! Loads of prizes and we got to choose our prize.

Sunday was fish fry evening. So good and too much to eat! There were some really good leftovers.

On the Last Great Day, after a message and catered meal, we scattered to our respective home. But the Kentucky hills were still aglow. It reminds us to never avoid God's messages, His majesty and promises.

We are still talking about 2022 being the best Feast ever and making plans for next year. May each of you be so blessed.

Alice Edwards Lauria

# Kenya, Africa

by Robert Onsando

THE LORD'S FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND LAST GREAT DAY have come to an end, having brought many blessings for which we are grateful. We saw the hand of God throughout the Feast—a blessing that overshadowed the obstacles we encountered.

We supported eight different sites this year:

1. Migori Feast site headed by Zablon Anyumba
2. Kehancha Feast site headed by Robert Onsando
3. Tabitha Outreach Foundation Academy headed by Robert Onsando
4. Homa Bay Feast site headed by Benard Ogola
5. Eberege Feast site headed by Ezekiel Oanda
6. Magencha Feast site headed by Joseph Chauro (This was a special group from the Seventh-Day Adventist Church that wanted to hold the Feast instead of the camp meeting as popularly known by the Adventists. They didn't want to be identified for fear of the SDA leadership. We sent our materials and I had trained some leaders silently.)
7. Kayole Feast site headed by Francis Mecha in Nairobi (This is a youth group I am mentoring in Nairobi. I am hoping to grow it into a big church. Some are former Seventh-Day Adventists who have understood the Feast of Tabernacles and wanted to keep it as in the Bible.)
8. Embu Feast site by Bancy Kariti, supported by Mike James (We sent Benjamin to help.)

I can authentically report for Kehancha and Tabitha Outreach Foundation Academy where I fully participated all the days. We had an opportunity to baptize seven souls, five of which were girls from the school we manage.

Due to strict government laws, this being an examination term, the students were joining us in the afternoons; however, we were able to have the kids join us for worship, full Sabbath days at CGI Kehancha church on the annual as well as weekly Sabbaths. They would keep the Feast in the school the other days. With the school being less than a mile from the church, we had an arrangement for how and when they would join us.

We were lucky to attract visitors from the neighboring country of Tanzania. Some of them were former Seventh-Day Adventists. They appreciated and learned a lot from our teachings, only to regret that our time and days were limited to only eight days. They would have loved to stay longer. We have planned to have them another time with the availability of resources.

We had a team from the Messianic church join us and stay with us throughout the Feast. We learned a lot from each other. "Iron sharpens iron" was the slogan. We had good times talking about the sacred names, and we came to an agreement to never to point fingers.

One the last Sunday, a Sunday-worshiping group abandoned their worship and decided to join us. We enjoyed fellowship and had a special meal together. They asked many questions, and we will do a follow up, as they invited us into their church to teach them.

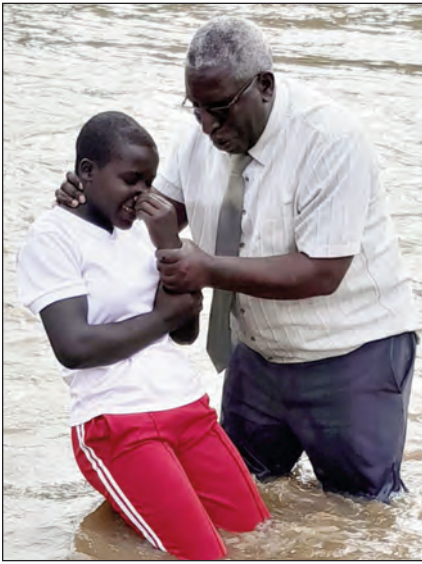
We had an average meeting of between 150 and 250 attendants.

## Challenges

Nothing good comes without challenges. This year brought challenges due to slow economic recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The prices of items doubled, making it very difficult to sustain a larger group. I ended up having to spend funds meant for my travels to meet my African brethren, as we had agreed.

## An Exciting Moment

The most exciting moment was on a Wednesday when Blake Silverstein organized for a surprise presentation by four of us from different continents using the GoToMeeting app. The surprise was that I knew two of the guests, one being John Classic from Australia and the other being the lady from the Philippines whom John Classic and I met with when we visited the Philippines. What a coincidence!



Robert Onsando baptizing Damacline at River Migori, Kehancha Town, Migori County.



Brethren at the Feast of Tabernacles in Migori





KENYA, AFRICA—Seven souls, having repented of their sins and accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior, were baptized on the seventh day of the 2022 Feast of Tabernacles. On the back row, from left, are Esther (school matron), Evans Ogiri, Mwenda (baptized), Pacificah (baptized), Robert (CGI Elder), Ondigo (Deacon), Abigael (baptized), and Caroline (baptized). Front row, from left, are Damacline (baptized), Fred (baptized), and Victoria (baptized).

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