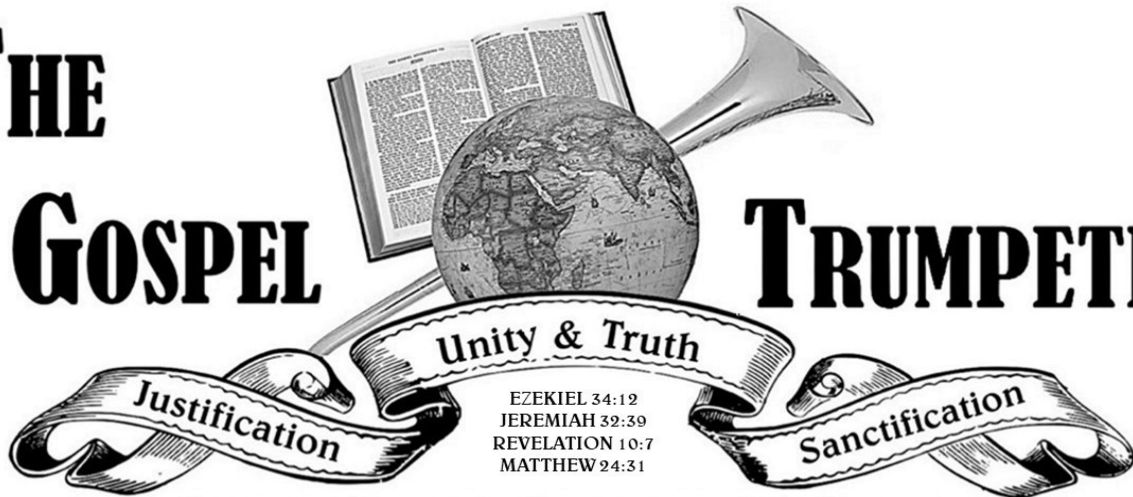


THE

GOSPEL

TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53 September 2023 No. 9

“A wise man’s
heart
discerneth
both
TIME
and
JUDGMENT.”

Ecclesiastes 8:5



"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Newark, Ohio 43055.
POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price; however, it is partially maintained through the gifts and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the expenses being paid by the local congregation.

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This monthly religious journal is published for the benefit of the Church of God universally. It is our supreme purpose to reach the world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to reveal the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error, war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding traditions of men that have no Biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matthew 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)
- Eternal life (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7-8)

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
- Final rewards (Rev. 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- Bible name of the Church (Acts 20:28; Gal. 1:13; John 17:11)

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ABIDE IN HIS LOVE

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

The secret to successful Christian living is constantly abiding in Him. Jesus said in John 8:29, "For I do always those things that please him." We must also do what pleases the Lord by earnestly striving to follow His example in all things. Love, fervently burning in the heart, is the key to abiding in Christ. Obedience to His Word will keep us close to the Master. In John 14:15, we read these words from the Savior, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." We prove the love He so richly gave us by continually obeying His words.

God places His love in the heart of man when the new birth takes place. This great transforming work creates a burning fire of love for God. However, it is our responsibility to keep the fire burning fervently. Failure to nurture this divine fire of love for God will cause it to die out. Love does not automatically keep burning, but it must continually be kindled. Too often, ones expect God to do it all. Jude 21

says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." In Proverbs 4:23, the wise man instructed, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The heart is the center of man's affections. Some things can rob us of God's love if we are not careful.

The issues of life come in many different forms. The spirit of worldliness will attempt to sneak into the heart of God's child. Looking for and desiring to possess the latest fads and styles can cause leanness in one's love for God. Yielding to the temptation of wanting to dress or act like the world can result in love becoming indifferent or cold. God wants His people to look and dress clean and modestly. We are to avoid worldly ways, patterns, and fashions.

Materialism is another robber of the love of God from the heart. This condition causes ones to become discontent with their station in life. Ones seek earthly riches. They want more worldly possessions and greater financial wealth instead of heavenly treasures. They end up in a condition of never being satisfied with what God has provided. They feel a need to keep up with the neighbors. Oftentimes, this spirit causes ones to work two jobs to make

[continued on page 13]



Brother Roger L. Decker

1 Samuel 30:1 And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

2 And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

3 So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.

4 Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for

his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

Ephesians 3:16 says, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Verse 6 of our text says, "But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." Surrounded by problems, David and his men were "greatly distressed" because of the events that had just taken place, and his men spoke of stoning David because they were so upset with him.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we could not assemble ourselves at the house of God. We were confined at home and could not associate with others. Businesses and restaurants were shut down because of the virus. God brought us through the pandemic with victory, and we have gained a greater appreciation of the privilege of assembling our-

selves together. Some congregations went nearly a year before they could assemble together again.

As Christians, we sometimes find ourselves in situations of little or no encouragement, but God will never fail us. Everyone has trouble, heartache, and sadness from time to time, but not everyone deals with them the same way. David, the king of Israel, had more than his share of problems. Some were the result of his own failures through the avenue of reaping. Let us consider how David dealt with his troubles.

King Saul pursued and attempted to assassinate David many times, so he spent years hiding from King Saul. His family was kidnaped, his friends turned against him, and he fell into adultery and murder. His son, Amnon, raped his daughter, Tamar. Amnon was murdered by another son, Absalom, who started a revolt against David. When Absalom was killed, it caused

David much grief. David experienced many heart-aches.

In Acts 13:22, we can read what God had to say about David. "And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave their testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will." By the help of the Lord, David survived his many dilemmas and became known as a man after God's own heart.

The Secret of Strength

The Apostle Paul went through many troubles and hard places. He wrote most of the New Testament while he was in jail. Second Corinthians 4:7-9 says: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

How did Paul stand through all these trials? Certainly, he could not stand in his own strength. He stood because of the treasure he had in his vessel. The secret of strength is the presence of Christ within our lives. Jesus will gladly come into a man's life, but He will never force His way in. He will always wait for the invitation to bring us His strength.

Consider what David did when faced with one of the most serious threats in his lifetime. David lived in Ziklag because he had fled from King Saul. When David was absent from Ziklag for a period of time, the Amalekites came into town with their raiding party and burned it

FLESHLY MEN boast of their own strength; SPIRITUAL MEN boast in the Lord.



down. They did not kill all the captives but took them as prisoners. David and his men wept until they could weep no more. Wherever David looked, he was surrounded by trouble, and there was no encouragement. He and everyone associated with him lost their wives and children. With the village burned and his family taken, his own men threatened to stone him because they should have been there.

Again our Scripture says, "David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." God was personal to him. David found strength in *his* God. He wrote in Psalm 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" God wants His people to put their trust in Him for help and strength. Psalm 18:30 says, "As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him."

When David encouraged, or strengthened, himself, it was not in his own strength; it was in the Lord's strength. We cannot handle our problems in our own strength. It is natural for ones to take matters into their own hands. When that happens, it does not turn out well. First Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." In other words, let the one who thinks he is standing firm watch out!

Sometimes the fall is much harder than the climb up.

We cannot strengthen ourselves in ourselves. If you leave God out, often God will leave you to work the problem out on your own. Let us read the admonition of the wise man in Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

David Sought the Lord for Deliverance

Peter was caught up in his own strength and had to repent. Matthew 16:21-22 says: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." Peter actually rebuked Jesus. Then Jesus turned to Peter and said in verse 23, "Get thee behind me, Satan [Peter was not the devil, but he was being used by the devil]: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter was boasting in his own strength.

Fleshly men boast of their own strength; spiritual men boast in the Lord. Only when David encouraged himself in the Lord was he able to deal with the conflict he faced. We have a record of David's many problems and how he dealt with them. Often, David wrote about strengthening himself in the Lord. You can read through the Book of Psalms of the times David was in trouble and sought the Lord to deliver him.

Psalm 57 is a good example. It

was written, "To the chief musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave." Verses 1-5 read: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth."

When David was fleeing from his own son, Absalom, he penned these words in Psalm 3:1-5: "LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me."

Psalm 56 was written, "To the chief Musician upon Jonathalemrechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath." Verses 1-4 state: "Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have

put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

Put Your Trust in God

David wrote these psalms demonstrating how he received strength and encouragement from the Lord. The Christian must not live subliminally but in a permanent state of expectation. We must be aware of a world filled with problems. There are encouraging and discouraging happenings. Psalm 56 shows David's trust in the Lord. In Psalm 59, David praised God for His help. In Psalm 63, while



OVERCOME Loneliness by SEEKING THE LORD

through praise, prayer,
and meditation
on the Lord.

alone in the wilderness, David overcame his loneliness by seeking the Lord through praise, prayer, and meditation on the Lord.

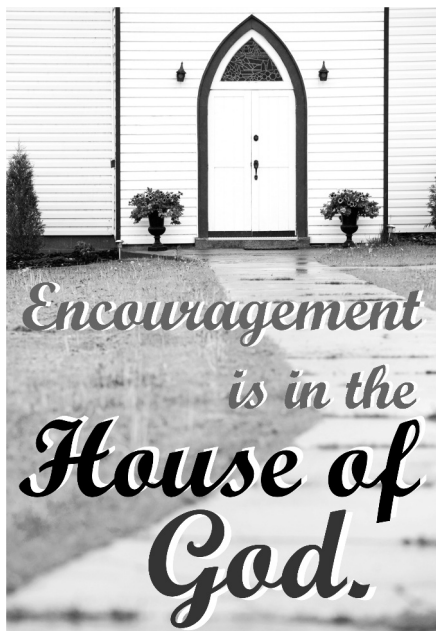
Psalm 63:1-7 was written by David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. It reads: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember

thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."

In times of trouble, we need to stay close to the Lord. Put your trust in God. Keep praising God and praying for Him to make you strong. The Lord will support you. Psalm 63:8 says, "My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me." David was a man of many troubles, burdens, and problems, but he faced them with victory. No one is problem-free. You may have problems on the job, at home, with your family, finances, or they may be personal. Your own decisions and actions may have been the cause. Regardless of where the problem originated, take it to the Lord.

Do not leave God out of your life as if what you are going through is none of His business. Some have forsaken God, thinking they can get their lives straightened out before they serve Him. However, God wants you to seek "first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

Jeremiah 17:5-8 reads: "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."



Discerning the Will of God

The Israelites had no encouragement to give David. They were full of wrath. David was surrounded by anger and hostility. First Samuel 30:7-8 says: "And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."

David went to Abiathar, the priest, to seek the will of God. When you have a problem, you may need to get counsel from God's man. He can pray for you and help you discern the will of God. Abiathar was the high priest and chief counselor for King David. David asked Abiathar to bring the ephod, the high priest's garment, which contained the Urim and Thummim, sacred stones used to discern the will of God. Exodus 28:30 talks about these stones. It reads, "And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth

in before the LORD: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the LORD continually."

David desired the presence of God to be with him. When he sought God's will, the problem started to go away. He asked, "Shall I pursue after the enemy, or shall I stay?" God said to pursue. So, David pursued the enemy and defeated them. His family, and the families of his men, were returned unharmed. First Samuel 30:18 states, "And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away."

Let us learn from this simple lesson. In times of trouble, look to the Lord for strength. Trust God, praise Him, and pray. Do not forsake Him or the assembling of yourselves with the saints. Many times, when people get in a hard place, they stay out of church. You will not receive any encouragement in the world. The place to get encouragement is in the house of God, where God's people give praise and thanks unto Almighty God.

A Discouraging Report

The devil uses thoughts to trouble the saints. Be careful what you think on. Some think: "I will never get through this situation" or "Why does everything bad happen to me?" or "I will never make enough money" or "I am not as popular as others." Dear one, those thoughts are not from God. Also, be careful not to keep company with negative people who have no encouragement to offer when you are going through a battle.

Numbers 13:1-2 reads: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them." Moses chose a leader from each tribe to

spy out the land of Canaan. He told the men to view the land, see whether it was good or bad. He instructed them to find out what type of fruit was growing there and bring back a report on the people. He wanted to know if they were strong or weak, few or many, and whether they dwelled in tents or strongholds. In verse 20, Moses admonished them, "And be ye of good courage."

The spies brought back fruit from the land—grapes, pomegranates, and figs. They said in verse 27, "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." The leaders of the tribes saw what God said they would in Exodus 3:8. God promised He would "deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" and bring them to "a land flowing with milk and honey."

Ten of those men brought back an evil, discouraging report. As they contemplated the battle in their minds, they already saw defeat. They were there when God parted the Red Sea and the people crossed over on dry ground. They saw the consequences given for worshipping the golden calf, witnessed Moses going up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments, and quickly forgot the power of God was in their midst as long as they obeyed Him. Unbelief broke out into complaining and murmuring, and the entire congregation became affected. The people of Israel turned against their leaders, Aaron and Moses.

Encourage Yourself in the Lord

Dear one, you will not find strength for your battles in the world because they have enough of their own problems without any solutions. Strength is found in God's Word, the Holy Spirit, and God's people. God uses His people to encourage and help us.

You find true strength when you strengthen yourself in the Lord. How many times have you faced a situation you could not handle because you left God out? Maybe you prayed about it, but did you really commit it to God? We find strength, deliverance, and victory for our souls in God.

The Apostle Paul was brought before a magistrate and put on trial. If anyone there said they knew him or was his friend, they would also go to trial. In 2 Timothy 4:14-18, Paul testified: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words [he was an informer who withstood anything Paul said and twisted his words before the

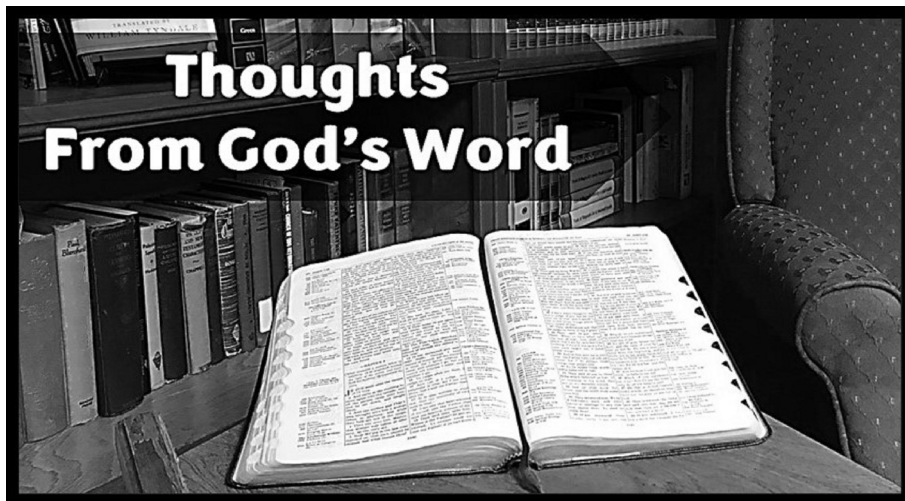
magistrate]. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men [not one individual prayed with Paul or encouraged him] forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever."

Always keep in mind, there is strength and encouragement in God, regardless of your situation or how the enemy has you boxed in. David's situation was hostile and seemed hopeless. The armies

of the Amalekites went from camp to camp, burning and destroying everything. Everywhere David looked, there was no encouragement, so he encouraged himself in the Lord. He sought the high priest to get the will of God. Once he knew the will of God, the whole situation turned around. He pursued the enemy and overcame them. The wives and children were brought back to where they belonged. When there is no encouragement, encourage yourself in the Lord.

(Compact Disc TR-2753)

Brother Roger L. Decker is the pastor of the Church of God in Newark, OH.



And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Ephesians 5:2

Too many times, we think of charity as primarily something we literally do for someone or an act which we perform.

First Corinthians 13:3-5 from the *International Children's Bible* (it just puts it in simpler terms)

says: "I may give everything I have to feed the poor. And I may even give my body as an offering to be burned. But I gain nothing by doing these things if I do not have love. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not become angry easily. Love does not remember wrongs done against it."

God wants to perfect the whole person. I am ever learning

and asking God: "Lord, help me that whatsoever I do, I would do it to Your glory and not my own. Let me be used to guide someone to know You in a better way."

Each time I hear the song, "Hide Me Behind the Cross," I am reminded that EVERYTHING Christ did – His life and sacrifice on the Cross – was to bring souls to the Father, to show God's love is so great that He will withhold nothing and give everything that we might gain the greatest gift of all: peace of mind. We have a Father in Heaven who holds us as the apple of His eye.

This charity, or love, I covet above all else. This charity, this love, is imperative for souls to see God as He truly is.

"Hide me behind the Cross, so the world sees only You."

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.

THE DANGER OF GOING LEFT OF CENTER



Brother Irwin Sesher

When a policeman pulls up behind you with flashing lights, your first reaction may be, "What did I do wrong?" Maybe you were speeding, made an improper turn, failed to use a turn signal, or had a seat belt violation. Some get pulled over because they were swerving or driving under suspension (without a valid driver's license). A child of God desires to be in the center of God's will. Anything else is unacceptable.

If you want success in your Christian walk, you must desire to stay as close to the Lord as possible. The key word is "desire." Do you desire to follow the Lord with your whole heart? Or do you care what other people might say about you? Some will talk about you or make snide remarks if you follow the Lord, but that should not deter you. Do you act like a child of God should when others are around? Our purpose, as human beings, is to live for God. God created man to be in a relationship with Him

and each other.

Mark 12:28-31 says: "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Are You Distracted by the World?

We live in an age of restlessness and dissatisfaction. People are constantly moving, buying, selling, indulging, and partying. They will do anything to satisfy the flesh because their hearts are not right with God. Many are

going left of center in their experience with God. Ask yourself these questions: "Am I living in the center of God's will? Am I easily distracted?"

Distracted driving is the most common cause of road accidents in the United States, resulting in more crashes in a year than speeding, drunk driving, and other reasons. What causes a driver to go left of center? Some are impatient and deliberately disobey traffic rules and regulations or ignore lane markings. Impaired driving, or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, will cause ones to go left of center. Spiritually speaking, getting your mind off serving God and becoming distracted by the world will cause you to go left of center in your experience. As you enter the sanctuary for worship, center your mind on God's will. Your focus ought to be on souls heading toward eternity without God.

Are you going left of center in the worship services through idle "chitchat"? The devil has ways of

getting your mind to wander. He does not want you to enjoy the service or stay focused on your needs and the needs of others. Philippians 4:6-7 states: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The Bible has many examples of ones who went left of center in their experience with God. King Solomon was very wealthy. His estimated net worth in today's terms was 2.1 trillion dollars. He reigned in Israel for forty years. Each year, he received twenty-five tons of gold. It could take a person a million days, or two thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight years, to spend one trillion dollars. God blessed Solomon with riches and wisdom, but he did not have true joy.

Solomon indulged in some things that proved to be his downfall. He was extravagant and allowed greed and self-centeredness into his life. He gave in to temptations and became involved in idolatry, and eventually lost all sense of the truth revealed to him. Saint of God, it can happen to us. We must be careful not to take the truth for granted. We need to love the truth.

Solomon's Heart Was Turned

First Kings 11:9-10 says: "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded." When the Lord commands you to do some-

**When
choosing a
companion,
use your
SPIRITUAL
eyesight
rather than
your
PHYSICAL
eyesight.**



thing, you should take heed and not go the way of your own understanding.

Verses 11-13 state: "Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

Solomon let his eyes stray and went left of center in his walk with God. First Kings 11:1 tells us, "King Solomon loved many strange women," but this was not in the will of God. Young person, if you are seeking a companion, do not look for one out in the world. Do not go on looks. Is the individual a true saint of God? You should date and marry in the Lord. You are headed for trouble when you get involved with a worldly girl or boy. I have seen many examples. Your ideas and thinking processes are different.

If you marry the wrong one, you will have a battle every time the church doors open. A child of God wants to be in the house of God, but a worldly companion may want to party or stay home instead. If you have children, you

may have a battle getting them into the house of God. As children grow up, they may not want to come to church. Children can turn one parent against the other. They may say, "If Dad does not go, I do not want to go." You will wish these things had not transpired in your life.

You need to seek God's face before choosing a companion. Next to salvation, choosing a companion is the most important decision you will ever make. Second Corinthians 6:14 reads: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" Use your spiritual eyesight rather than your physical eyesight when choosing a companion. You will be much further down the road if you do.

Samson Followed His Flesh

Another example from the Bible of someone going left of center is Samson, who violated the oath of his consecration. He was a man of great power and potential, but he wasted it. Samson's life warns that a heart left unchecked and uncontrolled will lead to pride, lust, and ultimately, disaster. Samson took his eyes off God and flirted with temptation. He should have stayed far away from Delilah, but he let his literal eyesight destroy him. Samson failed to practice self-control, and he followed the desires of the flesh. In the end, following your flesh will always cause more pain and heartache than if you continued to follow God.

Samson was a strong warrior. He killed a lion, and he killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. However, Samson gave in to the flesh. True strength



comes from God. We are nothing without God. Samson lost his literal eyesight. Judges 16:21 says, "The Philistines took him, and put out his eyes." God used Samson, but he had sinful tendencies that got him into trouble. Our spiritual eyesight is more important than literal eyesight, but we can lose it if we are not careful.

Samson had good characteristics. He had brute strength, even though he was self-destructive. He went through romantic betrayal and heroism, but he had a serious problem with self-control and pride. He said in Judges 16:20, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." However, the rest of that verse says, "He wist not that the LORD was departed from him." In the end, it was evident Samson's strength came from God. Remember, we are nothing without God.

God can take an easily manipulated man, turn his life around, and give him strength and courage to do great things. Moses, King David, and the Apostle Paul were all broken individuals whom God redeemed and empowered. You may feel you cannot do anything for God, but ask Him to help you and see where He will lead you.

Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way,

and the froward mouth, do I hate." Pride will cause you to assess your life by your own standards and accomplishments instead of God's standards and what He has given you. Selfish pride is especially destructive to relationships. The Hebrew word for "pride" is *ga'ah*, which means "to rise up, be exalted." Pride exalts self above God and others.

Sin Is Never Satisfied

King David is another example of one who strayed from the truth of God's Word and went left of center. His is an epic story of human failure and the disastrous consequences of turning away from God. David should have been on the battlefield, but he lingered in Jerusalem and got into trouble. If you are not doing what you should, you will go left of center in your experience with God. David let his eyes wander to a rooftop where Bathsheba was bathing. Instead of turning his eyes away, he let his mind dwell on her beauty. He desired to have her even though she was married to Uriah the Hittite, one of David's mighty men. David could not resist, and he gave in to his temptation.

David had an affair, a child was conceived, and he placed Uriah on the front lines of the battlefield to be slain. He did everything in his power to cover

up his sin while risking his throne, his country, and even the wrath of God. One sin leads to another sin, and one cover-up leads to another cover-up. Sin is never satisfied. David went deeper and deeper into sin. It was a sad situation in which innocent people suffered.

There was a couple in the New Testament who went left of center. The account of Ananias and Sapphira is one of the most terrifying events in the Bible. It is a classic example of how God will not be mocked. Personal greed can cause individuals to go left of center in their experience. In Acts, Chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira withheld some of the proceeds from the possession they sold and then lied about it. You cannot lie to God and expect good things to happen. They wanted to look good before others, but they did not look good in the eyes of God.

When you go left of center in your experience, you think too highly of yourself. Some believe they are invincible. The devil is real, and he wants you to go left of center in every aspect of your life. He does not want you to make Heaven your home. Make sure you are exactly where God wants you to be. The Lord has ways of bringing you down if you become too proud. God may not strike you down physically, but you could die spiritually. You may think nobody knows what you did, but God knows.

Stay Focused on God

Ones who are spiritually dead think everything is fine. They feel they have no spiritual needs. Some people think nobody goes to hell, and everybody goes to Heaven, even those who live ungodly. I heard an individual say he was praying for someone, even though he was actively engaged in sin. The Lord will not hear a sinner's prayer unless it is

a prayer of repentance.

Some feel saved under the cover of "church joining." There is nothing in the Word of God about joining a church to get right with God. It is a lie false preachers are preaching. Some never check out what they hear by studying the Word of God. Many so-called preachers do not get into the Word of God. They may tell a few jokes or funny stories, but the people are not hearing the truth. Thank God for the truth.

God saw through Ananias and Sapphira, and they received instantaneous judgment. I could have been struck down while living in sin and going against the Word of God, but God had mercy on me. Thank God for His

mercy and my godly heritage. I had godly parents who corrected me when I misbehaved. They did not read a Dr. Spock book on parenting to receive instruction on discipline. There was no such thing as timeout; it was instant judgment. I did not always understand why they disciplined me the way they did, but as I got older, I realized it was because they loved me.

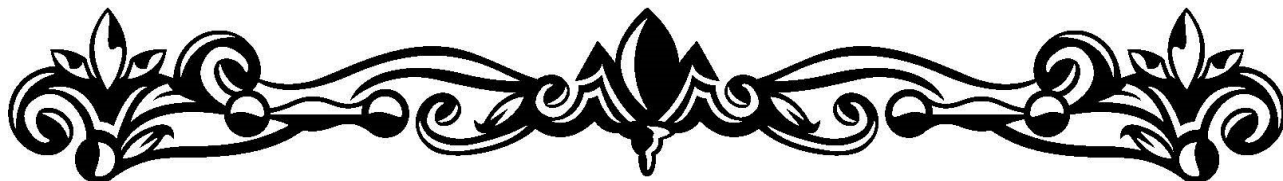
The Lord loves you, and He wants you to prosper. You may wonder why the pastor gets stern on certain lines. Dear one, he brings the message to stir up your pure mind. He is the watchman on the wall. He sees things you may not see. We are living in perilous times, and the pastor is responsible for the souls God has

entrusted him with. If you have a godly pastor, you should uplift him with your prayers and measure up to the preached Word of God.

Are you going left of center in your experience with God? It is easy to do if your mind is on other things. Stay focused on the things of God. If you dress or act more like the world, you have gone left of center. The glory of God will radiate from a true saint of God. If you have a need, take it to God and pray about it. He will meet your need.

(Compact Disc TR-2781)

Brother Irwin Seshier attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



I do not know how far the East is from the West, but that is how far God has removed my sins. I have been in some dark times in my life, but it does not matter how dark it gets, I know in my heart that God has forgiven me of my sins. He has cast my sins far from me. Why should I be down? Why should I fret? Why should I let the devil tempt me with this and that? I know in my heart, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the Lord has saved me!

You have probably been through dark times. I

have, but God knows my heart. He knows where I am, He knows where I was, and He knows where I want to be. I am determined to mind Him regardless of how the enemy tries to fight! It has been dark at times, and I have wished that I had more faith. I once said that to someone, and they told me, "Use what faith you have." I thought about that. If I use what faith I have, God is going to give me more faith. The more faith I have, the more faith He is going to give me to face whatever I have to go through in my life.

I am so glad that I am serving a God who is able! Dark times come. If you are in a dark time, hold on to God. When it is really dark and you cannot feel God or sense His presence, it is easy to look around and think: "What about this? What about that?" That is not the way to go.

When Peter said, "What about this? What about that?" Jesus told him, "What is that to thee? follow thou me" (John 21:22). That is what I want to do! Regardless of what I see or what I hear, I want to keep my eyes on the goal. I want the Lord to use me in whatever way He can.

Sister Madeline Darr



Hebrews 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

The *Amplified Bible* breaks this Scripture text down even more. It says: "Do not, therefore, fling away your [fearless] confidence, for it has a glorious and great reward. For you have need of patient endurance [to bear up under difficult circumstances without compromising], so that when you have carried out the will of God, you may receive and enjoy to the full what is promised." All our confidence must be placed in the hand of God. He has a plan, and His plan is for our good.

We should not compromise or back away from the truth. We should stick to what we know is right, read and obey God's Word, and pray about whatever comes our way. When we dedicate our lives to God, all His promises belong to us.

Joshua 1:9 says: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." This Scripture holds so much reassurance for me. We can know God's Word and His promises never change. We can put faith, trust, and confidence in God, knowing He will always be the same. We can have courage when we are

afraid and peace knowing He is always there for us.

Remember, having confidence in God comes from God. It does not come through our own strength. Have you ever noticed how God can catch you by surprise? He does the unexpected when we least expect it. I foresaw different outcomes from circumstances in my life, but God saw the opposite. It completely was not what I thought would happen, and it surprised me.

Isaiah 55:8-9 states: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God sees things we do not. He can take a bad circumstance and turn it into something good. He can also take a good situation and make it far better than we could ever imagine. His ways are so much higher than ours because He understands what we do not.

I wear size eight shoes. If I were to take a size four shoe and stretch it with all my might, pull on it, tug it, and try to shove my foot into it, obviously it would not fit because it is not the right size. It may perfectly match my outfit, but that does not mean it will work. If I try to wear size four shoes, I will end up with cuts and blisters all over my feet. Ultimately, it will defeat the purpose of wearing shoes, and I may

as well go barefoot. I can avoid all these problems if I stick with shoes that fit.

We may think something in our lives is good for us, a part of *our* plan. It could be a job, girlfriend, boyfriend, and the list goes on. However, it may not be part of God's plan. By choosing our way instead of God's, we are leading ourselves down a path filled with bruises, cuts, blisters, and heartache because the "shoe" does not fit. If we follow God's plan, we have no need to worry. The "shoe" will fit every single time.

God will never lead us down the wrong path. By following God's plan, you can easily avoid hurt and heartache. There will be plenty of seemingly deep, unending trials. You may feel defeated, weary, and worn, but God sees something we do not. Whatever we face is for our good. It will all fall perfectly into His plan if we keep obeying, trusting, and following His plan, not ours. There is peace in knowing He will not give you more than you can handle, by His grace.

It is amazing how God can use us in different ways. Just by having His presence within us, He can take an ordinary person, like you and me, and make us extraordinary by giving us meaning in our lives. It amazes me to think the Creator of the universe would care that much for me and make something out of nothing.

Psalm 56:3 says, "What time I

am afraid, I will trust in thee." The verse in Joshua 1:9 talks about having courage even when we are afraid. We can put our trust in God. In this life, there will be times of fear. It will not always be easy to take your burdens, worries, and doubts to the Lord. A trial or situation will come along and really shake you, but Jesus knows exactly what you are going through. He was here on the earth, died on the Cross, and carried the whole world's sins. He knows what it is like to face whatever you are going through.

Sometimes we focus our eyes on the problem instead of on Jesus. You can focus on the "what ifs": "What if this happens?" or "What if it does not happen?" You can basically live in the "what ifs," looking into the future rather than living in the present. "What ifs" are a tool of the devil. You can get so wrapped up in them, it can hinder your walk with God. It can cause you to doubt Him and worry about everything. It is better to live in the present, focus on one day at a time, and trust in God. It is easier said than done, but it works for your good.

We need to trust God because Romans 8:28 says, "All things

work together for good." We can have peace in fearful times because God is working it all for good. Nothing happens by accident; everything happens for a reason. This is another thought that can give you peace in the darkest times.

March 2021 was a difficult time for my family. It had been one year since my grandpa died of cancer, and then we learned my grandma has cancer. Other things were going on too. It was a real deep trial for me. Late one night, I was reading my Bible and taking notes, and I felt the urge to turn the page in my notebook and start writing. All these words flowed out of me, yet they were not from me. God gave me these words. They brought peace and helped me through that difficult time. I want to share what the Lord gave me.

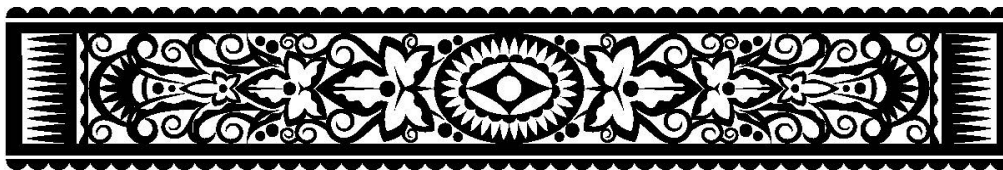
"It scares me that relationships I have built end in such heartache. It scares me that someone could become so meaningful in my life just to turn around and disappear into the night. It is frustrating to feel overlooked, and it hurts when it seems someone is shutting me out. I do not know my plans for the future, and I may never fully comprehend the big picture. I do not

know why I can feel so unloved, even though I know that I am loved by the One above. I do not understand why people think it is necessary to tear down others rather than build one another up. I do not understand why we cannot settle all of our differences. I do not know why I have to face this mountain. I do not understand why I have to walk through this valley. I do not know and understand many things, but this I do know – this life is not meant to be walked through all alone. My Heavenly Father has a purpose, a plan, and a reason behind every situation. I do not have to fight my battles defenseless, for He knows, and He understands. He is up to something good."

Those words I wrote helped me. They started negative, but God somehow switched my mindset and turned it into something positive. No matter what you face, if a problem or trial arises, whether now or in the future, know that it will all be for your good.

Sister Makayla Carr

Sister Makayla Carr is a member of the Church of God youth group in Newark, OH.



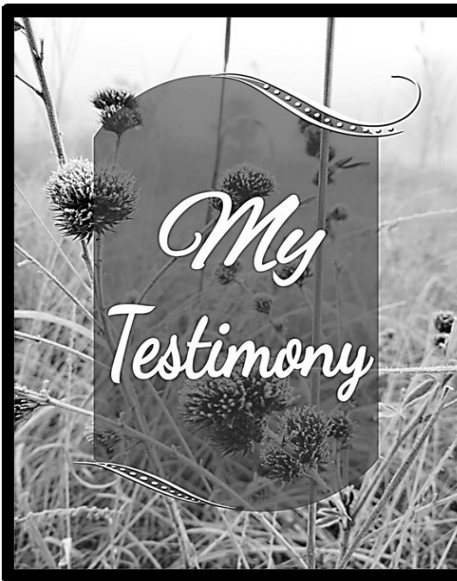
[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]

ends meet. Mothers leave the home to work so they can have more material goods. Some have left a spiritual congregation, where their soul was feeding on sound doctrine, for a better-paying job or promotion. The love of God in their hearts has become indifferent toward the things of God. Their relationship with God has begun to wane.

Every child of God must be careful and continually guard against various, devilish intrusions. Christ starts the fire in our hearts, but our responsibility is to keep the fire burning. The deep, burning love for God the Ephesian church once enjoyed

died out after a time. Although they still had a form of godliness and maintained good works, the real vitality soon turned into a form. The Laodicean church fell into a lukewarm state. They felt rich and increased with goods, but they did not realize they were naked before the Lord. The people of God must continue to hold fast to the Lord. Continue to abide in Him, His Word, and His ways. It will be worth it all to gain the heavenly prize waiting at the end of life's journey.

Selected



A Passion for the Work of God

Brother E. David
Stegmeier

We sing a song written by the Gaithers called "I'd Do It All Over Again." It reads:

*If I had to start over and relive
my life,
There's nothing that I'd like to
change;
I've started with Jesus, and with
Him I stand,
I'd do it all over again.*

*And I'd do it all over again,
I'd walk on with Jesus till my
journey's end;
I'd never give up living
For what the world's giving;
I'd do it all over again.*

*This life's had its heartaches,
And I've had my share,
But never too much to give in;
And you ask me if trials are worth
all the pain.
Still I'd do it all over again.*

At an early age, I gave my life to Christ. I am eighty-one years old and have never left the church because I am convinced we have the ultimate truth. I was not born yesterday, and I am no "Johnny-come-lately." I have studied many religions, and God has helped me. I would never give up living for what the world is giving. I would do it all over again. There is nothing in the

world I want. There is absolutely nothing good out there for you or me.

Hebrews 11:25, referring to Moses, reads, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." There is pleasure in sowing sin, but the reaping is so grievous. Hosea 8:7 says, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." I have worked with many people in my life and seen some very tragic things. No one who leaves a thriving Church of God congregation will ever prosper. I have never seen it happen. Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

These last few years, I have suffered with tremendous pain. I saw an orthopedic surgeon, and he thought I had arthritis in my hip. After some physical therapy, the physical therapist said, "It is very evident we are not helping you." I had blood work done, and they quickly called me and said my body was full of cancer. I have been struggling with this.

I was born in 1941 in the cold state of North Dakota. (One year, we drove through North Dakota to attend a camp meeting with the children. The temperature

was negative seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit with the wind chill.) In 1946, we moved to Montana, which is called the Big Sky Country. My father was a merchant. We had a store in North Dakota that did not do well after the Great Depression. All my family, including my uncles and aunts, moved to Seattle, Washington, to work at Boeing. We stopped at Plains, Montana, and my dad liked it there. We were near the Rocky Mountains and the snow. We purchased a farm there in a beautiful little valley. It was all God. I can look back and see how God miraculously was in my life.

The first Sunday morning in Montana, we went to a Methodist church, and it was dry. Brother Emerson Wilson would have said, "It was drier than a four-year-old bird's nest." My mother asked the pastor, "Where are all the children?" We had a large family. He replied, "This is summer, and the children are on vacation." My mom thought that did not sound right. God is never on vacation. So, we went to the Church of God that night. It was a lively service with people jumping, shouting, and having a wonderful time praising God!

When we got home, we had a family meeting. We gathered around the kitchen table and discussed the Church of God service. My mom said this was where she was going to church. My dad said he was not going to church there. My dad's religion, the Reformed Church of America, is very dry, formal, and legalistic. They follow the catechism written in their little black book. So, Mom decided we were going to the Church of God when I was five years old. For twenty years, my father opposed my mother and did not come with us to the Church of God. If he came, it was to find fault. If he found any fault, he would focus on it and bring it to my mom.

God dealt with me when I was five years old. The Prophet Samuel was a little boy when God began to speak to him. The Bible says in 1 Samuel 3:7, "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him." When God spoke to Samuel, he went to Eli. Verse 8 says, "And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child."

My mother was very pretty. My father would accuse her of going to church for some handsome man. We lived quite a distance from the church; so we walked. In the wintertime, it was cold. The snow was sometimes a foot deep, but Mother refused to take a ride. I would walk inside my mother's coat. She would button it up, and I would peek out the top. My mother refused to give my father any reason to accuse her of anything.

Sometimes when I got to church, I would stand in the foyer and say: "Mom, I'm sick. I want to go home." The pastor would come out and say I was not sick. I was under conviction. (I had a student who came to church for a while and got saved. Then he wandered out into the wilderness of sin and lived a terrible life. He called me and said, "Mr. Stegmeier, I want to come back to church, but I do not like the feeling I get when I come." He was under conviction. He finally came back and got saved. Later, he was involved in a horrific car crash.)

One Sunday morning, I do not remember what the pastor preached (I was probably six or seven years old), but I distinctly remember in the Rocky Mountains of Plains, Montana, singing the song called "I Will Follow Thee" by A. L. Byers. It reads:

*I will follow thee, my Savior,
Wheresoe'er my lot may be;
Where thou goest I will follow,
Yes, my Lord, I'll follow thee.*

*Tho' the road be rough and stormy,
Trackless as the foaming sea,
Thou hast trod this way before me,
And I gladly follow thee.*

*Tho' 'tis lone, and dark, and dreary,
Cheerless tho' my path may be;
If thy voice I hear before me,
Fearlessly I'll follow thee.*

*Tho' I meet with tribulation,
Sorely tempted tho' I be,
I remember thou wast tempted,
And rejoice to follow thee.*

*Tho' thou leadest thro' afflictions,
Poor, forsaken tho' I be,
Thou wast destitute, afflicted,
And I only follow thee.*

*I will follow thee, my Savior,
Thou didst shed thy blood for me;
And though all men should forsake
thee,
By thy grace I'll follow thee.*

As a little boy, I marched to the altar and prayed, "God, I want to live for You." I have stayed with the church ever since. Thank God, He has blessed me with a wonderful life.

At one time, my entire family and my wife's family left us. We had a congregation of approximately one hundred and twenty people, and thirty-five of them walked out the door because I would not take a stand they wanted me to take. Most of my memories are beautiful, but I have some very sad memories. When my family left, they took my nephews and nieces, whom I was very close to, and they became involved in a cult. The true Church of God is not a cult. We do not tell people what to do, only according to the Word of God.

My oldest nephew, who was involved in that cult for two or three years, moved close to where we were living. He got a job working for a farmer right across from our house. Later, he worked with a builder, building

a home for my sister's former husband in Portland. Metropolitan Portland is a huge city with more than a million people. It had to have been the Lord who gave us a miraculous opportunity to reconnect with him. He said it was the happiest time of his life. Later, he became lonely and called his parents. Had I known the end results, I would have told him to be careful of what they would tell him. They persuaded him to return to the cult. We have not seen him since.

In 1955, the Church of God congregation in Montana had a nucleus of people who left the Anderson movement because of the apostasy. This movement had let down on the standard, so we left. It was the same year Brother W. A. Wilson left the movement. At that time, we did not know the congregation in Newark, Ohio, existed. We started an autonomous congregation solely under the auspices of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. The Church of God headquarters is in Heaven. God is our Head.

In 1961, after I had just entered college at the University of Montana, I heard a man by the name of Brother Emerson Wilson was coming to Hamilton, Montana, a city south of where I was. He came with Brothers George Gordon and Kenny Wright.

There is a beautiful story about Brother Gordon. He had cancer and was near death. Brother Wilson was on his way to a revival meeting (my wife's mother was with him), and God said, "Go back and anoint Brother Gordon." Brother Wilson went to Brother Gordon's home, ascended the stairs to his bedroom, anointed him with oil, and prayed for him. Brother Gordon jumped out of bed after he had not walked for days. His feet and legs were straight, and he began to run and jump around. God healed him, and he accepted Brother Wilson's invitation to

come with him to the Hamilton meeting. I was trying to listen to Brother Wilson preach, but Brother Gordon was running around the church building, jumping, shouting, hollering, and praising God. He was excited because God had healed him! He was excited and continued to jump for the rest of his life.

After that meeting was over, Brother Wilson left for Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, and held a meeting for an old German minister by the name of Brother Reimchen. I said to Mom, "Let's go." I had a little Volkswagen, and we drove through a blizzard. In Montana, there are blizzards in the late springtime. It was June, and school was out. We drove toward Glacier National Park through a blizzard. We went through deep snow, wind, and rain. We could hardly make it with all the snow, but we finally arrived and heard Brother Wilson preach once again.

I had been dating a girl who thought the sun rose and set on her. She thought she was God's gift to men. She came with her aunt and uncle to the services. She went to the altar, and Brother Wilson prayed with her. She said, "I want to dedicate my beauty to the Lord." Oh, did she get a tongue-lashing from Brother Wilson! Pride was coming out all over her. I did not marry her, thank the Lord. Her own aunt and uncle said she was not for me.

I resumed college the next fall. In 1963, I graduated and decided to visit Newark, Ohio, where Brother Wilson was the pastor. I never saw in my life so many people going to church. I thought everyone in the city must be going to the Church of God. As I was sitting and enjoying the services, a really pretty girl came out and played the piano. I had never heard anyone play so

beautifully. I did not know much about what went on in that camp meeting, but I surely had my eyes fixed on that girl who was playing the piano.

The young lady and I courted for five years. It was long-distance courting over the phone. I would call and sing to her; she could call and sing to me. There is a two-hour time difference between Montana and Ohio, so many times, I would call her at ten o'clock, and it was midnight for her. I proposed to her at Aunt Beacie's house. (She lived in the caretaker's house at God's Acres.) I asked her if she would marry me, and she said, "I will pray about it." There was nothing wrong with that. She prayed, and God put us together.

It is a privilege to live a godly life and be a good example.

I taught high school band and choir in a town in the Rocky Mountains for five years. I have lots of wonderful memories. Some of those students I taught still contact me today. One is a Doctor of Education. He sends me a text every morning. While I was teaching in Thompson Falls, the Vietnam War escalated, and our country began to draft all the young men. My superintendent was awesome. He went to the county draft board and asked, "Is Mr. Stegmeier going to be drafted?"

They said, "Yes, sooner or later."

He said, "We do not want to lose him as a teacher because he is a good mentor for our students." It is a privilege to live a godly life and be a good example.

The draft board said, "He can join the Reserves."

I joined the Reserves in 1967 and was stationed at Fort Leon-

ard Wood in Missouri. I knew nothing about military life. I grew up with a strong belief in divine healing. They wanted to give me shots. I had never had a shot in my life. In basic training, they respected me, and I did not have to get any shots. However, when we marched on the parade field with all the platoons, maybe about five or six hundred young men, they hollered, "Who is the young man who does not take shots?" I walked out in front of the whole group. "Is it against your religion to guard our rifles when we take our shots?"

I said, "No, sir."

When I got to AIT (Advanced Individual Training), there was a doctor in the medical center who became so angry with me. He

was going to take me to Washington. He said, "You will take these shots." I was not there to fuss or argue with my superiors, so he gave me shots in both arms. Because I felt con-

demned for having done so, I called Brother Wilson and he said: "Brother David, remember while in the service you are not your own. You belong to the government, so they can do whatever they want with you." I felt better after talking to him. I looked to Brother Wilson and respected him as a wonderful man of God.

In 1968, after five years of pleading with my wife to marry me, she finally said yes. I use the example of our courtship when counseling young couples. In our congregation of fifty-three years, we have never had a divorce because I preach strongly on home values. The father needs to be in love with his wife, a good worker, and a good husband. The wife needs to be a good homemaker. The angels asked Abraham, "Where is your wife?" She was in the tent where she was supposed to be (Genesis 18:9).

Also, I use the following verse while counseling young couples. Genesis 24:27 says, "I [the antecedent of the word I is the servant of Abraham] being in the way, [Stay with the church, young people. Do not look for a companion in Babylon or the world. Stay in the way of truth.] the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." I found a companion among God's people. My wife and I were brought up in strong Church of God congregations. She was raised in Newark, Ohio, and I lived in Montana. God brought us together. Ours was the last wedding at the Sixth and Locust streets church building.

Second Corinthians 6:14 says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers [in any relationship]: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" My pastor counseled me to look for a companion in the church, someone who was saved, had a good experience, and was not up and down. As a child I would say, "I do not want a yo-yo religion, or a window shade religion," in other words, up and down, in one day and out the next. When I got saved, I stayed with the church because I am convinced we have the ultimate truth.

After we were married, we moved out west for a period of time. We lived in Montana in a little cabin I lived in while I taught school. It was neat. Right beside our bedroom window was a little creek that ran down from the Rocky Mountains. Out front was a larger river called the Thompson Falls River. The bears came down at night and foraged through our garbage, growling, but they did not bother me. I took a night shift job for a while. My wife was scared when those bears came and growled. She

was not a country girl; she was a city girl. We lived there for a while and did evangelistic tours in Canada, Oregon, California, and Arizona. We had a wonderful time in Montana. God blessed us in a very special way.

We witnessed some awesome miracles. While in Montana, we did evangelistic work in rest homes. (It is good to be busy for the Lord. One place you can be busy is in the nursing homes.) We went to one room, and this lady said, "Get out of here!" Some sisters from the church continued to be nice to her. Finally, one day she recognized we had something she did not have, and she was gloriously saved. Her name was Mabel Pearson. She got a

That afternoon, he came back to the chapel and asked me if it was possible to live a holy life.

I said yes!

wonderful experience with God. Her family was from Oregon. She was in a large hospital, Saint Pat's Hospital, in Missoula, Montana. Her family took her to Oregon, and we felt so bad. (At that time, God had not yet called us to Oregon.) However, that is not the end of the story, so keep that in mind. We were still living in Montana.

After a few months, my wife became homesick, so we moved back to Newark, Ohio. We lived there for a year and a half. I taught at Lincoln Elementary School, and I enjoyed it. Mr. James Waller was the principal. When I was hired, Mr. Waller said to me: "I know where you come from. Keep your religion out of this school." However, it was not long before he said: "Mr. Stegmeier, some students need help. Would you come into my office and work with them?" I won his heart and approval. Mr.

Waller and I had a wonderful relationship.

After a year and a half, I told Mr. Waller I was moving to Oregon. He asked me to pray with the faculty on the last day of school. It was very touching. He said, "Regretfully, Mr. Stegmeier is leaving to go to Oregon to accept a pastorate, but he will pray with us before he goes." I prayed with the faculty; it was a very precious time.

While I was in Newark, I was still in the Army Reserves. Brother Jimmy Lewis told me I should join the Air Force Reserve, so he took me to Wilmington County Air Force Base south of Springfield, Ohio. I worked in the chaplain's office with Chaplains Miller and Zabel (one was Methodist, and one was Presbyterian). A man from Newark, Ohio, who attended church with me, was there too. I was the chaplain's assistant at Wilmington, and I played the piano for some of the services, which were set up for different denominations. There were probably about eighty or ninety men who came to the services, but one day I noticed a man who had brought his Bible with him. As he was leaving the service one Sunday morning, I said: "It was nice to have you in the services. You must be a Christian."

He said, "Well, isn't everybody who goes to church a Christian?"

I said, "Not unless they are living a holy life." We left for lunch. That afternoon, he came back to the chapel and asked me if it was possible to live a holy life. I said yes; and I invited him to go to church with me at the Church of God at God's Acres, in Newark, Ohio. He came and got saved.

While I was stationed at Fort Leonard Wood and doing my best to stand for God, my platoon

sergeant's name was Mr. Carl Keith. On weekends, when he was on duty at the company headquarters, he would call my platoon, at my Quonset hut, and say, "Send Stegmeier over here now." I would go over there, and he would tell me he was in bad shape. He was a drunkard, and he would cast the blame on his wife and the military. I would go over almost every weekend and spend time with him. He would give me a sleeping bag or a blanket, and I would sleep on the floor under the desk. He would listen to radio broadcasts. Sometimes he heard messages on false tongues or the millennium. He would ask, "Is that true, Stegmeier?"

I said, "No, that is not true," and I would explain it to him.

He would say, "All right, go back to sleep."

When I left for AIT, I was stationed on another part of the same base. I went back to see him, and he told me he got saved. He said: "I drove off the base into the parking lot of a little country church. I said: 'God, I am the most wretched person who ever lived. Can You save a wretch like me?' And God saved me!" Praise the Lord! I am hoping to see him again someday.

When I moved back to Newark in 1968, Brother Wilson counseled me because, while we had traveled through California and Oregon, we spoke to a small group of people who left the Anderson movement in Oregon. Very distinctly, God told me I would be the pastor there. Several times in my life, God has spoken very distinctly to me. I can tell you the spot where God spoke to me. I did not want to do anything quickly, or in a hurry, so I came back to God's Acres and remained there for a year and a half. I had five different pastors in my life: Brothers

Mullen, Watson, Olsteen, Kelly, and Emerson Wilson. I can say with a clear conscience, I never gave any of them an ounce of trouble. I was subservient and respectful to everyone. I loved them, and I did not look for any fault in their lives.

I told Brother Wilson I felt called by God to pastor a congregation in Oregon. We were very involved in the Newark congregation at that time. My wife was the pianist, and I directed the adult choir. I could tell he struggled with us leaving, but he said, "Go where God has called you." He gave wonderful counsel: "Be sure God is calling you because there will be hard times, and all

"Be sure God is calling you because there will be hard times, and all you will have to stand on is that God called you."

you will have to stand on is that God called you." Of the original people I pastored, only one couple remains after fifty-three years. We have gone through some serious times, but God has helped us. We have a very beautiful congregation.

You need to know what God wants you to do. Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." We need to be counseled. Some people do not want the pastor to counsel them because the pastor will tell them something they do not want to hear. So, they will go to someone who will tell them what they want to hear. One Scripture I learned as a small boy is Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Fanny Crosby wrote a song called "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." God has

wonderfully led me.

In the spring of 1970, I was teaching at Lincoln. During spring break, Brother Wilson asked if we would go with him to North Carolina to a camp meeting at Brother Earl Wilson's. He wanted us to go sing and help him. God definitely spoke to me and said, "Go to Montana, and work with a young man there." This man was a little older than I was, married before me, and had two children. His home was broken up, and he was running with a very sinful woman.

My wife, our little boy (who was only five weeks old), my mother, and I left for Montana to work with this individual. I went to the home where he was staying and knocked on the door. I could see through the window he was inside. He came out, got in my car, put his head on my shoulder, and just cried. He said, "God told me you were coming."

I said: "God told me something is going to happen and you must get saved. You need to get away from here and go where you can be in a healthy situation." I worked with him all week.

On Friday night, we started back toward Newark. We got seventy-seven miles away, and God said, "Go back again, and read him the account of Lot." Lot was in Sodom, the city of destruction, and the angels went in to rescue him. Yet, the Bible says, "He lingered" (Genesis 19:16). So, I went back to his town one more time. When I got back, I told him to get in his pickup truck, and I was not going to argue or deliberate with him. I read him the Scripture about Lot and asked, "Is God speaking to you?"

He said, "Yes." So, he came back to Ohio with us. I called the principal, Mr. Waller, and told him I could not be there on Monday and would do my best to be

there on Tuesday. We drove all day and all night. We arrived home at about six o'clock in the morning on Tuesday. I showered, shaved, taught school, and then went to Medina that night for revival. My friend got saved, but he went back to Montana.

We went to a camp meeting in Montana in 1970 when I took the work in Oregon. My friend was there. I asked how he was doing. He said he was not doing very well. I told him he should move to Oregon. Shortly after that, he did. God put his family back together. Two and a half years later, I got a call from his neighbor to come to his home; something had happened. He was only thirty-seven years old. When I got there, his wife, whom he had remarried, said he was dead. He died of a massive heart attack. God had definitely told me to go work with him, and he died two-and-a-half years later. It is so important to obey God when He speaks.

Remember Mabel Pearson, the sister we met in Missoula, Montana? When we came to Oregon in 1970, the group of saints had just come out of the Anderson movement. I told them to get out and evangelize, go to the nursing homes, and get busy for the Lord. We went to a nursing home on a Friday night and held a service in the large room where they gathered. At the end of the service, this lady wheeled up in a wheelchair and asked me what church I was from. I said, "The Church of God in Molalla, Oregon."

She said, "The Church of God in Missoula, Montana, was wonderful to me!"

I asked her, "Are you Mabel Pearson?" She said, "Yes, I am!"

There are probably five hundred nursing homes in Oregon, and there she was. God had it all planned. We ministered to her until she died. She loved the

song "My Jesus, I Love Thee."

When I came to Oregon, we did a lot of personal evangelism because I wanted people to know the church. I visited a family in the country who had four or five children. They gave me a riddle for each of the children so I could know all their names. I got to know this family, and they started coming to church. One Friday night, while holding a service at the nursing home, I got a call to come quickly to their home. Something had happened.

We were on our way to this family's home with all these children, and the mortician was coming up over the hill. He said there had been a terrible accident. Eric, who was taking a hunter's safety course, had an accident with a gun and blew his little head completely off his body. It was very tragic. The family was distraught. As a pastor, you have many situations you have to deal with. I did my best to clean up the room where it happened.

Do whatever you can for God. Stay busy in the Lord. Stay with the church. May God bless you!

Many years ago, Brother Decker sent me a letter from a man who was in prison in Walla Walla, Washington. He had murdered three people. I got to know him very well. I ministered to him for thirty-five years. He got saved through a Church of God minister from Yakama. He told me when he went to prayer, he did not have peace of mind because three faces kept looming up. He wrote a letter to Billy Graham, the Baptist, who wrote back and said, "Forget it, just go on living." It helped him for a while, but those faces kept looming up, and he had no peace of mind. He wrote to Oral Roberts, but Oral Roberts said the same thing: "You

are forgiven; just go on." Finally, he told the district attorney in Seattle what he had done. He received a life sentence, but he had peace of mind. He died a couple of years ago, and we held his funeral. Occasionally, his counselor writes and tells us about the good example he was in prison. They had a prison riot, and he saved a man's life.

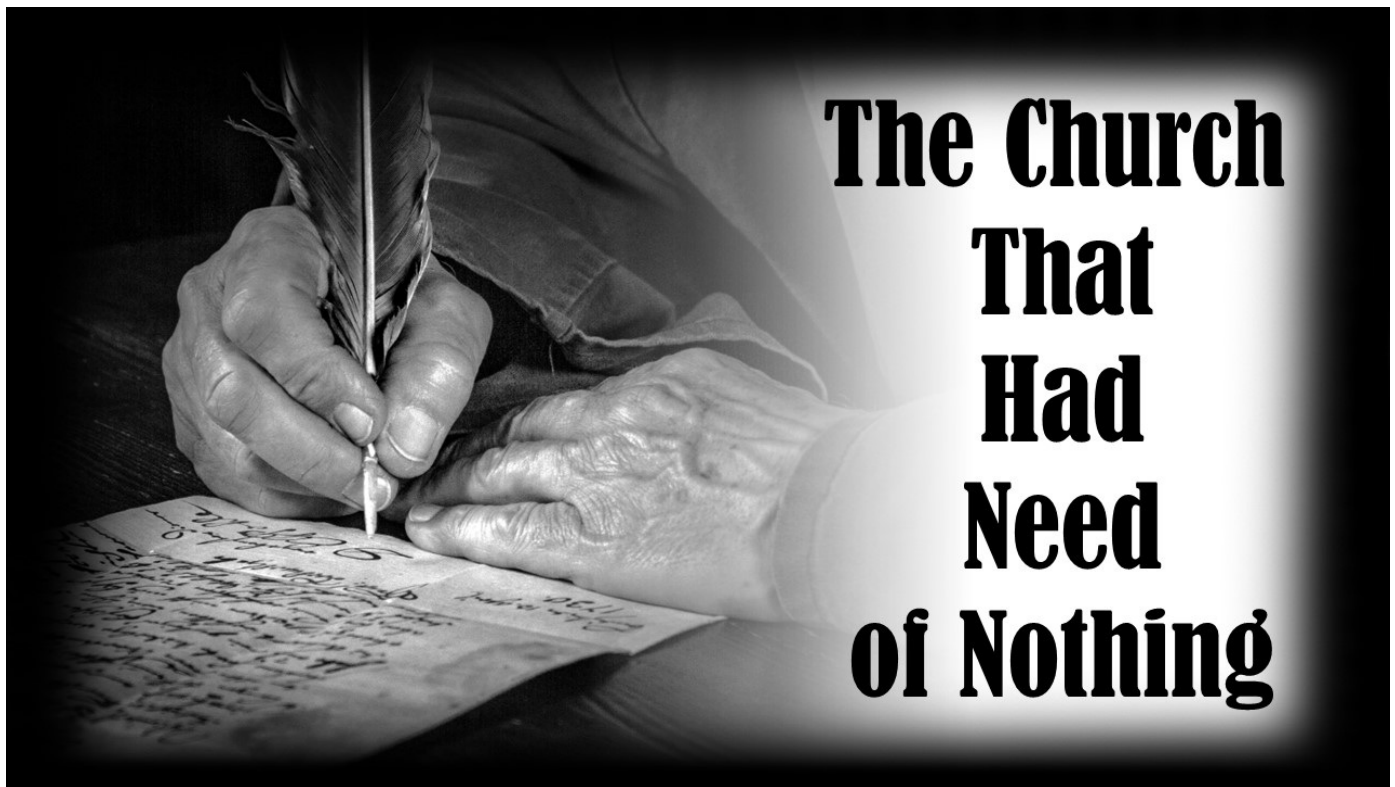
Brother Nailor Joles was raised as a gypsy. He said all they did was fight. God saved him. He came to church, confessed his crime, and went to prison for sixteen years and seven months. He lived an exemplary life after he got out of prison. On a Thursday night, he and the student I referenced at the beginning both died in a horrible car crash while Brother Abraham Burton was holding us a revival meeting.

Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We need God's help and divine direction. Matthew 25:23 says to be faithful in the small things. I stayed with the church all my life. I have been content to do whatever God wanted. At a young age, I knew God's hand was upon me, but I did not know I would be a pastor. Do whatever you can for God. Stay busy in the Lord. Stay with the church. May God bless you!

Verse 2 of the song "Is Not This the Land of Beulah?" reads:

*I can see far down the mountain,
Where I wandered weary years,
Often hindered in my journey
By the ghosts of doubts and fears;
Broken vows and disappointments
Thickly sprinkled all the way,
But the Spirit led, unerring,
To the land I hold today.*

Brother E. David Stegmeier is the pastor of the Church of God in Canby, OR.



The Church That Had Need of Nothing

Brother Reggie Stegmeier

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

This passage of Scripture contains many vital truths. We want to focus on one characteristic expressed in this letter. Revelation 3:17 says, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods [or the Greek says, 'I have grown wealthy'], and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This is a sobering and sad account of a congregation of people who actually felt they had "need of nothing." This letter is for our

day. God gave me a poem as I was studying for this message. It is entitled "The Church That Had Need of Nothing." It reads:

*There once was a church that had
need of nothing,
No yearning to worship and sing.
When the time would come for the
church bell to be rung,
You could count on them to be
missing.*

*First it was sickness, then a work
obligation,
Desire then began to fade.
The joy of meeting and each saint
greeting
Was replaced with some other thing.*

*The fire of God's love that once
burned within
Had now begun to wane.
Each weekly service would make
them nervous,
So from church they would stay
away.*

*Daily readings and Holy Ghost
leading*

*Became a thing of the past.
Though once on fire, with words
they'd inspire,
In the end, it just did not last.*

A predominant spirit in each of the seven letters in the Revelation corresponds to the seven distinct periods of time. They comprise the New Testament dispensation, also styled as the Gospel Day. The church at Ephesus was guilty of leaving their first love. The church at Smyrna was one of only two congregations that received no charges. They had works, suffered tribulation, and were poverty-stricken for the furtherance of the Gospel.

The church at Pergamos was guilty of holding to the doctrines of men. The church at Thyatira was involved in idol worship. The church at Sardis had a name they lived but was spiritually dead because they had compromised. The church at Philadelphia was the second of two that received no charges. They kept God's Word and did not deny His name. The predominant spirit in this final church age, the church of the Laodiceans (A.D. 1930 to the end of time), is lukewarmness.

The Laodicean Church

John addressed these letters to "the angel," or pastor, of each congregation. This particular letter written to the Laodiceans corresponds with the period of time in which we live. The predominant spirit motivating the masses in the religious realm today is they need nothing. They are independent, self-sufficient, and self-satisfied. How many are under the false impression they do not need the church, and the church does not need them? That is a lie from the pits of hell. We need our brothers and sisters, a pastor, and God's Word. These are essentials in our experience we cannot do without.

The saints of God have every right to be concerned about your spirituality if you miss several services, just as a good mother, father, brother, or sister would be worried if you did not come out of your bedroom and eat with the family at mealtime. Some people believe they are in a good position in life while at the same time expressing no need of God. Such was the case with the Church of God congregation at Laodicea.

Laodicea was an ancient city in Western Asia Minor and present-day Western Turkey. It was built by the Seleucids in the third century B.C. It was a prosperous Roman market town on the trade route from the east and an early center for Christianity. It was situated halfway between Philadelphia and Colosse and not far from Hierapolis. Prosperity and trade had so enriched the population that when their city suffered a great earthquake in A.D. 60, they could rebuild without applying to the Imperial Treasury for aid, as many neighboring towns had to do. When they suffered ruin, they had enough finances to rebuild without asking for help.

Colossians 2:1 says, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." It is believed the Laodicean church was founded by one of Paul's converts while Paul was staying in Ephesus. The city of Laodicea was a wealthy center for trade and commerce, and Paul had a burden for this congregation. He wanted this particular letter written to the Colossians to be read by the Laodicean church. Paul was concerned about what was being taught there and how the people were being affected.

In giving his final salutations and directions, Paul said in Colossians 4:14-17: "Luke, the be-

loved physician, and Demas, greet you. Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus [he was believed to be the pastor or part of the ministry of that congregation], Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."

Prosperity Can Dull Your Spiritual Vision

Many times, Luke was with Paul when he went through perils in his travels. Paul referred to Luke as "the beloved physician," and Luke was faithful. Demas was faithful at this time but later defaulted. He became infamously remembered for forsaking Paul. Second Timothy 4:10 says, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." Demas became immersed, or in love, with the pleasures of this life and forsook Paul and the Lord.

Similar to the ancient town of Laodicea, we live in a time of personal prosperity. Consequently, the tendency is to depend upon the government and our own financial gains rather than on the Lord. This is something we all must war against. Someone may say: "I have money in the bank, a good job, and a house. I do not need the saints or the Lord. I am doing fine." Everyone needs the Lord. You may be okay for a short while, but you will face something along life's way that will be bigger than you can handle. It may be too late to call upon God then.

God warned the children of Israel through Moses in the sixth

chapter of Deuteronomy. He promised them a land. We are promised an experience with the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:10-12 states: "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware"

God gives us our breath. We do not need to tell our hearts to beat or remind ourselves to breathe. God created our bodies, and we must recognize we can do nothing without the Lord. If we are not careful, we can go about our business thinking we can manage and go to work on our own. We can get our lives in a real mess, and then say we did it all on our own!

Verse 12 says, "Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." Moses warned the people not to forget God when they entered the Promised Land and became prosperous. Prosperity, more than poverty, can dull our spiritual vision. It can cause us to become self-sufficient and eager to acquire more of everything except God. We can attain a good job, house, transportation, and money in the bank and easily become self-sufficient and less sensitive to our need for God. This leads a person to concentrate on self-preservation rather than thankfulness and service to God and others.

Paul addressed Archippus in Colossians 4:17 by saying, "Take heed to the ministry." It is one thing to start for the Lord, but another to finish. Many souls who once gave tremendous testimo-



nies filled with precious promises no longer feel a need to be in church services. Somewhere along the way, they felt they had arrived and "had need of nothing." Paul was warning the congregation at Laodicea, and he encouraged Archippus to carry out the work he had received in the Lord.

The "People's Church"

Many people today are like those of Elijah's day. They are halting, or wavering, between two opinions. They spend their days riding the fence that runs between the things of this world and the things of God. They are not openly for the world, but they are not zealous and sold out for God; they are lukewarm.

Laodicea in the Greek means "justice or judgment of the people." Revelation 3:14 says, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write" The letter was addressed to the church of the "justice or judgment of the people." Every other letter was addressed to the angel of the location, or place. This final letter was addressed to the angel of the people. This was the "people's church."

Paul addressed the elders at Ephesus and said in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto your-

selves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God [not the church of the people], which he hath purchased with his own blood." In this spiritual age, people want to decide what God requires or does not require of His people. They determine what they will and will not obey. Can you imagine being in a congregation that tells the preacher what to preach and what not to preach? God's true ministers get direction from God.

Notice how Jesus described Himself to this congregation in Revelation 3:14. He said, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Christ was saying, "I and My Word have not changed, so why have you?" Many people who call themselves Church of God have changed in actions, attitudes, and attire. Psalm 119:89 reads, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven."

God's Word is not to be argued or disputed; it is settled and will not change. What God has always required, He still requires today. He may lead us to more understanding, and we may need to change or do some things differently, but God's Word will never change. Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." It states in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

There is more enlightenment, or truth, in our day than in prior days, yet more churchgoers want to dress, act, and live more like the world than ever before. There are more false religious professions today than at any other time in history. Mostly, they are people who say they have "need of nothing." They are satisfied with themselves and their labors for the Lord. We should desire to do more for God.

Lukewarmness: Lacking Enthusiasm

In this letter, Jesus made it very clear they were "neither cold nor hot," but lukewarm. *Lukewarm* means "warm or tepid." It speaks about a liquid or food that should be hot, but it is not. We should be hot and on fire for God! Christ was addressing people who were more enlightened with truth and should have been hot, but they were lukewarm. A lukewarm person shows little enthusiasm. A salesman selling vacuums door to door who says, "This vacuum is okay; you can buy it if you want," would not sell many vacuums. However, if he enthusiastically says, "This is the best vacuum and will not leave a speck of dust in your carpet," ones will show interest in his product.

If parents are enthusiastic about the things of God, it will positively affect their children. Some parents act like it is too much work to get to church. They only go because they are expected to go, but they would rather be somewhere else. Your attitude will sell something to your children, but it may not be what you intend to sell or what God wants you to sell. Be enthusiastic about serving God. Stay engaged, enlightened, and alive! God has something for you.

Around 1400 A.D., the word *tepid* evolved from the Latin adjective meaning "lukewarm," which came from the Latin word meaning "to be warm." Tepid people are lukewarm, or lacking in enthusiasm and emotion. Sometimes you may not feel the best, but you should still put forth emotion and energy when you witness to others. Church of God people have something to sell. Many walk away from God because they are halfhearted, apathetic, and uninterested. They have the "need of nothing" spirit.

If something is lukewarm, it

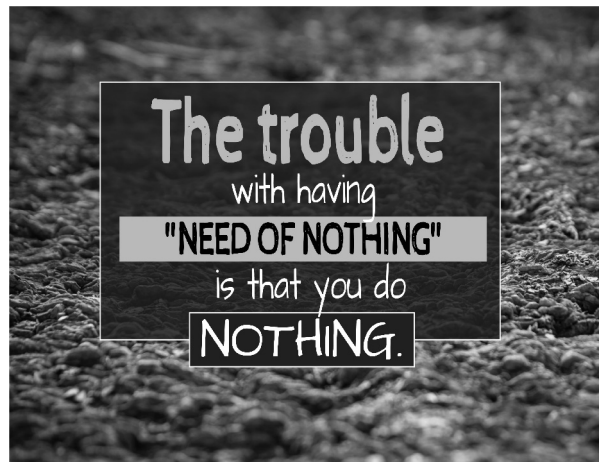
assumes the temperature of what it inhabits. How do you become lukewarm? By doing nothing! A cup of ice-cold water will become lukewarm if you leave it sitting out. It will assume the temperature of its surroundings. That is exactly what happens with the spiritual conditions of mankind. If you are not fervent, enthusiastic, and active in the work of God, you will take on the temperature of the surrounding climate you inhabit. You will become just like the world. God's people are to be different.

As the physical city of Laodicea was located halfway between Philadelphia and Colosse, people who are lukewarm are halfhearted in their commitment and obedience to God. They only go so far, then they stop. This is where the devil wants you. He does not mind if you attend church services as long as you do not completely sell out to God and continue holding on to some habits of life.

The Poor and Needy

The trouble with having "need of nothing" is you do nothing. James styled it as the sin of "do nothing." James 4:17 reads, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." How many people come to church but never publicly express to the congregation or the world they are a Christian? They put in their time, maybe pay their tithes, but they need nothing, so they do nothing.

There are needs in every congregation and all around the world. John, the Revelation writer, said they are "blind" (Revelation 3:17). They have no spiritual vision for the needs of the lost souls of humanity. They are



blind to the needs all around them, including their own needs.

God's people have always felt a genuine need for the Lord. David expressed his need for God many times in the Book of Psalms. He said in Psalm 86:1, "Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy." And in Psalm 109:22, he wrote, "For I am poor and needy." The reality is, everyone is poor and needy without the Lord.

When Jesus commenced His public ministry at thirty years of age, in Matthew, Chapter 5, the first Biblical teaching He instituted was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." *Poor* means "to realize you have a need." You will never receive anything from God unless you realize your need. It was the opposite for the church of the Laodiceans. They claimed to be something they were not; they had a false profession. They actually thought they were rich, and indeed they were in the things of this world, but they were poor when it came to the things of God.

There are five things we absolutely need to maintain our spiritual lives. 1) We need the Lord. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 10:23, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We all need direction from on high, and John 15:5 says, "For without me ye can do nothing." Proverbs 3:5-6 states: "Trust in the

LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

While children may outgrow the stage from dependence to independence, Christians never outgrow their dependence on God. The Christian should become spiritually mature. However, the more mature a Christian becomes, the more he relies upon God because he realizes the greatness and magnitude of the needs at hand. There are unsaved loved ones and many problems to work through and deal with. If you are a seasoned saint, you will realize you need God in a greater way.

Having an Ear to Hear

2) We need to read God's Word. Our Scripture text in Revelation 3:18 says, "I counsel thee to buy of me." What are we to buy? Proverbs 23:23 says to "buy the truth." John 17:17 tells us, "Thy word is truth." Without God's Word, we will have no spiritual nourishment for our experience. Many times, ones overlook their need to read God's Word. It is wonderful to know you *need* to read the Bible, but are you *reading* it?

3) We need to hear the Word of God preached. John spoke in Revelation 8:1 of "silence in heaven," or not enough of the preached Word of God in heavenly places. Our Scripture reading in Revelation 3:17 says they "knowest not." They did not know their needs for the same reason Noah's generation did not know. In Noah's generation, Noah faithfully preached for one hundred years. The Bible calls him "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). John wrote in our Scripture text, "He that hath an ear, let him hear." They did not know because they did not desire to obey the message.

In this spiritual age in which we live, the Word of God is faithfully preached service after service. That is important, but what are you doing with what you hear? Do you have an ear to hear what the Spirit says? Do you have an obedient heart? Are you willing to obey what God is telling you to do? An ear to hear is a desire to listen and obey. The Proverb writer said in Proverbs 1:5, "A wise man will hear." Several translations say "listen." Noah was a preacher of righteousness, but many people did not escape the Flood because they failed to listen.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, Paul said: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." Verse 21 says, "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Singing is wonderful, but that is not God's chosen method for souls to get help. What would we sing about if we did not have God's Word? We need God's Word, and we need to hear it preached. Romans tells us the preached Word of God establishes our experience. Romans 16:25 reads, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ."

"I Will Give You Pastors"

4) We need a pastor. Every letter in the Revelation was addressed to the pastor. Even the letter to the Laodiceans was addressed to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans. The message comes through the pastor! Just as every sheep needs a shepherd, every child of God needs a pastor. This independent



spirit of self-sufficiency is rebellion. Dismiss the thought, "I will not sit under a pastor, but I will listen to God." You do not listen to God any more than you listen to your pastor.

Jeremiah 3:15 says, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Noah was a pastor to the antediluvian world. Do you think it mattered whether the people listened to Noah? It was a difference between life and death. Not one soul survived when the Flood came upon the earth, except those who got on board the ark.

The saints of God realize their need for a pastor. Sheep know they need a shepherd. Goats and wolves have the ugly spirit of "I need nothing." Hebrews 13:7 says, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow." If you do not follow your pastor, you are not following God. If you want to be a leader someday, you must first be a follower. You will not prosper if you go against the Word of God. Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). You need to follow your pastor as he follows the Lord. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves [why?]: for they watch for your souls."

5) We need to be in church

services because we need each other. Some dangers we face today are convenience and comfort. Instead of people pressing their way to the worship services, they become content sitting on their couch. As church attendance fades across the nation, and online services become more convenient, it is important to remember why church attendance matters for you and your family. We learned this when we were shut down for the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to share a portion of something someone shared with me:

Church on the sofa will never be the same as church in the sanctuary. You can't serve from your sofa. You can't have community of faith on your sofa. You can't experience the power of a room full of believers worshipping together on your sofa.

Christians aren't consumers either. We are contributors. We don't watch. We engage. We give. We sacrifice. We encourage. We do life together. The church needs you. And you need the church.

Recognizing Your Spiritual Need

Social media and other platforms are wonderful tools for the sick, but they should not be a permanent solution. When the church doors are open, you need to be there if you can. Hebrews 10:24-25 states: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works [it is hard to consider one another and provoke one another when we are not together]: 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

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the day approaching." The Bible says to assemble together.

There are great benefits in being together. The early morning brethren were successful because of their fellowship with one another. You can read in Acts, Chapters 2 and 4, about how their strength, encouragement, excitement, and fervor for God were ignited by their assembling together. We must recognize our need for each other.

Check your experience if you claim to be a Christian and also claim you do not need God, His Word, hearing the Word preached, a pastor, and the saints of God. The psalmist said in Psalm 137:6, "If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." The service of God has to be above whatever brings you the most joy in life.

Jesus said in our Scripture text, "I know thy works." God knows every one of our spiritual conditions, and we need to know where we are spiritually. There was a disparity in our Scripture lesson. Their perspective was, "I am rich and increased with

goods; I have need of nothing." God's perspective was, "You are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." They did not recognize their spiritual need. We can know where we stand before God by coming to Him and listening to the preached Word, allowing it to sink into our hearts.

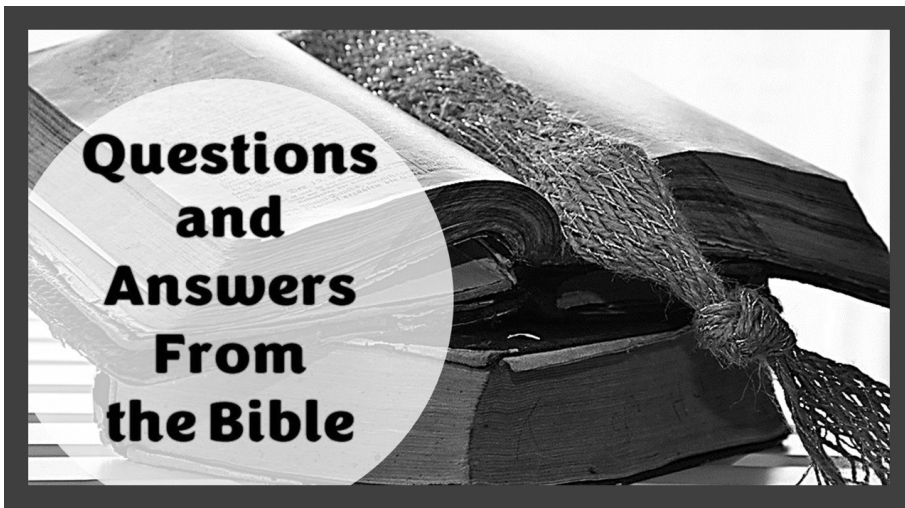
Psychologists will tell those battling substance abuse, the first step in receiving help is to admit you have a problem. It is the same for those who have spiritual needs. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Jesus said, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth [or realizes he has a need], more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). The first step is to recognize your need.

God promised our needs would be supplied if we realize and admit them. Perhaps you are leaning to your own understanding, trying to make it on your own, and doing things your own way. You need to repent. Never lose your desire and need for the things of God. One songwriter said, "All I know is I can't make it, Lord, without You." Is this your soul's sentiment?

Do you recognize your need for the Lord in your life? Do you have a fervent, burning desire to be with God, work for God, and sit under a man of God? Or, if you miss a service or a day of Bible reading, do you consider it "no big deal"? We never want to become lukewarm and have "need of nothing." God has promised to supply our needs if we recognize them.

(Compact Disc TR-2778)

**Brother Reggie Stegmeier
attends the Church of God
in Canby, OR.**



HOW DO SATAN AND DEMONS INTERACT?

Man is made up of "spirit and soul and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Our "spirit" ("the spirit of man"; 1 Corinthians 2:11) is the portion of our being that has God (or spiritual) consciousness. If we are saved, it is the part the Spirit of God inhabits to control our lives and enable us to live in a spiritual manner (a manner exhibiting godly character). For the unsaved, "the spirit of man" is prey to Satanic control by its potential possession by any number of devilish spirits. The possession of which one(s) is determined by the appeal of, and submission to, the particular spirit, or spirits.

Two predominant Greek words translate into English as "devils": (1) *daimonizomai* (Strong's #1139), which means "to be under the power of a demon" (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*)—this speaks more to the action or condition (as in Matthew 4:24; 8:16; 8:28; 8:33; Mark 1:32; and Luke 8:36); and (2) *daimonion* (Strong's #1140), which speaks more to the "demoniac being" (evidenced by Matthew 7:22; 9:34; 10:8; Mark 1:34; and many others).

Our human spirit is dominated by a spiritual power: either the Spirit of God or a devilish spirit. Not everyone who is lost is devil-possessed, but everyone who is unsaved possesses the devil. First John 4:4 says, "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." In reality, there is only one or the other "he" in everyone. It is determined by "to whom [denoting a per-

sonage] ye yield yourselves servants to obey" (Romans 6:16).

Various Scriptural accounts reveal some individuals yielded themselves to more than one devilish spirit. Luke 8:2 reveals Mary Magdalene "had been healed of evil spirits . . . out of whom went seven devils." Thus, "spirits" and "devils" are somewhat interchangeable. The distinction being "devils" may speak more specifically and "spirits" a little more generically, but essentially they are the same. It is apparent from this verse that an individual may "yield yourselves" to more than one devilish spirit.

Perhaps the most horrendous example is the account of the man recorded in Mark, Chapter 5, and Luke, Chapter 8. When asked his name, he replied, "My name is Legion" (Mark 5:9). A Roman legion consisted of 6,000 soldiers. Luke 8:30 says, "Many devils were entered into him." Those "devils" drowned "about two thousand" swine (Mark 5:13). This startling Scripture reveals an individual can be possessed with multiple, even extremely numerous, spirits. These "spirits" have the power of influence, control, and domination. They do not take up physical space and are not subject to physical measurements. Thus, space or size is not an issue.

Spirits are not designed or desirous merely to occupy or dwell in the air. Their design is to inhabit people. First Timothy 4:1 speaks of those who "depart from the faith" and tells why

that occurs—they were "giving heed to seducing spirits." Later, John spoke of "them that seduce you" (1 John 2:26), revealing those "seducing *spirits*" became seducing *people*. In 1 John 4:1, the Apostle said to "try the spirits" (plural); later in the verse, he wrote, "Many false prophets are gone out." Those "spirits" picked up bodies.

With the Advent of Christ, the demoniac powers, which had somewhat of a free rein because "the people . . . sat in darkness" (Matthew 4:16), began to lose their position in the lives of the people (Luke 10:18-20). An important part of Christ's public ministry was dealing with "those . . . possessed with devils" (Matthew 4:24). When He commissioned the twelve, part of what He provided them with was "power against unclean spirits, to cast them out" (Matthew 10:1). Later, when He commissioned the seventy, they came back rejoicing, saying, "Even the devils are subject unto us" (Luke 10:17).

In the Great Commission (Mark 16:17), Jesus proclaimed, "In my name shall they cast out devils." This has a perpetual quality to it. It was not only a first-century commission. Acts 5:16 tells of "them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one." Acts 8:7 reads, "For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them." Acts 19:12 says, "The evil spirits went out of them."

Perhaps one of the most famous occasions was when the Apostle Paul cast the "spirit of divination" out of the "damsel" (Acts 16:16-18). These verses substantiate the truth that dealing with and casting out spirits was a practice in the morning-time church, and it remains a necessary part of the ministry of the Gospel yet today. It is as valid as any other portion of the Great Commission.

Brother Earl R. Borders

Brother Earl R. Borders is the pastor of the Church of God in Summersville, WV.

Upcoming Meetings

September 18-24 — MOUNT PLEASANT, PA

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS
Service times: Mon.-Sat. 7 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation following the service on Sunday.
No service Sunday evening.
For more information, contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey @ 724-547-2151

September 23-24 — WARRENSVILLE, NC

FIFTH ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Road, Warrentsville, NC 28693
Service times: Sat. 10 a.m. & 2 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
For more information & hotel accommodations, contact:
Pastor Allen Borders @ 740-485-8881

September 25-October 1 — CHICAGO, IL

REVIVAL: Harding Street Church of God, 3924 W 14th Street, Chicago, IL 60623
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Aurelius Raines @ 708-751-1534

September 25-October 1 — MEDINA, OH

REVIVAL: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. & Sun. 10:30 a.m.
There will be a meal following the Saturday morning service.
Evangelist: Brother Calvin Foster from Kensett, AR
For more information, contact: Pastor Mike Miller @ 234-249-9309
Website: www.MedinaChurchofGod.com

October 4-8 — CANBY, OR

REVIVAL: Church of God, 522 NW 2nd Avenue, Canby, OR 97013
Service times: Wed.-Sat. 7 p.m.; Sun. 10:45 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders from Summersville, WV
Brother Borders will be preaching from the Book of Revelation.
For more information, contact: Pastor E. David Stegmeier @ 503-266-9297

October 11-15 — WHITE PINE, TN

CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 185 Highway 25/32, White Pine, TN 37890
For more information, contact: Pastor Roger Nethers @ 770-206-0786

October 16-22 — WARRENSVILLE, NC

REVIVAL: Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Road, Warrentsville, NC 28693
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. 6 p.m.; Sun. 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Borders @ 740-485-8881

October 23-29 — SUMMERSVILLE, WV

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd, Summersville, WV 26651
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m.; Sat. 6 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman from Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047
Website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com

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