



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## The Official Newspaper of the Church of God International

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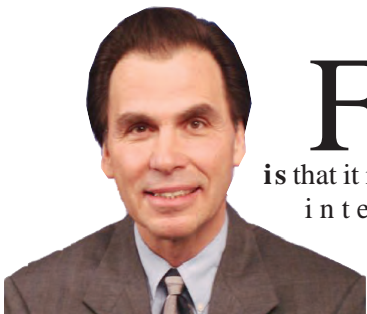
**"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)**

Summer 2009

## Jesus Christ Is Building An Organization... Are You Preparing?

Jesus Christ is building an administration. He is calling us to be kings and priests, and we will reign on the earth with Him (Revelation 5:10). God is organized. We can look all around us and see symmetry, coordination, and interdependence. Throughout His creation, from the planets and stars of galaxies beyond to the smallest of bacteria, and living organisms in between, there is synergy. Why then, do some think it odd and unnecessary for God to build His "body," a living spiritual organism, by means of organizational structure for achieving the Christian objective of spiritual growth?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

**F**or some, the problem with "belonging" is that it requires sacrifice, interaction, and teamwork. Unfortunately today, there are fewer people in God's church who want

to be part of a "collective team." Many believe it suits them just fine, and is more *spiritually comfortable* to be disassociated, detached, and disconnected from any organizational associations. In other words, "independent."

Now there are a variety of reasons for this, but two very common ones are 1) to minimize, if not eliminate, commitments, obligations,

pressures, and/or personal identification with any particular group, and 2) to be in the forefront, to be heard, to run the show, or to get and receive all of the credit, the accolades, and of course, the money.

### Independence Can Be Selfish

Admittedly, some fail to recognize the problem with *not* belonging is that it can be perceived to be a selfish approach to Christ's calling. The reason? Our calling includes and demands more than just *receiving* or *getting* personal salvation. There is a work to do, which requires us to put our personal learning into real interaction with others! In other words, it's a work that should be larger than us.

It's larger than our families, our friends, and our lives. It has everything to do with personal *sacrifice and fellowship* for a collective Christian purpose. Christ Himself said that we must

*love less* our families and friends to be worthy to serve Him. "If any man come to me, and hate not [love less] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, *cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:26-27).

Sure, we are expected to develop personally. Yes, we are absolutely expected to provide for our families and to personally grow in grace and knowledge. But in addition, there is a *collective* reason and purpose for our calling: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). "And the gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13:10).

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## Are You Just "Too Busy?"

*It has been said, "If the Devil can't get at you any other way, he'll use up all your time." Are you like the white rabbit in Alice In Wonderland? Are you "Too busy! Too busy! Too busy!" Are life's demands consuming too much of your time? What's a Christian to do?*

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd Cary

**"B**ut understand this, that in the last days there will set in perilous times of great stress and trouble—hard to deal with and hard to bear" (2 Timothy 3:1, *Amplified Bible*). Never before have there been so many demands on our time—stresses and tensions

pulling at us from different directions in the forms of jobs, spouses, children, family, friends, shopping, and recreation. Then there are the distractions of TV, radio, computers, telephones, various daily "emergencies" and varied problems. It is any wonder we feel worn to a frazzle?

Who among us cannot remember the harried white rabbit in the classic story *Alice in Wonderland*, as he scrambled about, checking his watch, declaring, "I'm late! I'm late! for a very important date! No time to say Hello!—Goodbye!—I'm late, I'm late, I'm late!"? Unfortunately, as this modern world crowds in on us more and more, we often feel like that white rabbit! Where does time for God come in? What's a Christian to do?

We cannot help but be reminded of Christ's

example in Luke 14:16-20, illustrating a problem certain ones had who were invited to a great banquet. When the appointed time was ready, they all with one consent began to beg off and make excuses as to why they could not come. One had purchased a field; another, five yoke of cattle; and a third had acquired a wife. They were all too busy.

There is no doubt regarding the identity of the banquet's host in Jesus' illustration. One of His listeners had just said "...Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15). Using this saying as a springboard, Jesus launched into His illustration. Even though the activities of the invited guests were quite legitimate, and in their own way important, Christ summarily dismissed their objections. How could their excuses possibly compare with a gracious invitation from the Sovereign Lord of the whole universe? None of us would wish to see ourselves among those of whom the Lord of the banquet said: "For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden [called] shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24).

God calls us His "peculiar" people in 1 Peter 2:9 and compares us to His precious jewels

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[www.cgi.org](http://www.cgi.org)



## Infuse News You Can Use

Mike James



Mike James

**H**i everyone, hope you all had a good spring holyday season. Here is the latest:

1) **Memphis Retreat:** Please let me know if you plan on attending the Infuse Memphis Retreat (July 17–19). A number of you have expressed interest, but have not yet formally committed by sending me an email. Please do that so I can plan things.

Some of the speakers I have scheduled for the seminars at the retreat include Jeff Reed, Marvin Wyke, John Boyd, Anika Sandy-Hanson, and myself.

2) **Feast Planning:** Well, it's that time again—time to plan for the Feast. We will need more help this year because we are going to run Infuse programs in both Florida and South Carolina. We will also be responsible for teen classes at all the Feast sites.

We started planning for the Infuse programs at the Feast sites in Myrtle Beach and Clearwater this past Friday. Here are the results of that meeting that I posted to the "Hub" (site for all those taking part in the planning). If you want to become one of the planners, please send me an email and we will get you on the "Hub." If you don't want to be one of the planners, but you have ideas in relation to the Feast planning, feel free to send me an email. We want to hear from you.

Thanks to everyone who attended the meeting on Skype. We had some issues getting started, but once we got started, things went well. Here are the results of the meeting:

**Theme:** Some of the ideas for our theme this year included *Service, Impact, Getting Over Yourself, Who Was Christ, How to Gain Eternal Life, Living the Abundant Life, and Living the Good Life*. If you have opinions on these or other ideas, please post to the Hub.

Things are taking shape at the Florida site more than South Carolina at the moment. I already have three speakers for Florida—Chris Wilkes, Jeff Reed, and Adrian Davis. Cody Wilkes is also going to handle announcements in Florida, as well as the kick-off luncheon ice breaker. Adrian will also provide an ice breaker at the Infuse Dinner. Kelsey (Cody's girlfriend) will take the lead on the Infuse Dinner in Florida.

**Elders:** Please let me know if you are the Feast coordinator at North American Feast sites. I will need to talk to you about teen classes and Infuse.

**All:** If you want others to join the meeting who are not on this list, please send me an email at: mhjames6043@yahoo.com.

I need all of you who have assisted in the past to step up to the plate once again. If you want changes to occur in the future, you need to get in on the ground work now. Change happens when the ground work has been laid. Please join us or send me a note if you have ideas for planning, but can't attend the meetings. We want to address team leads for Music, Community Service Project, Special Events, Beach Party, etc. Let's get it rolling, team. Let me know if you will be at Myrtle Beach or Clearwater and what you want to volunteer for.

3) **We are looking for some folks with web site skills to help out with the Infuse web site.** She is getting very busy with other things, and Jordana is going to help him out with some things we want to post to the site, but we want some other folks to provide back-up assistance when needed. Please let me know if you have those types of skills and would want to help with this. Let me know if you have any ideas.

Thanks,

Mike

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### Notice!

- It is the desire of the staff to publish *The International News* quarterly. We can do this only if you, the reader, help by submitting timely articles, reports, and photos.
- With few exceptions, submissions should be from 800–1000 words in ether .doc, .rtf, or .txt format.
- Submissions may be sent to either vancestinson@cgi.org or lloyd Cary@gmail.com. (or both).

**DEADLINE** for the next issue is **August 15, 2009.**

We look forward to seeing you *in print!*

The Editor

## What Should I Expect When I Attend a Church of God International Sabbath Service?

Lloyd W. Cary

**T**he Church of God International has many congregations, and we always welcome visitors and newcomers. Our worship services are open to the public. We hope you will join us for Sabbath services soon.

We meet on God's Sabbath, Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath. The seventh-day Sabbath was instituted at creation. It is to be taught and kept holy in accordance with the Biblical instruction. The Sabbath was reaffirmed to Israel as a part of the covenant at Sinai, and taught by Jesus Christ, Who is the Messenger of the New Covenant. The keeping of the Sabbath is fundamental to a Christian's relationship with God. (See Genesis 2:2–3; Exodus 16; 20:8–11; 31:12–17; Mark 2:27–28, and Luke 4:16 in your own Bible.)

Expect to meet "just regular people" in an educational meeting. The pastor and deacon(s) will likely dress nicely in shirt and tie, but you can make yourself comfortable. Just remember you are appearing before Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Meetings begin with hymns and an opening prayer. Depending on the particular program, there may or may not be a short sermonette, another hymn, and announcements. You may want to bring a Bible and notepad to take notes. The main message will be a 45–55 minute Bible-based sermon. Meetings end with another song and a closing prayer. Very minor variations may exist from place to place.

Simply put, just come and enjoy yourself. You will meet open, friendly people who care about you. If you stay to visit afterward, feel free to give your opinion and ask questions. If you disagree with something, you may say so. No one will put you on the spot. There may also be a literature and CD display for your perusal.

There's no collection, and nobody will expect anything of you. There's really only one rule for attending: Don't disturb others who are listening.

We are a non-paid ministry. If a local minister is pastoring in another area on a particular Sabbath, there will be a sermon presentation on DVD.

Put another way, be yourself, have fun, and don't worry about anything. For an hour or so, you will be in one of the best places on earth.

To find out if there is a *Church of God International* meeting in your area, go to our web site at [www.cgi.org](http://www.cgi.org) or call us at (903) 929–2929. Ω

### THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS P.O. BOX 2525, TYLER, TX 75710

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Editor-In-Chief: Vance A. Stinson

Editor: Lloyd W. Cary

**Contributing Writers:** Lloyd Cary, Peter Gregor, Lonnie Hendrix, George James, Mike James, Jean Jantzen, Frank Klett, Nancy Miles, Bill Watson, and to the many who contributed behind the scenes, *thank you.*

**Production:** Lloyd W. Cary

**Chief Executive Officer:** Charles E. Groce

**Business Manager:** Benny Sharp

**NOTICE:** *The International News* welcomes submissions of articles, features, church news, pictures, or manuscripts. However, it cannot be responsible for the return of unsolicited materials. All materials submitted should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

#### FOREIGN OFFICES:

- **Australia:** Minister, Herb Haupt: The Church of God International, PO Box 171, Boonah, Queensland 4310, Australia
- **Canada:** Minister, John Coish: The Church of God International, 1299 Oxford St., PO Box 33034, London, Ontario, Canada N5Y 1A0
- **Jamaica:** Minister, Ian Boyne: The Church of God International, 60 Cairncurran Ave, Western District PO, St Andrew, Kingston, Jamaica
- **Philippines:** Minister, Rene Corpuz: The Church of God International, 7 Opal St., Severina Subdiv, KM 18 South Superhighway, Paranaque, Metro Manila, Philippines.

CGI Web Site: [www.cgi.org](http://www.cgi.org)

CGI E-mail: [info@cgi.org](mailto:info@cgi.org)

Phone: (903) 939-2929



Organization, continued from page 1

Organizations Are For Team Players

As melodramatic as it may sound, some of us may be required to lay down our lives in martyrdom (Luke 21:12–19). Dying for our faith is a great honor. Consider the historical records of Christians throughout the centuries, the apostles, and Christ Himself.

Unfortunately, today many of us have lost that connection in the quagmire of our “politically correct” society. Many are far more concerned with serving their own personal agendas than sacrificing for their country, political purpose, corporate goal, or team objective.

So it is in God’s church. We find Christians who are more concerned about what they can do “independently,” or how they can help *themselves* or improve on how they *personally* feel. So many today are only concerned about what they can do for *themselves*, completely forgetting the value of fellowship, which results in mutually benefiting relationships. Sadly, they fail to recognize the importance that comes from working with others, and the *long-term value* it has in the actual development of learning how to become a *king and priest*. It’s one thing to read and understand the theory and idealism of becoming a *world ruler* (Revelation 2:6), but quite another to actually interact presently with others, promoting the Christian way.

Are We Team Players?

Not all of us are evangelists. Not all of us are teachers or pastors. We are not all writers or scholars. As in many areas of life, not all of us are capable or qualified to lead in every area. But we can be part of a collective movement by using the God-given talents/gifts we have for the benefit of the whole. We call this “first among equals.” However, “first among equals” can only be understood in the context of being a team player.

*Organizations are for team players.* They require the spirit of cooperation for a common cause. They are not for the self-serving, the self-oriented, the self-interested, or the self-promoting. People like this are not well suited for an environment requiring sacrifice for a collective objective. That is too ambiguous for those who are self-serving; besides, it requires faith and trust in others beside yourself. This is difficult to understand and accept for those who have personal ambitions or agendas.

The Bible says to trust no man (Psalm 146:3). This is true. But we are not talking about trusting an organization with our *personal salvation*. We’ve been through that. Don’t get confused. We’re simply talking about trusting an organization enough to voluntarily participate in a *particular evangelistic work*. In our case, that work centers on sounding a clear and concise warning to a derailed and dysfunctional nation while making disciples for Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19–20). This is not hard to understand, unless you are strapped with suspicion, distrust, or perhaps, just simply an ample amount of selfishness.

Building Faith

Doing such a work requires faith. But faith (belief and trust) develops and matures only when we are committed to something *outside ourselves*, be it our business, our family, or our church.

With that consideration in mind, a spiritually healthy *Christian faith* should generate *outreach*. Unless obstructed, it generates selflessness and compels one to repent, get baptized, and proceed to overcome, while *committing to share* the good news (the gospel).

It’s not difficult to recognize the need to connect and network with others when one has that mindset and outlook. By networking, you can enhance your personal growth and impact on the world around you. There is strength in numbers, and your person-

al effectiveness is multiplied by the efforts of, and exposure to others.

“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke [encourage] unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:23–25). “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews. 10:38).

Holding the profession of faith firmly and encouraging one another as we “see the day approaching” demands a team effort framed in fellowship. We are required to get along, work with one another, interact with each other, and trust and depend on one another. It requires the ability to trust each other’s judgment, thoughts, advice, and leadership. In other words, we should have some type of relationship with each other.

Mutual trust with interpersonal functions, while each of us trusts our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—this is fundamental to our preparation for positions in Christ’s government and administration. Under those kinds of conditions, camaraderie occurs, and the attributes of faith and trust become a real living experience that metabolize as part of our spiritual make-up.

Benefits of Organizations

An organized effort requiring mutual trust and cooperation creates an ideal environment for developing faith and other attributes of godly character that are intrinsically real, because they’re derived from living the experiences. At the same time, it enables us to contribute to a larger work, resulting in greater impact for Christ throughout the world.

It’s much like the principle found in 1 John 4:20. If you can’t love those whom you see, work, and talk with now, how can you say you really love God, *Whom you don’t see*? This is very profound! It’s quite a statement and simple equation to consider, especially when applying the same principle to organizations and/or organized Christian efforts.

How can you say you are on “God’s team,” yet not even have enough faith to commit to an organized brotherhood, sharing yourself, your talents, and skills with a “work” that is bigger than yourself—a work of witness and warning to our troubled and failing nation and violently agitated world? After all, isn’t Christ going to require you to work with others in a coordinated effort during the Millennium? *It’s something to think about and consider* when and if you’re hesitating to fellowship with others.

Clarify Your Work and Calling

When suspicion and distrust are abundant, Satan the Devil can scatter the power of God’s holy people and cause the love of many to wax cold (Matthew 24:12–13).

God’s church needs to have a very pointed, focused, and concise message. It needs to be laser beam sharp! But with all of us being scattered, fractured, and split, we have effectively allowed Satan to diffuse our efforts and blunt our proclamation of the *true gospel* and warning of the coming destruction to our own cultures within the United States, Canada, Australia, and other parts of the world.

Consequently, many today are focusing on more customary and traditional subjects of Christianity, with minimal emphasis on the distinctions of God’s truth. This obviously is less likely to generate criticism from the public. Failure to emphasize our distinctions is unfortunate for God’s church and our nation. We are all aware of Christ’s warning in Luke 6:26 about His true “called out” ones: “Woe unto you, when all men

shall *speak well of you!* For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

In light of this world’s destructive trends and the continued demise of our Judeo-Christian values, God’s church cannot afford to take a “lukewarm” approach toward our responsibilities as an evangelistic “trumpet.” I think all of us who know and understand the prophetic *truth of our national identity* and the *scepter promise of Jesus Christ* should reconsider why we were called and the direction we are pursuing in our Christian objectives and work ethic.

The nations of this world need *God’s team* to be committed, clear and concise in message, and dedicated to the work of witnessing, warning, and making disciples for Jesus Christ. As a culture and nation, we are facing impending national calamities and destruction. And Christ’s return to re-institute our Father’s government on this planet is our responsibility to announce and “cry aloud.” So what are we doing about it?

We should ask ourselves: What are the present levels of our participation in advancing the gospel of Christ crucified, and the announcement of His coming world ruling government? Are we involved? Are we contributing? Be honest with yourself. Are you doing all you can in these *troublesome times* to contribute toward opening up more opportunities to help *save some*? Are we part of an *organized team* that is *actively witnessing and warning*, and *building God’s “Gideon’s Army”* in these latter times? Are we proactively involved in preparing to be future kings and priests by working within an organized effort *bigger than ourselves*? The choice is ours. We need to “get real” and be urgent on ourselves, because the times, brethren, are upon us!

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**“Too Busy,” continued from page 1**

(Malachi 3:17). But what *makes* us peculiar, different, or precious to Him? In a word, one book—the Bible! The worldwide neglect of the Bible by churches and professing Christians is simply appalling! Rising world problems are the result. This article will discuss the importance of reading and obeying that Book. First, why read the Book? What are a few of the benefits?

**Why Read the Book?**

- God *says* to read it. That should be reason enough. “**Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Of course, we cannot *study* the Book unless we first *read* it.
- Reading the Bible fills your mind with the thoughts of God. You soon begin to think like God thinks! His ways and laws become burned into your mind.
- Reading the Bible enables you to articulate your faith. You will be able to explain why you believe and live as you do. This will help you become a better light and witness.
- If a parent, you will learn how to bring up your children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) without modern-day “Spock marks.”
- Reading the Bible gives you confidence, faith, and power in prayer.
- You are *blessed* for reading the Word of God (Revelation 1:3).

**Realize Men Died to Bring You the Book!**

We need to realize men and women gave their lives to bring you the Book! The Bible was preserved through the centuries by courageous God-led men—our spiritual brethren—as a record for you and me to read and believe. Consider:

**John Wycliffe** was excommunicated and martyred for translating the Bible. Later, his very bones were dug up, burned, and scattered in the river.

**William Tyndale** was imprisoned, strangled, and burned at the stake.

**Miles Coverdale** fled his country to escape martyrdom.

**Thomas Cranmer** and **Rogers Williams** were burned at the stake.

Countless thousands of Albigenses, Carthari, and Waldenses were hunted down and killed like rabid animals for possessing the Book. When caught, many were hacked to death on the spot by the sword. Others had their Bibles chained around their necks and were burned at the stake for public display. These martyrs certainly did not take their Bibles for granted! Perhaps a worse crime than burning the Bible is having it *but not reading it!*

**The Wrong Way to Read the Bible**

Of those who *do* read their Bibles, some read it for all the wrong reasons.

- **Some read the Bible for argument’s sake.** Some are destructive critics, gainsayers, theists, and Gnostics who are looking for “loose bricks”—alleged contradictions, criticisms, and objections. These often publish their supposedly “new” findings with the intent of destroying the faith of believers.
- **Some read or skim the Book just to be able to say they have read it.** These often dismiss the content as if to say, “Oh, *I’ve read* that thing. In *my* opinion...” and then go off on a rant.
- **Some read the Bible to get something *into* it.** They read with extreme prejudice to prove a pet theory, “idea-baby,” or pet doctrine. Some examples are the immortality of the soul, the secret rapture, the trinity, predestination, and so forth.

**The Right Way to Read the Bible**

How should we—God’s people—read the Bible?

- **We should read the Bible to get something *out* of it—the mind of Jesus Christ!** We should be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11). Like them, we should allow ourselves to be corrected by the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16).
- **Most of all, we should read the Bible to get *Someone* out of it—and develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!**

Jesus said, “They [the Scriptures] are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). Some have estimated that the Bible is one-third history, one-third prophecy, and one-third principles of living.

**How to Read the Bible**

- Read it prayerfully. Ask God’s help (Psalm 119:18).
- Read it systematically (Luke 24:27).
- Read it reverently (Psalm 119:161).
- Read it carefully (Deuteronomy 15:5).

- Read it every day (Acts 17:11).
- Hide it in your heart. Memorize portions of it (Psalm 119:11).

How will you stand on Judgment Day if Jesus Christ asks you, “Have you read My Book?” How will you answer? Will you answer lamely, “No, Lord. I was just too busy”? Are we just too busy—perhaps too addicted to *escapism*—to do more than listen to a CD or peruse an occasional booklet or article, to read God’s Word itself?

**Too Busy to Choose Life?**

True, we live in times when it does consume many hours to earn a living, keep a home going, and raise a family. And then there is eating, sleeping, and grooming. Yet we seem to always find time for the things we really *want* to do. For example, there may be a favorite television program we watch. And we probably take time to read the newspaper, perhaps keeping up with the latest sports scores. All of these can be a welcome change from our work, but many times they are merely pleasant diversions having little to do with the long-reaching welfare of ourselves or our families. We need to ask ourselves if investigating what God says in His written Word is one of the things we want to do above all else. In other words, are we sometimes just “too busy” to choose life?

Jesus declared, “Man shall *not* live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Taking in God’s Word—knowledge imparted by God himself—is *the way* to gain everlasting life. We cannot afford to ignore that way!

Perhaps some feel their attendance at Sabbath services discharges their “religious duties” satisfactorily. But does a brief, formal church service really provide *enough* spiritual food for you to digest during a whole week? In these days when so many clergymen do away with large portions of God’s Word while substituting their own versions of the Gospel, it is fitting to ask: Are we really learning God’s Word by listening to others? By analogy, how would we fare if we took in *physical* food only once a week?

**Putting First Things First**

Just as an artist finds it helpful to step back and see the overview of his work from a different perspective, so we, too, will gain a better perspective by taking a step back to evaluate our lives from the viewpoint of God’s Word. The apostle Paul, under divine inspiration, admonished, “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates” (2 Corinthians 13:5)? “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalms 90:12). The time is coming when there will be no more time for preparation.

Jesus knew His disciples needed food and drink and clothing, yet He counseled them not to be overly concerned or anxious about them. Why? He said: “Therefore take no [anxious] thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:31–33). This means we must *prioritize* our time. When we put God *first* in our lives, He promises a blessing.

Of course, it takes faith to put material wants in “second place” in your life. But that is just the reason why the taking in of godly knowledge is so important. The Bible itself says: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing [*how?*] by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

**He Read the Good Book!**

Christianity is not just “another religion”—not a formality, nor a warm, fuzzy feeling in your heart—it is a *personal love relationship* with Jesus Christ Himself!

Someone once said about the Bible, “If you know the Author, you’ll love His Book.” How true!

This reminds me of a story of a renowned orator, who in a public appearance boasted, “I will recite anything you choose to demonstrate the importance of proper delivery.” There was an embarrassing silence for a spell. “Well?” he prodded. Then, finally, an old man spoke up, “Let us hear you recite the twenty-third Psalm.” The orator cleared his throat, puffed out his chest, and began to recite the Psalm from memory. He gesticulated and strode melodramatically across the stage. His stentorian voice boomed out, rose and fell, reverberating off the walls. His enunciation was meticulous. His timing was flawless. When he finished, his audience erupted in spontaneous applause.

The orator, mischievously thinking to get back at the old man for suggesting he read something from, of all things, the Bible, returned the challenge, “And now, my good man, for the sake of comparison, I would like to hear *you* recite

**“Too Busy,” continued next page**



**“Too Busy,”** continued from previous page

it.” The old man, not anticipating this, stood apprehensively, shifting nervously from one foot to the other. Reaching inside his jacket, he pulled out his glasses and an old, well-worn Bible, and began to read the twenty-third Psalm. His hands shook so badly and the light was so dim, he could barely read, so returned the Bible to his pocket and he began again from memory. The voice reaching the ears of the hearers was harsh and dry. His speech was hesitant, and he stuttered a bit. It was not a professional presentation. As he continued, his voice cracked with emotion. It appeared he was personally talking to God. When he finished, there was a prolonged silence. There was no applause. But neither was there a dry eye in the room.

The orator, sensing the near-electric atmosphere in the room, stood and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I am humbled. When I spoke, I reached your eyes and ears, but this man reached your heart. You see the difference. While I knew the Psalm, he knew the Shepherd!” He knew the Shepherd because he knew the Book!

We are told, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). “Search the scriptures; for in *them* ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). The Bible is the work of God—not man. It is our personal letter from God. He gave it to us to read and follow. Will we say by our actions, “No thanks, Lord. I’m just too busy?”

Try this experiment: when watching the television news, first turn off the sound and watch; then, turn the picture off and listen for awhile, and see which media, visual or audio, carries the most information. Or watch a movie based on a book, and then read the book and see which carries the most information. Likewise, we need to digest God’s Word first hand, not second or third hand. Reading God’s Word is supreme!

To help inspire you to get God’s Word “inside” you, be sure to request our free booklet, *How To Study Your Bible*, which contains chapters on “Ten Points To Better Bible Study,” “How To Avoid Common Mistakes,” “How To Mark Your Bible for Effective Study,” and even includes an easy-to-follow “Daily Bible Reading Schedule.” This unique guide can be started at *any* time of year and followed at your own pace.

### Time to Act

We are told that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). The world was *too busy* with the ordinary pursuits of life—the materialistic pursuits of “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”—to take heed of God’s warning message. As a result, Jesus went on to say, “...the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:38–39).

Surely it is time to be about our Father’s business (see Luke 2:49). The Feast to which we are invited is available to those preparing *now*, while there is still time.

How about you, personally? Have you been “just too busy” to read God’s Word? Perhaps it is time to take the challenge, to get ready, to enrich your life. *Read the Book!*

Ω



**Thy Word have I hid in mine heart,  
that I might not sin against thee.  
Psalm 119:11**

## Thinking Spiritually About the Heart

by George A. James



George James

**Phrases, metaphors, and imagery of the heart have been a rich aspect of poetry and literature in history.** The strong imagery and inspiration created by the heart in fiction also extends itself

outward into a real world of human emotion and communication. In our communication we hear, “My heart is broken,” or “I knew it in my heart.” The use of the word “heart” has the tendency to magnify our expression. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare wrote, “In my heart’s core, ay, in my heart of heart.” The indication here is that there is something deep within the heart. *Is there something deep within the heart, and if so, what exactly is it?*

When authors like Shakespeare and Dickens, among others, use the *heart*, is it merely out of the notion that the heart strikes an emotional response in the reader, and we can all relate to some physical thing that beats within us, or is there something more profound? Other writers who tap into the matters of the heart include those from the Old and New Testaments. For instance, the heart is expressed through *love* (Deuteronomy 6:5), *being enlightened* (2 Corinthians 4:6), *obedience* (Psalm 119:112), *faith* (Nehemiah 9:8), *fear* (Jeremiah 32:40), *trust* (Proverbs 3:5), *deceitfulness* and *wickedness* (Jeremiah 17:9), and believe it or not, the heart also *thinks* (Matthew 9:4). Of course, we consider the brain as the thinking mechanism, not the heart. Scientists and physiologists, many of whom are evolutionists, have taught the brain is the thinking mechanism of the human body, and thinking simply cannot exist anywhere else.

Many of the readership may recall a book published by the *Church of God International* in 1996, *You Can Take It With You*, authored by Garner Ted Armstrong, in which he expounded upon the human spirit. Needless to say, the ideas and concepts expressed by Garner Ted in this area are the same ones the CGI holds as truth, as well as many other Sabbath-keeping organizations at large. In the study of the human spirit, there are two words that are often identified—*ruwach* and *neshamah*. *Ruwach* can mean *wind, air, anger, courage, and mind*, while *neshamah* can refer to *vital breath, divine inspiration, intellect, and conscience*. All of the above can refer to a spiritual essence, but where does the human spirit reside? Garner Ted Armstrong would have answered *in the brain*, because that is where we think, and just about everyone in modern day Sabbath keeping organizations would answer the same way. To the reader, the author of this article asks: What does the inspired Word of God actually say? Garner Ted Armstrong used to challenge his audiences and listeners to find the phrase “immortality of the soul” or “immortal soul” in the Bible. Likewise, the author of this article would like to challenge the reader to find in the Bible where it states, “The human spirit resides in the human brain.” According to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, there are no scriptural references to the brain. On the other hand, there are over 900 references to the heart.

### Why the Heart?

The heart has a great deal of mystique and grandeur for several reasons. It is an amazing organ that continues to work whether we are running, sleeping, or relaxing on the couch. Also, it adjusts on its own

to the level of activity we are participating in. The heart will beat 100,000 times a day, equaling 40 million times a year. Additionally, it pumps two gallons of blood per minute through a vascular system that extends an astonishing 60,000 miles. In Leviticus 17:11 we read, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood...” (NKJV). Yes, the blood brings life to the physical body, carrying with it oxygen and other vital nutrients; but it is the heart that pumps that blood to extraordinary measures.

### Distinguishing Brain and Heart

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

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

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

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

Ω



# Christianity: Success and Persecution

by Peter Gregor



Peter Gregor

**R**ecently I came across a question and answer section in a religious magazine. A writer had explained that he was wavering in his faith because he was deeply in debt and experiencing all the worries that come with financial troubles. The answer that was given began by explaining that, as a Christian, although his future was bright and shining, he could expect persecution and trials in this life, and he was expected to “endure.” The implication of this answer struck me as odd.

Really? I thought. Is that what this fellow’s going through?—persecution? I should grant that this poor guy was certainly going through trials in his life, but not the same “trials” that are indicated by Scripture. Simply, he was suffering the consequences of his own actions. He had spent beyond his ability to pay and was now a slave to the interest on his debt. An unfortunate scenario indeed, but personal failures shouldn’t be perceived as persecution. In addition, the difficulties he was experiencing would not have occurred *if he had obeyed God in the first place*. Scripture is quite clear in its warning against the dangers of debt and financial overextension.

Proverbs 19:3 explains: “A man’s own folly ruins his life; yet his heart rages against the LORD” (NIV). It is oftentimes much easier to blame God for one’s own troubles, whether in the process of self-actualization or whether trying to rationalize the situation of a friend. God, obviously, does not at this time actively defend Himself, so we have free reign to cast whatever blame we wish up to His throne. But such thinking is, at best, self-deceptive; or, at worst, harmful to our continued growth; furthermore, it obscures the true nature of God, Who is a giving Being and longs for our health, prosperity and success. If self-inflicted trouble could be classified as “persecution,” then all one would have to do is continue to disobey God, reap the whirlwind of despair that surely would follow, then claim that one is being “persecuted.”

God’s Word is replete with laws of *success*, not failure. It is clear that He wants us to be accomplished, healthy, strong, courageous, financially secure, wise, knowledgeable, and therefore, happy! We are given hygienic instruction to keep us physically strong and healthy, financial instruction to make us wealthy, comfortable, and independent, and social instruction showing us the way to an ongoing concern for and peace with our neighbor. We are given everything we require to help us become a glorious success on this bounteous earth that God made. John wrote, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 1:2).

## True and False Persecution

So what, then, is persecution? When are we persecuted, and how, and by whom? Indeed, we are told we should expect persecution and trials in this world, so certainly not every problem we experience can be attributed to our own shortfalls.

Persecution does not come from within—that is, from God—but from without. Persecution, *true persecution*, derives not from one’s failure, but with one’s success! Oliver Goldsmith once said, “Persecution is a tribute the great must always pay for preeminence.” When one puts into practice God’s way, when one has faith that God will reward him openly for his righteous decisions, one will become successful in all he does—*especially* in a free society. Such strength, courage, and accomplishment may then attract persecution either by the state, by demons, or by evil people.

Honestly, what’s the point of persecuting someone who’s a complete failure? Who’d notice?

A perfect example of persecution in Scripture is contained in the book of Job. Though some believe that God afflicted Job, a closer perusal reveals it was Satan who was the instigator and perpetrator of Job’s troubles. *It was God Who made Job prosperous*.

It is written that Job was “the greatest man among all the people of the

# Never Throw in Your Towel!

by Jean Jantzen



Jean Jantzen

**S**lumped against the dank coarse stone wall, his sleep shallow and troubled, Joseph reluctantly shook himself awake when something cool rubbed against his hand. Protectively yanking his hand towards him, his half-closed eyes glimpsed the gaunt rat, in the dim flickering light, as it scurried to the prisoner sleeping a stone’s throw away. Rubbing the gritty sleep from his eyes, Joseph wondered why, if God was working in his life and if he was trying with all his heart to obey all His laws, why had

he been thrown into this caliginous tomblike dungeon in Egypt?

Hadn’t he made the best of an unfortunate incident that kept him from family and friends? Certainly, it had been a frightful time when his brothers sold him for a mere twenty pieces of silver. Still, he believed God had great things in store for him. In his youthful zeal, Joseph thought this could be the great adventure of his life. He’d never been on his own before. He took courage in the challenges presented him, worked hard, made the best of a bad situation, knowing God was for him and would bless his efforts.

God took careful note of Joseph’s growing godly character and conduct. In due time, his boss did become a wealthy man, and Joseph was a great man in his household (Genesis 39:2–4). Joseph must have been flying high. When God decided to test Joseph further, it must have been like an unexpected punch in the gut. I’m sure we could have heard the wind explode out of his sails.

What if we, too, like Joseph, had worked hard over the years to serve God, been faithful in obeying His commandments, been faithful in tithing, in prayer, in our Christian conduct, and in helping the fatherless and widow, and done all this in spite of minor setbacks and trials? So, what if after years of faithfulness, when we feel we are in the homestretch, instead of achieving health and prosperity, we find hard times financially besetting us, or our bodies wracked by some deadly malady, or without cause we’re persecuted and punished. Would we take it patiently like Joseph?

Joseph also knew he’d done the best he could in the hot belly of the earth

he’d been thrown into, as he called out to God for deliverance daily. He might have wondered “Why me?” after serving God with all his might in Potiphar’s household. And God answered his prayers according to what God wanted Joseph to learn (and what God wanted to learn about Joseph), not what Joseph thought he deserved. Joseph was not liberated; nevertheless, the jailer favored him, saw the virtue, the integrity that shone in his eyes—gave him privileges, responsibilities others did not have (Genesis 39:22, 23).

And then, it looked like God at last would release him from his chains. Joseph wondered—*Hadn’t God sent the Pharaoh’s butler and the cook to prison for that very reason? Hadn’t God shown him the meaning of their dreams?* His heart beat fast in anticipation of God’s next move. He could taste his impending reward. He was sure he would be freed soon from this abyss. God would surely bless him now. But days passed slowly, and the drudgery of prison life engulfed him once again. Still nothing happened. It would be another 730 days (or 17,520 hours) of putting one foot in front of the other before anything happened. He must have wondered, *When is God going to answer my prayer?* His early dreams of greatness faded as he rubbed his empty, grumbling belly and the sore, swollen ankle chained to the grimy stone wall. Maybe God wasn’t with him after all. It must have been a low point in his spiritual life.

Would we wonder, like Joseph, on the journey toward our promised greatness, why we end up in difficult, dungeon-like, black hole situations—finding ourselves emotionally, spiritually and physically drained—our bodies slumped against a cement wall, our leg in chains? Do we on occasion wonder if maybe God doesn’t hear our prayers after all? Or do we grasp it is only when we have been pummeled by God over a long period that we are indeed, only ready for that last and most difficult testing period, that last few grueling meters, that character of endurance demanded of us before the end of the race? God knew what He was doing when He inspired the apostle Paul to write that all things *eventually* work together for good (Romans 8:28).

What else can we learn from Joseph’s story? We could wonder, *How come we’re not all rolling in dough?* like God says we should in Malachi 3:10: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven,



East”—no small feat. Think of Job as Bill Gates in the United States, because, among his contemporaries, that’s who Job was. Through hard work, ongoing education, and most importantly, obedience to God’s laws, he had accrued fantastic wealth.

What did God think about this? Did God say, “Job just has too much wealth”? Let’s read further: “Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.’” God was *proud* of Job and his success, and was even proclaiming Job’s name and good reputation to Satan! This is an important insight: God not only gave Job much, but was happy to see him successful. It was Satan who hated Job’s prosperity and upright character; and it was Satan who caused so much trouble in Job’s life. Moreover, after all Job’s trials, it is written “... the LORD made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10, NIV).

God made Job prosperous; Satan destroyed it all; God then made him twice as prosperous. See a pattern here?

What sort of persecution have you received in your life so far? Have you been beaten up for your beliefs? Imprisoned? Have you had your home seized? Have members of your family been tortured or killed? What many take for persecution today (i.e., “my credit card balance is too high,” “my job is terrible,” and so forth) may not have been recognized as persecution by the apostles, all of whom underwent *real* persecution for their message and beliefs. Yet, in spite of this, we have invented a “false persecution” through engaging in the behavior of failure.

It’s time to realize that God wants you to be a stunning success in this world. You are to be the “salt of the earth”—a bright lantern in the darkness. This does not simply include spiritual enlightenment—it means becoming wise, courageous, strong, healthy, and prosperous, all proceeding from God’s way and Spirit. Those searching in this world will look to you and wonder from where (or, more accurately, from Whom) all your power and blessings originate. If true persecution may then come, we should glory that we have been counted worthy to suffer for God’s name, then continue to be diligent, skilled, and reliable with our tasks, decent, helpful, and honest in our dealings with others—and never, ever, be ashamed of our Lord’s name.

Let’s get to work!

Ω

and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” But we might realize like Joseph probably did, *If God poured great riches and/or power on each of us too soon, wouldn’t that defeat His own great purpose for us?* Christ is preparing us for an office, a responsibility for which we *will be* well trained—like He was preparing Joseph for great things, great things He had shown Joseph in a dream as a very young man (Genesis 37:6–11). God, too, when we were called, showed us the foreshadowing of great things to come (Revelation 2:26–28). Besides, most of us could not handle being rich (Luke 18:24, 25).

For Joseph, and for most of God’s people, his eyes were on the ultimate goal—and the true riches of the Kingdom are more important than present distresses. Of course, it is nice to know where the next meal is coming from, or the mortgage payment, or the overdue phone bill, or if that relationship will work out, or if our bodies will recover as we trudge through daily trials. But, no matter the circumstances, like Joseph, we need not wonder. God has never left us with our bellies empty or without shelter when we earnestly prayed to Him. When life is a grind, we know in our hearts that God means the best for us. Just like he never let go of Joseph’s hand, but tried and tested him until He could at last give him the promised greatness, He will not let go of ours either.

God doesn’t always pour out physical blessings because we give Him what belongs to Him. But He does bless us in other ways, just like He did with Joseph in the midst of bitter hardship, trial, and tribulation.

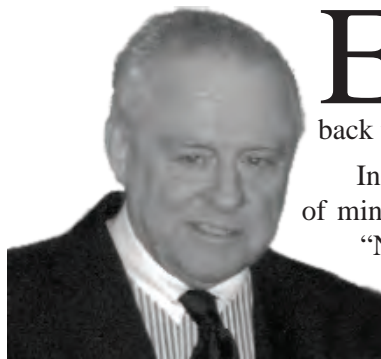
Like Joseph, I believe we, too, are looking for spiritual riches. If we can be like Joseph and trust God in advance, God will eventually open up the windows of heaven and pour down overflowing blessings. Like the Psalmist says: “...he sent a man before them, Joseph, sold as a slave. They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons, till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true” (Psalm 105:17–20, NIV).

So let’s walk through the tedious and tough situations life throws our way knowing that we, too, need to be proved true. And know that “...God was with him [Joseph] and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the good will of Pharaoh king of Egypt...” (Acts 7:9, 10, NIV). God will do the same for us, so never throw in the towel! Stay true to God, especially when it is most difficult. Never compromise your commitment to God, and He will give you the promised crown of righteousness.

Ω

## Father Knows Best!

by Frank Klett



Frank Klett

**E**ach day we live, we are one day closer to the end spoken about in Scripture. Only the Father knows when He will send Christ back to this earth.

In college, just before exam week, many friends of mine would go on a crash course program, take “No-Doze” pills to stay awake, and get into study groups to compare notes and cram, cram, cram. Getting the best score possible was always the goal. A few students would go so far as cheating or trying to steal tests from previous years to help them get an A+ on their exam. Whatever the carnal mind could think up was tried.

There is an old saying that goes like this: “Inch by inch, it’s a cinch; but yard by yard, it’s very hard.” When you procrastinate on a big project—putting it off until the last minute—the desired results are not usually what you expect. I know that many, including myself, have followed this negative method of doing projects or going places, and it always brings stress into our lives. On the other hand, God has known all along, from before the universe was created, when He would send Christ back. A much more efficient and less stressful method of doing and planning projects exists, but usually we don’t choose the easy, less stressful, more peaceful avenue to a successful conclusion.

We have all seen this sign: “Plan ahead.” Waiting until the last minute to do something when we had plenty of time previously, is a poor method—it’s called procrastination. God doesn’t operate this way, and neither should we. God has worked out all the details. Everything He does is right, and if we totally follow His procedures, we will always get the correct results. God promises that He will direct our paths and our projects, for all we need to do is to trust Him and not try to do things our own way (Proverbs 3:5–6). I bring it up again and again whenever “Blue Eyes” sings *I Did It My Way*. Our way never works out, but God’s way is perfect and never fails. We have an agreement, or covenant, with God. Our promise to Him is to obey His commandments and do His will. He promises to bless us totally all of our lives. “All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:1–3). God planned ahead of time to test us, to see what we were made of. This strategy of testing was always in God’s mind. This same great mind of God, because He plans ahead far into the future, also knows when He will send Christ back to the earth. He planned this out before the universe was created. God’s plan is, “there is a time for everything and everything has a time or season” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

In today’s society, everything revolves around control. Our government wants total control in every area of our life. Congress thinks it can pass legislation that will create total happiness, prosperity, and peace. The carnal mind is enmity against God and is not subject to God’s ways and laws (Romans 8:7). Society thinks it can legislate character. We all realize it is impossible to live the correct way without God’s spirit. God the Father and Christ always make correct decisions. They never make a mistake because they have decided to always follow the correct laws and paths that always lead to righteous conclusions. We, as humans, can never lead perfect lives until we repent and are baptized, and then receive the Holy Spirit from God by the laying on of hands. Man’s ways, apart from God’s, always lead to turmoil and chaos. Man is always trying to climb to the top and never wants any authority over him to control or advise him as to what to do. Man is having a definite period of time to prove that his ideas, apart from God’s guidance, never lead to a successful conclusion.

After this period of man’s time has ended, God will send Christ back to this earth to set up the only government that really brings about total peace and prosperity to all people everywhere. Christ will make people follow and participate in the Father’s plan, with a government that leads to righteousness everywhere. God the Father will send Christ back at the perfect time, because only He knows when that will be (Mark 13:32).

Remember, Father knows best.

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# That Ain't Cream Rising to the Top!

by Lonnie C. Hendrix



Lonnie Hendrix

**D**own through the centuries, it has been widely preached (and believed) that blessings are a sure sign of God's favor. This thinking has led many people to the conclusion that Christians should be happy, successful, wealthy, and trouble free. Since the days when John Calvin first began preaching his doctrine of predestination, many in Christendom have interpreted material success as evidence of the Divine calling. In modern times, this thinking has gained even more acceptance as a consequence of what I will refer to as the "positive thinking" preachers. They reason that because God wants to bless His people, all we as individuals have to do is get out of the way and let success and happiness come to us. Even among secular, non-religious people, there has existed a kind of "social Darwinism" that attributes the advantages of a group or individual to biological or genetic superiority. For all of these people, the cream always rises to the top.

The only problem with this thinking is that it is COMPLETELY lacking ANY scriptural foundation! Jesus Christ personally assured his disciples, "...In this world YOU WILL HAVE TROUBLE..." (John 16:33, NIV throughout). He also said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self" (Luke 9:23-25)? Christ told His disciples in explicit language: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world HATES you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, THEY WILL PERSECUTE YOU ALSO" (John 15:18-20). He continued: "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you [Christians] out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God" (John 16:1-2). Maybe I am missing something. Does anything in these words of Jesus Christ sound like a guarantee of worldly success and happiness for Christians? In his sermon on the mount, Christ told his disciples: "BLESSED are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. BLESSED are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matthew 5:10-11). The truth of the matter is that Christ promised Christians a DIFFICULT road to walk!

Moreover, His apostles repeated and reinforced this message over and over again. Paul told the Roman Christians that we must share in Christ's sufferings (Romans 8:17). He told the Corinthian church: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body" (2 Corinthians 4:8-11). He talked with them at length about the sufferings they all had in common (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). He told them that if they were depending on blessings in this life because of their reliance on Christ, that they were to be "pitied more than all men" (1 Corinthians 15:19). He wrote to the Thessalonian church: "Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the PERSECUTIONS and TRIALS you are enduring. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, FOR WHICH YOU ARE SUFFERING" (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5). Peter wrote: "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are BLESSED, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (1 Peter 4:12-14). Peter says that this suffering is the true evidence that one is a Christian—not material blessings. He goes on to tell them to resist the Devil and remain in the faith "because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings" (1 Peter 5:9). The author of Hebrews instructs Christians to "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). He goes on to say: "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart ...Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined [and everyone undergoes discipline], then you are illegitimate children and not true sons" (Hebrews 12:3-8). Suffering, trials, and tribulation are part and parcel of the true Christian life.

Furthermore, God's characterization of what constitutes a blessing is very different from our human conception of such. We tend to equate wealth and

power with reward, happiness, and contentment, but God clearly has a different view of these things. Christ told His disciples: "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23-24). James wrote: "My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ [AS CHRISTIANS], don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also come in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: HAS NOT GOD CHOSEN THOSE WHO ARE POOR IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him" (James 2:1-5)? When we review these Scriptures, it becomes clearer and clearer that wealth is not a good indicator of God's favor or calling. Maybe that is why Paul told the Corinthians: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him" (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). In plain language, wealth, power, and intellect are not the hallmarks of most true Christians.

How can this be? Didn't Christ say, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10)? Didn't Christ promise that we (Christians) would be kings and priests? (Revelation 2:26-27, 3:21, 5:10). Jesus Christ certainly did promise those things and more to His people, but He did not promise them in this life. The blessings and rewards that Christ promised to His people were to be given to them in the next life (1 Corinthians 15:20-56). The Apostle Paul told the Romans: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that WILL BE revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed...We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is not hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Romans 8:18-25). God has good things in store for His people—things much better than wealth, power, and glory in this present world.

The simple fact of the matter is that God is not doling out rewards and punishments right now. In this world, people rise to the top who do not deserve such a station. Solomon observed, "The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (Ecclesiastes 9:12). Bad things happen, too. Christ asked His disciples about two disasters that had occurred in His time. Concerning the people who died as a consequence of these, He asked "...Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:2-5). This is man's world influenced and twisted by Satan. God has allowed all of these things to prove a point, and He will step in and take control some day—that is HIS plan. Paul said that we have been given "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). Our positive thinking, hard work, and good deeds are not guaranteed to make us wealthy, happy, or successful.

Are we (Christians) then to be sad, negative, and unhappy? Absolutely not! Paul said that he had learned to be content in whatever circumstances he found himself (Philippians 4:11-13). Christ told His disciples: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:32-34). Finally, Paul wrote to the Romans a message that still resonates down through the ages to all true Christians: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:35-37).

On closer inspection, what rises to the top does not always turn out to be cream. However, we as Christians have God's promise and assurance that we will receive the greatest blessing of all times in God's time and kingdom. Let everyone say "Amen!"



=====Feast Reservations=====

Greetings, Brethren!

It's never too early to make your plans for the Feast of Tabernacles. Please look over our festival information for 2009 and make your reservations as soon as possible.

This year we have festival sites in the Philippines and Australia, four (4) festival sites in the United States, and two (2) in Canada and Jamaica. In the information we've provided, you will find telephone numbers for the lodges and the festival coordinators. If you have any questions or special needs, please contact the festival coordinators by e-mail or telephone. Please *do not call the lodges except to make reservations or ask questions concerning your lodging*. When calling to make a reservation, mention you are with the *Church of God International* so you will be added to the block of rooms reserved for church members and receive prearranged group pricing.

If we can be of further service in helping you make your plans, please call our main office number at (903) 939-2929 or e-mail us at [info@cgi.org](mailto:info@cgi.org)

We hope you will have a wonderful Feast wherever you may be observing it (Leviticus 23:34-37).

Sincerely,

Charles E. Groce

AMERICAN SITES

PINELLAS PARK, FLORIDA

Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center  
4951 - 78th Avenue North  
Pinellas Park, Florida  
727-541-0805

Tony Fontao  
[aleidachb@aol.com](mailto:aleidachb@aol.com)  
305-385-6306

LAND BETWEEN THE LAKES, KENTUCKY

Kentucky Dam Village  
20 miles east of Paducah, KY  
800-325-0146 or 270-362-4271

James Pollitte  
[jamespollitte@kih.net](mailto:jamespollitte@kih.net)  
606-742-2222

WAGONER, OKLAHOMA

Western Hills Guest Ranch  
918-772-2545  
Campsite Info: 918-772-2046

Ron Elkins  
[relkins17@gmail.com](mailto:relkins17@gmail.com)  
870-653-6043

SOUTH MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

Springmaid Beach Resort  
3200 South Ocean Boulevard  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29577  
866-764-8501 or 843-315-7100

Mike Nolen  
[tmnolen@santeecooper.com](mailto:tmnolen@santeecooper.com)  
843-761-5211

INTERNATIONAL SITES

NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO, CANADA

Best Western Cairn Croft Resort  
6400 Lundy's Lane  
Niagara Falls, ON, Canada  
800-269-0354

Murray Palmatier  
[murraypalmatier@yahoo.ca](mailto:murraypalmatier@yahoo.ca)  
514-697-1706

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Victoria Ramada Waterway  
123 George Road  
Victoria, BC, Canada  
888-468-3514

Eric Jantzen  
[ericjantzen@shaw.ca](mailto:ericjantzen@shaw.ca)  
250-714-1117

OCHO RIOS, JAMAICA

926-765-2160

Ian Boyne  
[iboyne@jis.gov.jm](mailto:iboyne@jis.gov.jm)  
926-765-2160

MANILLA, PHILIPPINES

Development Academy of the Philippines  
EDSA Shangri-La Hotel  
63 2 995 0294

Rene Corpuz  
[rene@cghphils.net](mailto:rene@cghphils.net)  
63 2 995 0294

BALLINA NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

Ballina Jockey Club  
0408-101-309

Herb Haupt  
[h-thaupt@skymesh.com.au](mailto:h-thaupt@skymesh.com.au)  
61 7 5463 2949



# Feast Reservations

## Notice

Feast information for the following sites were listed in the previous issue of the *International News*:

- Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
- Niagara Falls, Ontario
- Victoria, British Columbia

For Feast accommodations at these sites, please consult the spring issue of the *International News*, Volume 30, Number 1.

## St. Petersburg (Pinellas Park), Florida October 3 to 10, 2009

**T**he Church of God in Miami and the Church of God International are co-hosting this year again the Feast of Tabernacles site at sunny St. Petersburg, Florida.

After long research, we were able to find a place to accommodate our worship services every day. Services will be held at the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center, located at 4951 - 78<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Pinellas Park, Florida.

The Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center can accommodate up to 700 persons with a professional sound system, lighting, and stage. It also has a smaller breakout room for the children's classes and young adult's activities.

Services will be in English with simultaneous *Spanish translation* via wireless receivers for those who need it.

We will have several activities, including a BBQ/picnic at the beach, a volleyball and a baseball tournament, a dinner/dance, family bowling night, fun/talent show, and other activities being planned.

### Accommodations

There is a selection of hotels and motels, condominiums, and houses near the Pinellas Park Performing Arts Center. We have been able to secure discounted prices at a variety of accommodations to satisfy everyone. **Important:** When calling the hotel, please mention you are attending with the *Church of God*.

#### Hotels and Motels

- **Super 8 Motel:** 13260 - 34<sup>th</sup> Street North (Ulmerton Road and 34<sup>th</sup> Street North), Clearwater, Florida

(866) 572-8881 or (727) 572-8881 or go to [www.super8.com](http://www.super8.com).

Approximately 4 miles (9 minutes) away from the site. Prices start at \$50.98 per night for a 2 double bed room for Fridays and Saturdays and \$42.48 for Sundays thru Thursdays (double occupancy). Includes a free Continental Breakfast, complimentary Business Center including computer, printer and fax, and high speed Internet. All rooms are equipped with hair dryer, coffee maker, fridge and microwave, in-room safe, iron and ironing board, and daily newspaper.

- **Ramada Inn:** 5005 - 34th Street North (US Hwy 19 and 50th Avenue), St. Petersburg, Florida

(800) 843-4669 or (727) 525-1181 or go to [www.ramadastpete.com](http://www.ramadastpete.com)  
Approximately 1 mile (5 minutes) from the site. Hotel is fenced in, and you need your key to get into the parking lot at nights. Prices include a complete hot breakfast buffet, 27" color TV with cable and 7 HBO channels, in-room safes, coffee maker, refrigerator and microwave, hair dryer, iron and ironing board, a gym, a Business Center with computer, printer, and fax. Prices are as follows:

Single/Double, **\$55.00** per night

Triple/Quad, **\$65.00** per night

Kitchenette, **\$75.00** per night

Jacuzzi Room, **\$104.99** per night

2 Bedroom Apartment on hotel site, \$175.00 per night

- **La Quinta:** 7500 Highway 19 North, Pinellas Park, Florida 33781 (727) 546-5611 or go to [www.laquinta.com](http://www.laquinta.com).

Approximately 3 minutes (less than a mile) from the site. Prices start at \$62.10 per night for a 2 full bed room, and \$66.60 for a king bed room.

Prices include a Continental Breakfast, 25"-27" TV with premium channels, in-room hair dryer, coffee maker, iron and ironing board, and a guest laundry facility.

To make reservations call **1-866-527-1498** and identify as a member of the **Church of God party** and mention the Reservation Block Confirmation Number **0638GRTXQS**. Reservations must be made before **9/11/2009**.

### Condominiums and Houses

There are lots of condominiums and private homes along the area of St. Petersburg, Pinellas Park, Clearwater, Indian Rocks, Indian Shores, Redington Beach, and other nearby neighborhoods. The following companies have a vast inventory which you can see at their websites, or call them for more information.

- **Capalbo Rentals** offers properties at very reasonable prices with ample space for families. For more information call Diane at Capalbo Rentals at (800) 237-5960 and tell her you are attending with the Church of God or visit their website at [www.capalborentals.com](http://www.capalborentals.com).

- **Waterfront Vacation Rentals** has over 160 listings to offer, including private vacation homes and condominiums. Most of the properties are on the beach or the intercostals. For more information, call Carrie Collister at Waterfront Vacation Rentals Inc. at (866) 547-7368 or (727) 398-7368 and tell her you are attending with the Church of God; or visit their website at:

[www.waterfrontvacationrentals.com](http://www.waterfrontvacationrentals.com)

Ω

Submitted by *Tony Fontao*

## Ballina, New South Wales, Australia

**T**he Feast of Tabernacles will be held again this year at the beautiful seaside town of Ballina in the Northern Rivers district of New South Wales.

Ballina, situated at the mouth of the majestic Richmond River, is blessed with beautiful surf and calm water beaches perfect for fishing, swimming, boating and "whale watching." The hinterland, with many coffee and fruit plantations, along with numerous country towns and villages, is perfect for sightseeing and shopping.

Services will be held daily at the very peaceful Function Rooms of the Ballina Jockey Club. Catered meals (midday) will be available on the first day of the Feast, October 3, and also on the Last Great Day, served at the Function Room.

Numerous family functions are being planned, and we look forward to welcoming any who would like to accept our invitation to join with us for great opportunities for fellowship and sincere "Aussie" hospitality.

For further information on travel and accommodation, contact:

Herb and Tui Haupt: 07 54632 949 (011-61-5463-2949)

email: [h-thaupt@skymesh.com.au](mailto:h-thaupt@skymesh.com.au)

To view and book accommodation on line:

[www.ballinaaccom.com.au](http://www.ballinaaccom.com.au)

Ω

Submitted by *Herb Haupt*

## Feast of Tabernacles – 2009 Pinellas Park, Florida



**C**ome one, come all, to be a part of the **2009 Feast of Tabernacles Choir** in Pinellas Park, Florida.

This year we have a first-class performing arts center with all the sound equipment and lights we will ever need. We also have a state-of-the-art sound booth with a first-class technician from the arts center. If you desire to be a part of the music program in Pinellas Park, please contact me quickly so I can send you the music in advance. Thank you.

Ω

**Frank Klett**  
**5940 Burdette St.**  
**Toledo, OH 43613**  
**(419) 475-2554**



# Feast Reservations

## Wagoner, OK 2009 Feast Accommodations

**W**estern Hills Lodge & Resort continues to be one of our most popular resorts. So much so, that each year following the Feast, many make reservations for next year.

Since we reserve the entire facility and housing accommodations, allowing brethren to be side-by-side neighbors, it's like one big happy family living and learning together for eight days. The facilities here allow a person everything he or she may need without ever having to leave the Feast site.

In addition to our rooms, there is a restaurant and meeting rooms for our children's and teen Bible classes and daily worship services all under the same roof. Also under the same roof there is a recreation hall, lounge, pool table, and a variety of other games and music available.

Outside there is tennis, volleyball, hiking, bicycle riding, fishing, skiing, etc. On the beautiful lake that affords gorgeous sunsets and surrounds the park on three sides, there will be pontoon boat rides, a float trip down a nearby river, a picnic or camp at one of several campgrounds here on this several-thousand-acre state park. Play golf on the beautiful course; don't be surprised if your game is slightly delayed by a herd of white tail deer, flock of geese or turkey. There will be cookouts, hay rides, tournament games, and park tours for the little ones, with picnic and games at the nearby campsite. There is a swimming pool, table tennis, video games, board games, horse shoes, nearby Indian museums, malls at Tulsa, 45 minutes away. Well, you get the idea.

Due to the popularity of this site, please don't delay in making your reservations. There are a limited number of accommodations available at the site. Once filled, rooms can be found in nearby Wagoner (6 miles), Tahlequah (18 miles), or the larger city of Muskogee (25 miles). For information regarding these communities, write or call the following:

Wagoner Chamber of Commerce 214 E. Cherokee, PO Box 247 Wagoner, OK 74477 (918) 485-3414	Tahlequah Chamber of Commerce 101 S. Muskogee Tahlequah, OK 74464
Muskogee Chamber of Commerce PO Box 797 Muskogee, OK 74402 (918) 682-2401	

For those preferring camping or staying in a recreational vehicle (RV), there are a number of options available through the park service. The park service will be pleased to answer questions or give out directions to the various campsites located on the peninsula. Their number is (918) 772-2046.

### Rates and Fees Are as Follows:

- Overnight Tent Sites:  
Primitive site \$7 per night, Area 3-6.  
With water and electric, \$12 per night, Areas 1 and 2.
- Overnight RV Park:  
With water, electric hook-ups, and sewage dump station, \$14 per night.
- Overnight RV Trailer Park:  
With water, electric, and sewage hook ups, \$16 per night. There are 28 of these sites, and they are not available through reservations, but taken on a first-come-first-served basis.
- Please note: For senior citizens (62 or older) and the totally disabled, there is a 50 percent discount on the overnight camping fee only—this does not apply to the utility fee. They do honor Sam Cards.

### Reservations

There are a variety of rooms and cottages available. For information and reservations, call (918) 772-2545, or toll free at (800) 368-1486. Please mention your affiliation with the church.

Nightly room rates are as follows: (Sales tax not included.)

(An adult is considered to be anyone 18 or older. Children under 18 stay at no additional cost. Daily linen service is available. Rollaway beds are \$10.00 per night, available in queen lodge rooms only.)

Lodge Rooms: Lakeside, \$60.00; Poolside, \$65.00. Lodge room rates are for 1 or 2 adults per room; \$10 for each additional adult.

Cabana Suite, \$85.00; Governor Suite, \$175.00; Wrangler Suite, \$150.00; Miss Kitty Suite, \$125.00.

Studio Cottages are \$55.00; with kitchenette, \$60.00.

1 queen bed, Hillside, smoking or non-smoking, with or without kitchenette, handicap accessible.

1 queen bed, Hillside, smoking, without kitchenette.

1 Bedroom Cottage:  
Hillside, \$65.00; with kitchenette, \$75.00.  
Lakefront, \$75.00; with kitchenette, \$85.00.

2 twin beds and 1 queen Murphy bed, smoking, with or without kitchenette, Lakeside or Hillside.

2 Bedroom Cottage: \$90.00.

4 twin beds and 1 queen Murphy bed, kitchenette, smoking, Lakeside.

Kitchenettes have a two-burner stove top, sink, microwave, and refrigerator. We do not provide dishes, cookware, utensils, coffee makers, etc. All cottages have a television, telephone, and shower. Charcoal grills are located at the cottages. VCRs, hairdryers, and irons are available at the front desk, but quantities are limited. Ω

Submitted by Ron Elkins, Festival coordinator, (870) 653-6043

## 2009 HOLYDAY CALENDAR

“These are the Feasts of the LORD, even  
holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim  
in their seasons.” *Leviticus 23:4*

- New Testament Passover: April 7 \*
- Feast of Unleavened Bread: April 9-15
- Pentecost: May 31
- Feast of Trumpets: September 19
- Day of Atonement: September 28
- Feast of Tabernacles: October 3-9
- Last Great Day: October 10

\* Observed at sundown.

### NOTICE:

The home office in Tyler would like to recruit the services of foreign-language writers and speakers. If you can offer any assistance, please call at 903-939-2929.

## The Tables of Our Heart

by Nancy Miles

Our Father writes His laws, on the tables on our heart  
That we against Him may not sin...But just in case we do,  
We repent and He forgives me and you...and then...  
He writes them on our hearts once again.

Now, I'm not speaking of a license to sin  
Of course, we should trust God and obey  
But when we've fallen from grace, and we're flat on our face  
We need hope and faith that Jesus will pick us up and...  
Help us keep walking in His way.

Now we can have a part with God writing on our heart  
But we must study the Word and meditate  
Then keep walking in His truth everyday  
And don't forget to fast and pray.

Now Jesus understands the battle we're in  
He fought and won it long ago when He was a man  
But with His Holy Spirit in our minds and His law in our heart  
He can win that battle all over again.

*Chorus:*  
Now Jesus is always there, with the Father, and They care  
And it's Their will and pleasure to save us from sin  
So let Jesus write His laws on the tables of your heart  
Then when sin breaks your heart...The truth will fall in. Ω





Church News

Ministers Ordained in British Columbia!



**Ordination of Eric Jantzen and Jeff Patton**  
From left to right: John Coish, Angela and Eric Jantzen, Carolanne and Jeff Patton, Vance Stinson.

Eric Jantzen

I have known Eric Jantzen for almost five years. When I first met him, he was going through a very bad experience with ministry from a different organization. Having had some input on this matter from others who had participated in the process within the other church, I was comfortable in having him assist in the future as he was able. Going through one bad experience after another oftentimes affects people so that they give up, but Eric and Angela held firm in their faith and in their knowledge that people fail, but God never fails.

When the whole Nanaimo church decided to attend the Feast with us in Victoria, I asked if he would mind helping out. He was quite surprised by this, and by the attitude that the leaders are there to serve the brethren first and foremost. His service to the church has just continued to blossom since.

He is a capable leader with good morals, organizational skills, relationship skills, and love for the brethren. Those who know Eric well seem confident that he is hard working, as he is able, and is a very dedicated husband and father. His family is amazing considering the size and difficult background—12 children in all. This is a testament to the both of them. Angela is also hospitable, eager to be a help to others, and a great asset to Eric, too.

Eric has had the opportunity to conduct baptisms, anointings, assist in Feast coordination, church building locally, and assisting on the mainland with Penticton and Alberta. He has also been a Director on the Canadian Board, being elected by the local church. In every task he has performed well. I am confident Eric will come across to everyone in the church as a man with a heart of service and responsibility to build the Church of God.

While the above stresses his strong points, he does make mistakes, and will learn to serve better as he goes along; so please be patient with him, too, as he remains a fully committed disciple of Jesus Christ. Eric and Angela have not only understood the difference in CGI culture (service-based rather than authoritarian-based), but have embraced it with open arms.

Eric was recognized on the First Day of Unleavened Bread as a Minister to the Church of God International. Ω

Jeff Patton

It is interesting when someone enters the MAP program, because many people would like to encourage the applicants, but also hold a little hesitancy with the thought of them becoming a minister. After working through our mentorship program, the local brethren have become very comfortable that they see an individual who has a heart to serve the brethren and will give of himself willingly to do so. At the same time, they see Jeff and Eric working hand in hand as brothers.

Jeff is a good teacher, and has a heart for helping the brethren. I am sure he has had some problems with his children, which any parent can relate to. Without any problems, they would probably not had the opportunity to walk on their own and perhaps stumble at times. However, only a fool lets them learn to walk on stairs, and Jeff has tried to not be a fool. He has encouraged them to dust themselves off when they fall and get back up. He forever encourages them to be the disciples Jesus expects them to be. The older children have made their own personal decisions to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Jeff set a good example, and the same attitude and concern he has for his children also comes out for the people in the church.

Jeff and Carolanne have participated in many personal training sessions for funerals, marriage counseling, baptism counseling, and general counseling. Jeff has had the opportunity to conduct baptisms, anointings, assist in local church building, as well as assisting on the mainland in Vancouver. In every task he has performed well, and is an extremely competent teacher. I am confident he will come across to everyone in the church as a man with a heart of service and responsibility to build the Church of God.

Jeff Patton was ordained a Minister in the CGI on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Ω

Q & A

*Q: Both Jeff and Eric are from the same church area—how does that work?*

A: Quite well, actually. Most ministers in the CGI are not full time paid ministers, and it is good to share the work as each is able. It is also good to have many people assist in community matters, so the both of them working together in conjunction with the church at large will work well.

*Q: If it will work well, why don't you do the same in Kitchener?*

A: I wanted and still want to do the same in Kitchener. I had Murray Palmatier working with me in Kitchener, but for employment reasons, he ended up moving 400 miles away before he was ordained. This move was probably good for the service of the church at large, but I sure miss him. I am currently working with another gentleman locally and hope that he will be ordained in the years to come.

*Q: How many more ministers does the CGI in Canada need?*

A: We are a very large country geographically, but a small one in population, which carries some unique difficulties. Eric Jantzen and Jeff Patton have certainly helped in covering BC far better. Alex and Jeff have assisted in Alberta, but we could sure use a minister in that Province, too. Alex Kennedy is covering Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Murray Palmatier covers eastern Ontario and the Montreal area. John Coish covers southwestern Ontario, but when it comes to Ontario, we could use one minister living in the Toronto area and one more west of Toronto helping with Kitchener and London. Several of us take turns visiting the Maritimes, but we would love dearly to be able to better serve them in the future. Of the four areas we are short, we are working hard to fill the void in three of those areas, and pray that God assists our efforts and continues to bless us with gifted servants for the future. Your prayers would be appreciated. Ω

Submitted by John Coish



===== Church News =====

Special Days of Unleavened Bread  
in Nanaimo, British Columbia



Naniamo, British Columbia Congregation

Spring was in the air as CGI Nanaimo brethren gathered together on Vancouver Island to welcome two elders for what would be a whirlwind of God’s Word beginning on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. And for three solid days the Word was expounded in sermon and seminar by John Coish and Vance Stinson. For those who could not make all three days, a live cybercast was available online. John and Vance covered a variety of topics, such as *Proof That Jesus is the Christ* and *Partaking the Real Unleavened Bread*. It was a mini-Feast, food for thought, food for the body, inspiring special music, as well as fine fellowship with one another and with Christ our elder Brother. Brethren brought an abundance of delicious food and desserts which were enjoyed by all.

The first afternoon, the much anticipated ordination of Eric Jantzen and Jeff Patton, with the laying on of hands by John and Vance, took place. We in Nanaimo are grateful and humbled to now have two capable, hardworking, and caring individuals as elders of our congregation. It’s something they’ve been doing for a few years, and we appreciate their hard work and dedication.

The movie *Fireproof*, a church production about relationships in marriage, was enjoyed by many of the brethren.

We also had a blessing of the marriage of Alex and Tye Jantzen by John Coish and Eric Jantzen.

All in all, the three days were informative, inspiring and enjoyable. The Nanaimo brethren would like to say a very large thank-you to John Coish and Vance Stinson for their marathon of hard work, preparation, speaking, and traveling. It was immensely appreciated by the congregation.     Ω

Submitted by Jean Jantzen



A blessing on the marriage of Alex and Tye Jantzen in Naniamo, British Columbia  
Congratulations, Alex and Tye!  
May God be with you always.

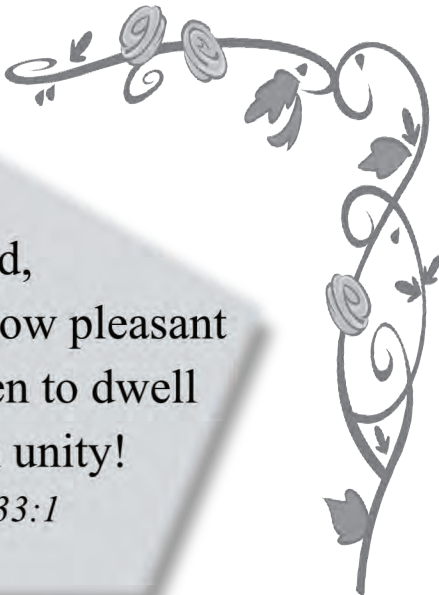


Special Music

Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous work. (1 Chronicles 16:9).



John Coish, Vance Stinson, Eric Jantzen



Behold,  
how good and how pleasant  
it is for brethren to dwell  
together in unity!

*Psalms 133:1*



# Church News

## Report from Jamaica on Feast of Unleavened Bread Nearly 400 Attend Passover Holyday Services in Jamaica

**T**here were 331 and 323 persons in attendance on the First and Last days of Unleavened Bread, respectively, at the Church of God International holyday services in Kingston, Jamaica. Approximately 50 persons attended services in western Jamaica. Continuing its steady growth pattern, the CGI baptized six new members only days before the Passover itself.

During the season also, the Jamaican CGI accepted into formal membership a former Worldwide Church of God member, Mr. Bramwell. After abandoning the WCG for doctrinal reasons, he visited the CGI and decided it was the best place to fellowship and faithfully practice the true faith.

Pastor Ian Boyne and Elder George Ramocan both gave messages of relevance throughout the period, focusing on the meanings of the festival, and the practical implications for everyday Christian living.

In his first day sermon, Pastor Boyne recounted the historical opposition to God's holydays in favor of Easter. He was devastating in his polemic against critics of Passover observance, showing that God's people are on sound historical ground in staying true to God's holydays.

He emphasized that symbols are important, and that an inaccurate or incomplete understanding of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread will prevent us from making the best of the days and the rituals. For example, he showed that while the traditional emphasis by God's church on "putting out sin" during the Days of Unleavened Bread is sound, it is not enough. He challenged the *United Church of God* to adopt a more Christocentric, rather than a strictly Old Testament approach, which allows for unleavened bread not to be eaten on all the days the feast. He said, "Christ is the new Unleavened Bread (John 6; 1 Corinthians 10:16) and the new Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). While putting out sin is certainly one aspect of unleavened bread, as we have traditionally taught, a proper New Testament understanding demands that we also recognize we now belong to Christ, and He lives inside of us. This is symbolized by our eating of the unleavened bread every day."

His Sabbath sermon during the days continued this theme by challenging our perspective on sin. He showed that our spiritual capacity to overcome our sinful patterns is largely determined by how we think of ourselves in relation to our capacity to be victorious over sin. If we think of ourselves as being strong in Christ, then we are more able to live holy lives; but if we consider ourselves as weak and at the mercy of our uncontrollable impulses, then we will continue to be weak, and unable to win over sin. He also emphasized that we have to have a plan to deal with sin in our lives; we can't accept it as something we are helpless to deal with.

He also showed how a lack of proper preparation for unforeseen adversity and trials can result in spiritual danger. He exhorted the congregation to carefully and consistently count the cost of staying faithful to Christ through all the vicissitudes of life, and be prepared for any and every thing.

His last day sermon concluded this well choreographed series of messages by bringing scientific evidence to show how little things, left unchecked, can have devastating consequences on our lives and our faith, over time. He shared his research findings that managing expectations is a critical skill to master. "Many people underestimate what can go wrong. They just believe, like the Israelites did, that they can leave Egypt and go straight to the Promised Land, without passing through the wilderness; but you must expect the wilderness."

He brought up specific everyday practical scenarios to make the connection between the principles he was sharing and members' daily lives. He stressed the importance of humility (something symbolized by the foot-washing ceremony). Having an openness to take correction and a willingness to seek out counsel are vital habits to develop to ensure spiritual survival. True discipleship is not just about being in the true church or keeping the holydays, but includes a change in lifestyle to reflect godly character. This, he said, should be one important result of keeping the rituals of God's festivals.

Elder George Ramocan's last day message was especially memorable for many brethren. Especially within the context of the current global economic crisis, his sermon, entitled *How to Simplify Your Life for Spiritual Power*, was particularly relevant. His emphasis on how money affects the quality of spiritual life provided many profound insights as well as useful practical strategies for avoiding the pitfalls of financial disaster.

He also emphasized the need to be self-critical and to know one's strengths and weaknesses, and make provisions for dealing with weaknesses. "Satan," he said, "has a plan for you based on your unique weaknesses. If you don't have a plan for him and his schemes against you, you will be overcome." He showed

specific techniques for creating a winning spiritual program for overcoming, including how to establish spiritual priorities, and live from these priorities daily.

Angelina Franklin, a counselor and one of the six newly baptized members, shared her thoughts about what her first Passover as a member meant to her: "My first Passover as a baptized member means a lot to me. My understanding of what these holydays are about has been enhanced by the messages by Pastor Boyne and Elder Ramocan. Their emphasis that we should expect problems and be prepared to deal with them has made a great impact on me. I have learned through their sermons the importance of managing expectations in my walk. First time, I used to think like others that my problems were a sign that I was doing something wrong, but now I understand that adversity is an integral part of our Christian faith." She speaks for the entire congregation. Ω

*Submitted by Glenford Smith*

## CGI Jamaica Challenges 104 Sabbath-Keepers to Also Keep Holydays

**F**ollowing record attendances of 313 and 331 at two recent campaign lectures on the subject of the Sabbath, CGI Jamaica presented the final in the Campaign Series, entitled *Questions for Sabbath-Keepers*, on March 28. On this occasion, 323 persons, including 104 visitors, were in rapt attention for two hours as Pastor Ian Boyne presented arguments from Scripture, scholarship, and logic showing why the seventh-day Sabbath and the holydays stand or fall together.

He forthrightly engaged the audience in an extensive interaction with all the major arguments used by proponents of the view that the holydays are not in the same category as the seventh-day Sabbath, and are not a requirement, as the weekly Sabbath is. These included arguments such as:

- The holydays were given after Sinai, while Sabbath was given at Creation.
- Feast days are not in the Decalogue, as Sabbath is.
- The Sabbath's special status is symbolized by its preferred position in the ark.
- The weekly Sabbath is part of the moral law, while holydays are ceremonial.
- Colossians 2:16 is speaking of annual Sabbaths, and not weekly Sabbaths.

He then proceeded to answer these views, in addition to providing compelling scriptural arguments that show an inextricable link between the seventh-day Sabbath and the annual festivals of Leviticus 23.

He demonstrated that at least some of the annual Sabbaths were commanded by God before the seventh-day Sabbath, and that the holydays can be kept outside the context of ceremonial sacrifices. He used several New Testament holyday references to show that it was inconsistent to insist that Sunday observers stop breaking Sabbath, by using arguments that logically compels observance of the annual Sabbaths as well.

The follow-up Q&A session was energetically participated in, and elicited several searching questions, which were fielded by both Pastor Boyne and Elder George Ramocan. So riveting and comprehensive was the presentation that one Seventh-Day Adventist conceded that he was convinced that the holydays should be kept. Several requests for follow-up discussions and for recordings of the lecture were received. The campaigns were suspended for the Passover holy day season. Ω

*From The News of the Work*

## Charles Groce Visits Springfield, MO New Member Welcomed

**M**r. Charles Groce visited the Springfield, Missouri area on April 3 to join with the church in the celebration of the baptism of Maddeline DeJarnette at the home of David and Nancy Beckerdite. Mr. Groce visited with Maddie for a while before the baptism, and with the full support of the local church and Maddie's family, Mr. Groce performed the service of baptism.

The next day, Sabbath, Mr. Groce conducted an impromptu Bible Study on *The Three Trials of Christ*, an engaging and thought-provoking study on the suffering of Jesus. A potluck meal followed the service, and Mr. Groce was able to stay and share in the fellowship and love of the brethren as we welcomed a new member into the family of God. Ω



# Church News

## "And the Angels Sang" in Toledo, Ohio!



Pastor Wayne Hendrix and Deacon Lloyd Cary baptize Terri Majewski into the Body of Jesus Christ.

**"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).**

On April 11, 2009, the angels in heaven indeed sang joyously as a repentant sinner was baptized into the Body of Christ.

At approximately 9 AM on April 11, 2009, Pastor Wayne Hendrix and Deacon Lloyd Cary baptized Terri Majewski. This joyous event took place in the swimming pool of the Fairfield Inn in Toledo, Ohio. Those witnessing this happy event were Sandi Hendrix, Gail Cary, and Terri's husband, Richard Majewski.

May GOD keep her in the hollow of His hand forever.

**Congratulations, Terri!**

## Bill Watson Visits Springfield, MO

On April 14, the Springfield, Missouri charter of the *Church of God International* celebrated the Sabbath with a visit from elder, *Armor of God* presenter, and Ministerial Council member, Mr. Bill Watson.

Mr. Watson presented a full sermon on "Present Events and Their Future Impact," a study in the events of the modern economy and political situation of present-day America, the greed of our present day, and what that means to our children's children and beyond. His subject gave us all much to think on as we pray for the "peace of Israel."

Following Mr. Watson's message, the congregation shared in fellowship and a very enjoyable potluck meal. After the meal, Mr. Watson reconvened the group for a session of several questions that had been forwarded to Mr. Watson via e-mail—from questions like *Why Do We Keep Saturday?* to *Did Paul Eat Unclean Meat?* Mr. Watson engaged the audience in commentary and debate while keeping the session civil. It was very enjoyable—like watching a master at work!

As we concluded the Sabbath activities at 6:30 PM, a unanimous request for a future repeat of these Sabbath events was made. Mr. Watson was receptive to the response, and said that when his schedule allowed, he would consider the Springfield group for a later visit.

Several of us met with Mr. Watson the next morning for breakfast, as a sending off gesture. We discussed the Sabbath service and its impact on the local group, along with ideas for outreach to our community. And we shared the joy of "brethren of like mind," coming together to send our brother off with the love and blessings of a grateful church.

We look forward to the next visit.

Ω

## In loving memory...



Mark Stahl, March 25, 1981—March 26, 2009

## Heartfelt Thanks!

**W**e would like to start off by saying, "Thank you, brethren!" My son passed away on September 20, 2008. He was 24 years old. He had a severe asthma attack. Thank you for your generosity and kind words. All the cards that I have received, I will always cherish them because they mean something to me and my family. God bless everyone that wrote to us. We will be looking forward to seeing most of you at the Feast in Myrtle Beach this year.

The passing of my son made me realize many things; we can't take life for granted. People tell me "get over it," but you can't get over a death of a loved one, you learn to deal with it. And it's been very hard for me. If you are upset with someone, make up with them before they leave, because if you don't, you might never get the chance. The memory of my son will forever be with me and my family; like Phil Collins says, "You'll be in my heart"...always!

And in conclusion, we rest our hope in Jesus and the resurrection.

The Melendez Family, in Christ's service.

Ω

## Mark Stahl

**M**arcus Dean Stahl was born March 25, 1981, in Orlando, Florida. He died March 26, 2009, in Waco, Texas. Funeral services were Monday, March 30, at Corley Funeral Chapel in Corsicana, Texas, with Mr. Charles Groce officiating. Interment was at Oakwood Cemetery.

Pallbearers were Eldridge Howard, Danny Richards, Jeff Hiens, Tommy Botello, Roy Guerrero, and Josh Mains.

Mr. Stahl was an Assistant Produce Manager with H-E-B Food Stores. He was a 1999 graduate of Ennis High School and was a member of the Church of God International in Tyler, Texas.

He is survived by his parents, Dean and Carol Stahl of Corsicana; brother, Bryn Hendrickson of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota; sisters, Lynette Ragan (and husband James) of Waco, Deana Wood (and husband David) of Gains, Michigan, Connie Hendrickson of Macon, Georgia, and Rachelle Crotzer (and husband Chris) of Brandenburg, Kentucky.

Ω



# Feast Site Map

(See details on pages 9–11.)



## THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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