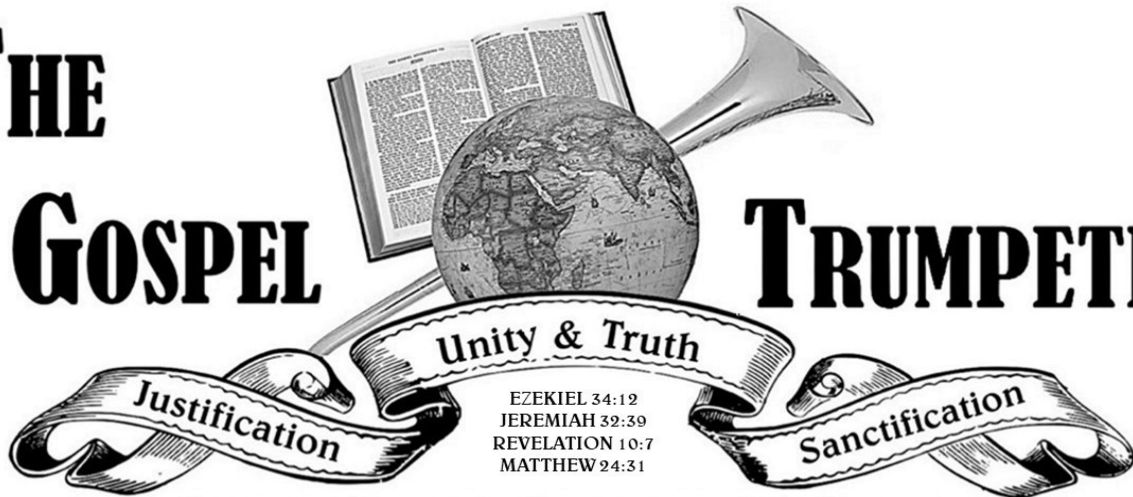


THE

GOSPEL

TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 55 March 2025 No. 3

*"We are
the clay,
and
thou our
potter;
and we
all are
the*

**WORK
OF THY
HAND!"**

ISAIAH 64:8

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

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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.

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 11:23-24)
- 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 (Matthew 16:18)
- It is built on a good foundation (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Ephesians 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6)
- God admits the members (1 Corinthians 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Romans 11:22; Exodus 32:33)
- Only the saved are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Revelation 22:17)
- There are final rewards (Revelation 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- The Bible name is the Church of God (Acts 20:28; Galatians 1:13; John 17:11)

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"THE WAY EVERLASTING"

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Such was the tenor of our 2024 winter camp meeting at God's Acres. Although a brief meeting, our pastor, Brother Roger L. Decker, termed it so perfectly, "It was power packed!" Each message challenged souls to gain a deeper, more consecrated life in Christ.

Brother Allen Polston from New Castle, Indiana, was the evening evangelist. Brother Polston began the camp meeting with the message, "An Offering in Righteousness," and ended 2024 with the message, "Who Will Stand for the Truth of the One Church in 2025?" God used our brother mightily! In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul wrote, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." We were privileged to examine ourselves as God's Word went forth throughout the meeting.

Brother John Gill, Brother Brandon Gonzalez, Brother Earl Borders, and Brother Bryce Davis brought stirring messages during the morning services. It was amazing how each message communicated the need for leaving off self and gaining a greater love for one another and for growth and unity in the church.

During the afternoon services, Brother Reggie Stegmeier, pastor of the Church of God in Canby, Oregon, brought teaching lessons on "The Four Seasons of Life."

Taking his text from Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3, Brother Reggie taught four lessons on the changing seasons in our spiritual lives: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

Winter Bible School was available for children from kindergarten through twelve years old. Sister Karen Wilks told the story "Tin Can Valley." Her many helpers helped with crafts and games. As the spiritual searchlight went out to the young and the old, we were reminded of how God wants to "lead [all] in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:24).

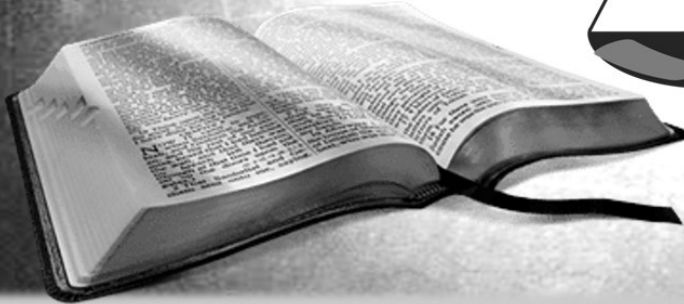
The youth services were well attended Saturday through Tuesday evening. Brother Steve and Sister Sheri Strelecky asked a few saints to give their personal testimonies. Brother Larry McClain, Brother Bill Miller, and Sister Anishia Lemaster shared with the youth how God led them to the Church of God.

As I listened to each testimony, my mind went to Peter, who said in Acts 10:34-35: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Verse 35 in the *Amplified Version* says, "But in every nation the person who fears God and does what is right [by seeking Him] is acceptable and welcomed by Him." We all come from diverse backgrounds, but no matter where we come from, God can save us and keep us to the uttermost!

Before the camp meeting ended, Sister Almeda Cummings and

[continued on page 12]

THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD



Brother Roger L. Decker

Romans 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

7 To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek

for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

11 For there is no respect of persons with God.

12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

18 And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

22 Thou that sayest a man

should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Jewish people in our text. They had the privilege of God's goodness above others. John 1:11 says, "He came unto his own [speaking of the Jewish nation]." Romans 3:2 tells us, "Unto them [the Jews] were committed the oracles [or commandments] of God." The Jews thought everyone else would be brought to the Judgment except them. Paul opposed that teaching and said they were treading on the mercies of God.

In verse 4 of our Scripture text, Paul talked about the goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of God. *Goodness* comes from the Greek word *chrestotes*. Two words for *good* in the Greek are *agathos* and *chrestos*. *Agathos* means "good or honorable," whether it is seen to be or not. For example, Jesus was *agathos* when He drove the moneychangers and the sellers of doves from the temple in anger. He was *chrestos*, which means "virtuous, good, pleasant," when He dealt with the sinful woman who anointed His feet and the woman who was taken in adultery.

Paul mentioned forbearance and longsuffering. The Jews thought they were safe because God's judgment had not yet descended upon them. God gave them an opportunity to repent, not the freedom to sin. A man cannot continue in sin without consequences. God's punishment does not always immediately follow sin, which is proof of His patience and longsuffering.

In Ecclesiastes 8:11-13, the wise man wrote: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times,

and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God."

Breaking Down the Barriers of Prejudice

Paul let the Jews know that God has no favorite nation. Romans 2:11 says, "For there is no respect of persons with God." Some nations are more advanced and developed than others, and some have more knowledge of the truth, but God is no respecter of persons when it comes to sin. Peter had to learn this truth, and it was a hard lesson for him because there was a time when Peter thought otherwise.

Acts 10:9-16 reads: "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop [many housetops had flat roofs where the people went to eat, socialize, sleep, and pray] to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven."

God had to break down the

belief that the Jewish nation was privileged above others. Peter had to unlearn some of the prejudices he had been taught. He was staying with a man named Simon, who was a tanner. Acts 9:43 says, "And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner." Acts 10:5-6 states, "And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

Acts 10:32 says, "Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee." A tanner worked with the dead bodies of animals. They were considered permanently unclean by the Jews. Simon lived by the sea, away from the city where the Jews lived. An Orthodox Jew would not consider accepting hospitality from a tanner.

Numbers 19:11-13 reads: "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him."

God was working with Peter to help him remove his prejudices. At midday, Peter went up to the roof, away from the commotion of the house, for privacy and to pray. While he was there, he went into a trance and saw a vision of a great sheet being let

down with animals on it. A voice spoke to him and said, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."

"God Is No Respector of Persons"

In Leviticus, Chapter 11, we read that the Jews could only eat animals who chewed the cud and had cloven hooves. The other animals were considered unclean and forbidden. Peter protested when he saw the sheet because he had never eaten anything that was unclean. The voice spoke to him, saying not to call what God had cleansed unclean. This happened three times so the lesson would be clear to Peter. At one time, he considered the Gentiles to be unclean. God was preparing him for the visitors who were on their way to see him.

The Jews believed other nations were outside of the mercy of God. Strict Jews had no contact with the Gentiles or with Jews who did not observe the Law. When the representatives of Cornelius came to the door where Peter was staying, Peter asked them in and showed them hospitality. Acts 10:23-24 says: "Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends."

When Peter arrived at Caesarea, Cornelius met him at the door. In verse 27, we read that Peter "went in." The barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles began to break down. God loves *all* people. Peter, seemingly the most prejudiced of all the disciples, witnessed the love of God and saw that God accepts "who-soever will" (Revelation 22:17). We read Peter's testimony in Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I per-

ceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Today, many feel the same way the Jews did. They are familiar with the church. Sunday after Sunday, revival after revival, and camp meeting after camp meeting, they witness the goodness of God. They feel God has something special for them. Dear one, if you do not repent, God will not allow you to go on without any retribution for your sin. At some point, you will pay for your sins. God does not want to use severity. He would much rather use His goodness to win people to Him. However, God will not continue allowing ones to keep trampling on His goodness.

A Limit to God's Goodness

Luke 13:6-9 reads: "He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung [or fertilize] it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Verse 7, from another translation, says, "So he told the gardener: 'Look here! For three years I've been coming to look for fruit on this tree but I haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it waste the soil?'" Often, the Gospel gives us another chance. God is kind to the one who falls, the one who is bound, the one who has trouble believing, and to the weak. This parable also makes it clear that there is a final chance. If you keep refusing God's plea time after time,

God will shut you out, but you will have deliberately chosen to shut yourself out. I do not want that to happen to anyone. I am afraid that without a drastic change in some people's attitudes, they could be on the brink of severity.

God comes close to everyone—Christians and sinners. In many instances, the sinner refuses to repent. Our text reads in Romans 2:5-6, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Another translation makes these verses more clear: "But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. He will judge everyone according to what they have done."

God despises stubbornness. In 1 Samuel 15:23, Samuel, speaking to King Saul, said: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." Everyone should take advantage of God's goodness. I would much rather have God's goodness than His severity. God gives us so many good things: health, homes, wages, family, friends, church, and the air we breathe every second of the day. You do not have to think about your breath; God gives it to you freely.

Leading to Repentance

If you are a sinner, allow the goodness of God to lead you to repentance. Let this be the day you give your heart to God. He loves you and wants the best for you. Some may think repentance

is not for them because they have done vile things and gone deep into sin, or God will not hear them pray. Some are involved in more sin than others, but remember, there is no respect of persons with God. God can forgive one sin as well as He can forgive another.

Dear one, if you enjoy coming to church and being around church people, why not become a member yourself? Before you go too deep into the vile sins of this world, turn to God so you can have victory. God will not put up with rejection forever. Something will always come down the highway that you cannot handle. You may handle many minor things, but something will come, and

you will be unable to handle it yourself. You will need God.

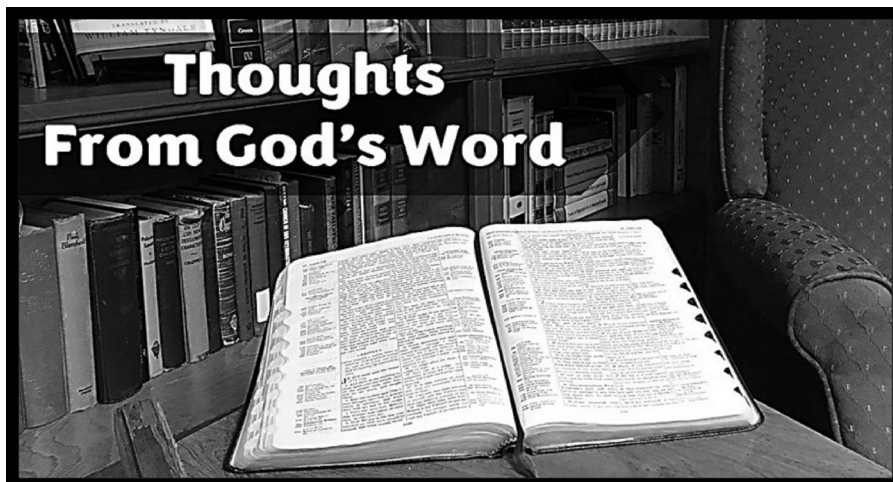
We read of many in the Bible who pushed God too far and paid a terrible price. Judas went too far. He never thought the end would be like it was. He may have thought he could take the silver, go his way, and nothing bad would happen. Maybe he thought Jesus would forgive him, and he could go on. He never thought he would commit suicide. The people who lived in the Antediluvian world before the Flood, King Saul, and King Ahab, are all examples of ones who ended up paying for the consequences of their sins. The end of their lives was unnecessary.

The goodness of God intends

to lead people to repentance. I do not know how many times God could have taken me out of this world. He had several opportunities. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Paul wrote to the Romans, saying, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22).

(Compact Disc TR-3014)

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



are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The Bible is full of recorded accounts of witnesses for God. My life is a witness to something. It is being read and known by the people I meet.

When my son was seven, he asked, "Mom, who is God?" How sobering! A disappointment came over me because I could not tell him. It was then I knew I needed to make a change. I gave my life to God, and the old book was thrown as far as the east is from the west. A new book began to be written, which I am no longer the author of. I can now "[Look] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). God directs the way each letter, page, and chapter is written in my life's book. By the grace of God, I want to be one of the great "cloud of witnesses." I want my book to glorify and honor the One to whom it is due. When I come before God, I want Him to open the book of my life and say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

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

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3

When we meet someone for the first time, we walk away with an opinion of that person. As we become more acquainted with them, we gain more insight into who that person is. A multitude of circumstances play a part in forming the person we are. They may include our

genetic makeup, upbringing, relationships, hardships, or anything we incur as we live this life. These things become ingrained within us and will stand out as we interact with others. This is what a person will "read." So, our lives are writing a book "known and read of all men."

As God brought this to me, I realized the magnitude of the importance of the contents of my book. What is my epistle, the letter of my life, saying about me? More importantly, what is my life saying about Jesus? Am I pointing ones to God? Could my life be grouped with the writings in the Scriptures? Hebrews 12:1 says, "Wherefore seeing we also



HEALING OF THE LAND

Brother Mickey Mullins

Isaiah 30:26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

Our Scripture text is a seventh-seal prophecy. It does not refer to the sixth-seal earthquake. It says, "The light of the sun shall be sevenfold." We still believe in the doctrine of the seven church ages. Every teaching in the Word of God is doctrine, and it is all important! Unity is doctrine. It is amazing what some people are willing to leave out or reject when it comes to doctrine.

The seventh-seal message is critical to the church today. Without it, how will we know where we are and how to stand? God addressed some things that

would happen in the seventh seal in this prophecy. He said He would repair and fix what was wrong. The evening-light message will bring people together. God's people have been divided for years because of the morning time apostasy and the cloudy day of the Protestant era. The evening-light message brings God's people together, who are scattered in so many places.

Another prophecy is found in Ezekiel 34:12, where God said, "So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Many brethren were inspired to write the songs we sing in the *Evening Light Songs*, such as: "Thy Children Are Gathering Home," "The Reformation Glory," and "Prophetic Truth." The seventh-seal light does not do away with the sixth-seal light; it makes it brighter.

The Path to Binding Up the Breach

The seventh-seal message is not a message of division or separation. Sectarian spirits divide God's people as they did in the cloudy day for 350 years (the three and a half days spoken of in the Revelation). These are basic truths some people have lost. My burden is to encourage you. How will the Lord bind up the breach of His people and heal the stroke of their wounds? God did not create the division; yet some are waiting for God to do what they ought to do. God gives us the answers in the Word of God. There is a path to success, healing, and binding up the breach. There is a cry among the people of God, especially in the pews, who are tired of divisiveness.

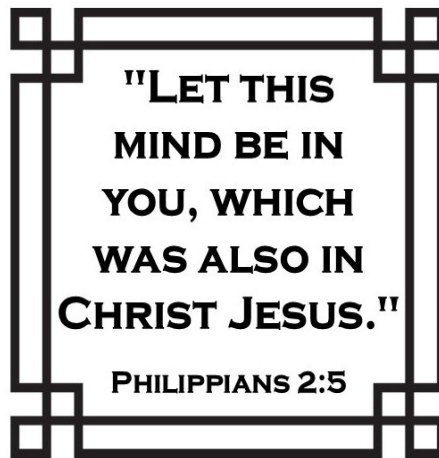
It is easy to overlook doctrine and become partial. James 2:9 says, "But if ye have respect to

persons, ye commit sin." When we consider doctrine, we need to be consistent and consider them all. Ezekiel 33:31 says, "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Sadly, some who claim to be the people of God refuse to speak to one another, and it is a terrible breach. Is it any wonder Christ, in His seventh letter, was disgusted and said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16)?

God offers a path to success. He said to repent! Revelation 3:18 reads, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." A breach is caused by people not having their eyes opened and not hearing His voice. Verse 20 states, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Christ's letter was not written to the sinner but to the church. Not everyone who claims to be the Church of God is hearing His voice.

Second Chronicles 7:14 reads, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." Church of God, can we humble ourselves and pray to see the breach repaired? How will God heal the breach if we cannot hear His voice or see clearly?

Division is a wicked thing. "He that soweth discord among brethren" is "an abomination" (Proverbs 6:16-19). We may not have *caused* it, but we have *inherited* it. In the Word of God, we can see where God wants to fix it, and we all have a part to play. What can we do? We can humble ourselves and pray. We can back the messages and manifest the right attitude.



Proverbs 13:10 says, "Only by pride cometh contention." Some folks cannot let go of things because of pride. Brethren, we should not be too big to back up. I have made mistakes in my life; I have not done everything perfectly. A wise man learns from his mistakes. Have you ever considered that pastors are human, too? Second Corinthians 4:7 tells us, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." Can you have the same mercy and longsuffering for others you want someone to show you? It is amazing how much mercy we want when it involves ourselves. Matthew 5:7 states, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Pride is a terrible thing. It will keep the contentions going.

"That They All May Be One"

If you are married, you need to work through some things to stay married. You will never agree on everything because you and your spouse think differently. Can you have unity in the home in spite of those differences? Your backgrounds may be different, but God wants you to stay together. That is the rule. You should not look for reasons to divorce. Ephesians 5:32 states, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." God's people do not look for reasons to divorce, separate, or divide from each other.

Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now [God wants our attention], and let us reason together, saith the LORD." You may say, "God was talking to the sinner." Philippians 2:5 tells us, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of God is to reason and reconcile. Isaiah 1:18 continues, "Though your sins be as scarlet [even though there is a problem], they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The problems can be fixed.

God can heal the land and bind up the breach. Will you be a part of the healing? Some folks will reject it. God has always wanted His people to be one. How can one say they have a burden for a lost-and-dying world when they are unwilling to help those who believe? Division will never increase faith or lift Christ up where He can "draw all men" to Him (John 12:32). Division will never convict lost-and-dying souls. If you have a soul burden, you will also have a burden to be one with the people of God.

In John 17:21, Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Can you imagine a quarrel between Jesus Christ (the Son) and God (the Father)? Can you imagine them parting ways? Jude 19 reads, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." The song "One in Christ" written by Clara M. Brooks in the *Evening Light Songs* reads:

*As sweet strains of heav'nly music
Blend in one harmonious sound,
So the members of Christ's body
In blest unity are found
One in mind and one in spirit,
One in doctrine, faith and love;
One in name – O precious union,
Like the angel hosts above.*

*Not like waves upon the ocean,
Tossing wildly, rolling high;
Or the tempest's great commotion,
As it sweeps across the sky;
But like twilight, gently stealing
O'er the verdant, shady lea,
So the holy saints in Zion
Rest – from all their sins set free.*

*Blood-washed pilgrims on the
highway
Chant the sweet, melodious strain
Of their freedom from confusion,
Angels join the glad refrain;
One with all the hosts of Heaven,
There their names are written down;
Jesus only, Jesus ever,
In their hearts as King they crown.*

*Love, the theme of all their praises,
Doth in holy bond unite
All their hearts, in Him made
perfect,
Turned from darkness unto light.
Thus the saved in Christ together
Dwell in sacred unity
In the secret of His presence –
Hid away, dear Lord, in Thee.*

"Let Us Plead Together"

Jesus prayed for us to be one in Christ. That was the morning-time message, and it is still the message in the evening time. Isaiah 43:26 says, "Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified." When you disagree at home, you may need to talk through some things and communicate. The Word of God says, "Come now and let us reason together" and "Let us plead." How long has it been since someone has pleaded to repair the breach? Some become prejudiced as soon as they hear where a brother is from. That ought not to be.

We need to stay at one another's feet. "No big I's" should be more than a cliché; we must implement it! Romans 12:3 states, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of

himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." In John 15:5, Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." Do you see your need for Jesus?

What can we do? We can pray! The ministry can do even more. Where did many of these problems start? They started with those who held positions in the ministry. We may not have personally caused them, but we can pray and obey the Bible. Psalm 107:20 reads, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." The Word of God will heal situations if we implement it.

The song "A Child of God" by B. E. Warren says, "Let a holy life tell the Gospel story." Are you living holy? Are you walking in all the light you have? Have you become a new creature in Christ Jesus? Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The song "The Church's Jubilee" by C. W. Naylor says, "We reach our hands in fellowship to ev'ry blood-washed one." First John 4:1 tells us to "try the spirits whether they are of God." Doctrine is important, but John did not say, "Try the doctrine."

Unity is important. In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul said, "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." Paul was not bound by groupism; he concerned himself with the will of God. In verse 22, he said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

We have gone in the wrong direction if we are afraid of each other. We should have the liberty to work in our local areas as God directs and reach out to the lost. Pastors are free from each other, but still servants. Again, Paul

said, "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all." Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." We need liberty among each other.

We should not spy on each other to see what other pastors are doing in their congregations. Hank Williams wrote a song called "Mind Your Own Business." One line of the song says, "If you mind your own business, you'll stay busy all the time." We have no time to concern ourselves with someone else's business. If we are about the Father's business, we will not shoot arrows at one another. Looking at others and finding fault is a distraction and a waste of time, energy, and effort. The world is on its way to hell, and many of our loved ones are overtaken with unbelief. We are more profitable when we love one another. We need to pray and seek God for opportunities.

Love One Another

Third John 9-10 states: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." Pity the man who is under a spirit of preeminence. Good people are under that spirit without realizing it. God wants to heal the land.

Ephesians 4:1-2 reads, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech [beg] you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called [we are called to be saints], With all lowliness and meekness, with

longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." He did not say *tolerating*, but "*forbearing* one another *in love*." In John 13:34, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Matthew 22:37-40 says: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." A supreme love for God will do the work of sanctification in your life. When you fall in love with God with everything you have, you will love your neighbor as yourself. Then, Jesus said to love one another as He loves us. He died to salvage our eternity-bound souls. The way He cares for you is how He wants you to love one another.

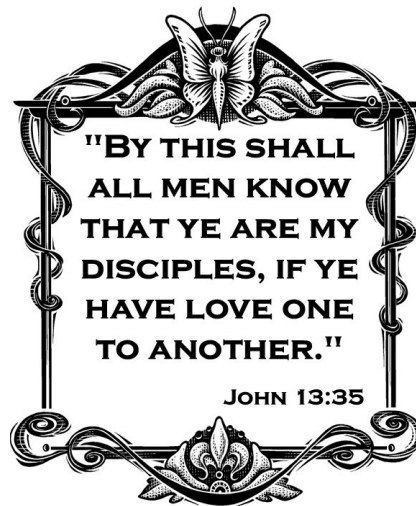
If we love one another as Christ loves us, it will help our patience and reduce our irritations. What a responsibility! We all need to work on improving our love for one another. In John 14:15, Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." If we allow the Word of God to heal us, there will be no room for strife, bitterness, malice, or grudges. James 5:9 says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." If you have something in your heart against somebody, you are condemned.

We are heading for the Judgment, and the books will be opened. We will stand as individuals before God. Revelation 20:12 says, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those

things which were written in the books, according to their works." We can read some things that are written in the books.

The Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:3 states, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Why do we need to endeavor? Micah 4:1-2 says: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to



the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

We come from different cultures and backgrounds, so we must endeavor or put forth effort "to keep the unity of the Spirit." The Scripture does *not* say to keep the unity of the *faith*. Ephesians 4:11-13 reads: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [salvation is the beginning, not the arrival] of the saints, for the work of the minis-

try, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith."

"Till" denotes a time frame. We will not all arrive at the same time. Is the Scripture saying we have no unity until we all come to the unity of the faith? Some people have unity of the faith but no unity of the Spirit. How does that work? They agree on the teachings, but they do not like each other. According to the Apostle Paul, we can have unity of the Spirit because your spirit and my spirit are right, and we both genuinely love God. We may not be on the same page on certain points, but if the Spirit of God is within us, we have been saved from sin; we can love each other! This is what the Bible, the eternal, forever settled Word of God, teaches, and it is *not* compromise or an ecumenical spirit.

Some people who are bound by groupism will not accept Scripture. Something is wrong if you are unable to have fellowship with saved people. In John 13:35, Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." All men include us as the people of God. In 1 Peter 4:8, Peter said, "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves." It takes two people with the same desire and love for a marriage to work. It is the same with brethren. Abraham told Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (Genesis 13:8).

The song "I'll Never Go Back" by C. W. Naylor says, "*I'll never go back to division and strife*." Some people who sing that song are right in the midst of division and strife. Many do not realize it because they have been taught that everyone is an apostate who believes differently than they do. The only way you can take the "we are it" position is to make

everyone else an apostate. The sixth-seal brothers stood against that teaching. You can read about it in *The Birth of A Reformation*, written by Andrew L. Byers. The "we are it" spirit has caused a breach, and God wants to heal the breach.

The Word of God lets us know God wants to do more. I wonder how many souls would believe the Gospel if we were one as our blessed Lord prayed in John, Chapter 17? Unity is the soul-saving salt of the earth. Our faith will increase when we have love one to another and a right spirit. Again, according to the Apostle Paul, we can have unity of the Spirit, true unity, and our understanding not be on the same level. Some people think they have greater knowledge than God does. The Bible says they have a preeminent spirit.

Ephesians 4:13 says, "Till we all come." How long will it take? When the fifth seal was opened, "under the altar the souls . . . cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord . . ." (Revelation 6:9-10)? Three hundred and fifty years is more than anyone's lifetime. If we put time limits on people, we will become guilty of cutting each other off. We will make an image to that same beast if we are not careful.

We Are Nothing Without Charity

Paul spoke of the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:18. God wants us to reconcile relationships. Many people have the false idea that everyone needs to come to them. When you think you are it, you have taken the position that others are not and must line up with you. It becomes "my way or the highway" in the name of doctrine. Meanwhile, the doctrines of charity and unity are thrown out.

First Corinthians 13:1-2 states: "Though I speak with the tongues

of men and of angels, and have not charity [charity is a doctrine in the Word of God], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal [of no benefit]. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

You can be the greatest in the eyes of man—the greatest preacher or teacher. You can understand Revelation better, have all knowledge, and have the best delivery, personality, and ability to sway the crowds, but will you succeed if you have no charity? It will be all in vain. Anything we have or think we have is nothing without charity. You can teach the Word of God with the wrong attitude, which has no benefit to anyone.

Verse 3 reads, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [you can claim to have the greatest consecration and sanctification], it profiteth me nothing." First John 4:20 says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Jesus emphasized how we treat one another more than impressing each other with our gifts and abilities. The song "My Heart's Desire" by Lucena Byrum says, "Let my talents and time all be given to Him." We need to be a consecrated people, but we must have charity.

First Corinthians 13:4 says, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind [no knee-jerk reactions—I am done with you!]; charity envieth not." Think about that. Someone else may do things better than you can. Be glad for them; do not allow it to work ill will. Envy and jealousy are close kin-

dreds. Some get an attitude because of envy. It bothers them if someone can do something better than they can.

Some show false humility while envy is working. As time goes on, a case is built, and when the time is right, they will divide because something was in their hearts all along. Division occurs when they think they have the right excuse or reason. Where is your consecration? If you feel something is working on you, own it and correct it by repenting. Let the fire of the Holy Ghost burn it out of you.

First Corinthians 13:4-6 reads: "Charity vaunteth not itself [is not lifted up], is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." That is beautiful! We are nothing without charity. God has always used people. Can God use us for the healing of the land? Do you have charity and humility? Do you desire to be one so the world may believe?

How much damage has division caused? Some people do not know what to believe, and they do not know where to go for help. Some people may not have enough faith to turn to God because of unbelief, and they are empty in their souls. Babel's confusion causes one group to say, "We are right," and another group to say, "We are right." It has created so much negativity. Instead of worrying about *who* is right, concentrate on *what* is right.

We Can Humble Ourselves and Pray

When Nehemiah heard the walls of Jerusalem were torn down, he inquired about the welfare of the people of God, sat down, and wept (Nehemiah 1:1-4). He went before God and

prayed and got under a burden to rebuild the walls. Today, the seventh-seal message is to rebuild. Do you have the faith to believe and implement the message? If we do our part, God will restore His people.

Do you have a burden for your brother who may be overtaken in a fault? Or are you glad he is gone? Galatians 6:1 states, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." None of us have made it yet. Until the last breath goes out of your body, you have not made it.

Jeremiah 8:22 asks, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" We have the answer to all three questions. We have a healing balm and the Great Physician. If you do not know which way to go or how to handle a situation, ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" If you want to know how Jesus thinks, look into the Word of God.

John came to Christ and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us" (Mark 9:38). In verse 39, Jesus said, "Forbid him not." Verse 40 reads, "For he that is not against us is on our part." We should never have negative attitudes toward anyone. Some may not have the understanding we have or think we have. Stay humble, or you can be puffed up thinking you have understanding, and the self-conscious thought will be, "They have to come to *my* understanding."

In 1 Corinthians 3:3, Paul asked, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" James 3:16 says, "For where envying and strife is, there

Today, the seventh-seal message is to REBUILD.

Do you have the faith to BELIEVE and IMPLEMENT the message?



is confusion and every evil work." In 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, Paul said: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

Paul nailed the groupism early on. Today, the ministry needs to stand against groupism and those who start or promote division. Some want to play politics. They do things to be accepted. We need more than a social salvation. Many people will die and go to hell right around the so-called Church of God because they follow the protocol of what is necessary to be accepted by the group. The needs of their souls go unmet.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). God wants to do a restoration, repairing the breach in the seventh-seal day. What can we do? We can pray.

(Compact Disc TR-2865)

Brother Mickey Mullins is the pastor of the Church of God in Stewartville, AL.

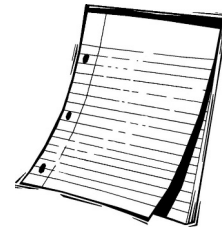
[Camp Meeting Report cont. from pg. 2]

her family felt impressed to sing "The Potter Knows the Clay." As the Holy Spirit spoke to hearts through the words of this song, many made their way to an altar of prayer. Souls were saved and lifted to a new life in Christ Jesus. We witnessed ones who desired a closer walk with God or needed to lighten their burden and gain peace in the middle of their storm, kneel and get help. God's Spirit spoke to backslidden souls, and thank the Lord, many gave their hearts back to God.

God's presence should never be esteemed lightly. We thank the Lord for His faithfulness in searching us, knowing our thoughts, and seeing if anything would keep us from making Heaven our home! Psalm 100:5 summarizes the atmosphere of our camp meeting. It says, "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." Thank God for His goodness!

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

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



Consecration

"Will you please tell me in a word," said a Christian woman to a minister, "what your idea of consecration is?"

Holding out a blank sheet of paper, the pastor replied, "It is to sign your name at the bottom of this blank sheet, and let God fill it in as He wills."

Author Unknown



The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *investing* as "to commit (money) in order to earn a financial return; to make use of for future benefits or advantages." Investments can be made in cars, apartments, houses, jobs, stocks, or money. Investments are not sinful but can become sinful if they take time away from our walk with God. If you owned shares in companies such as Ford or Tesla, and there was a fifteen percent increase in your investment if you sold Tesla but a seventeen percent decrease if you sold Ford, which company would you want to invest in? Naturally, you would want to invest in a company that offered a greater profit.

The world invests in earthly things that have no eternal value. Luke 12:13-21 tells us: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he [Jesus] said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build

greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

The man in this parable had treasures for himself down here, but nothing for his eternal soul. He was only concerned about his wealth on earth. He did not consider that one day he would die, and the Lord would require his soul. It was not a good investment. Jesus wants us to invest in the things of God.

In Luke 12:29-34, Jesus said: "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Christians can invest in prayer, Bible study, testifying, singing, and worshiping the Lord. When we invest, we must remember that we are God's people and not our own. Think about how your investment will influence your spiritual walk with the Lord. Investing in prayer does not involve money, but salvation. The Lord will only hear the prayers of the righteous. First Peter 3:12 says, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

John 9:31-33 reads: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing."

We need to invest in prayer. If you are unsaved, God does not hear your prayers. As sinners, many of us thought we could pray to God, asking Him for protection. Thank God for the prayers of our saved loved ones who were praying for us to make it through our day. I thank the Lord for the prayers sent up on my behalf.

Before you can invest in the things of the Lord, you must obtain salvation. Romans 10:9-10 reads: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart

that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

We do not invest in the Lord because we have to, but because we want to. Once you get saved, you automatically have different desires. The desire to serve the flesh is gone. We have a new desire to serve the Lord and do what the Lord would have us to do. Romans 8:4-5 says: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Thank the Lord for salvation! I can pray and know my prayers have gone to the throne of God, and He hears me.

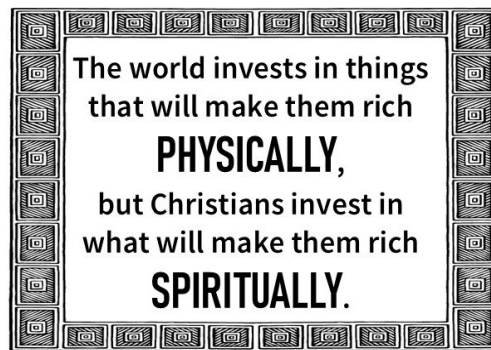
In order to invest, you need something to invest in. The world invests in money, such as stocks, cars, houses, and jobs. We need money to survive, cars to take us places, a house to live in, and jobs to live. Christians are not limited to investing in those things; we can invest in salvation. The world invests in things that will make them rich physically, but Christians invest in what will make them rich spiritually.

When you invest in prayer, you obtain strength. Prayer is an important investment as a Christian. We cannot communicate with the Lord or gain daily strength without prayer. The Lord provides ROI (return on investment). When you invest in something, it can bring a bad or good return. If you own stock and it goes down at the time you sell it, you will not receive a good return on investment. If it increases in value when you sell it, you will have a good return on investment. Everything you do to serve God will yield a

good return on investment.

Giving praise to God is a return on investment. We can walk with God and give our testimony to others, and God gets the glory, not ourselves. Philippians 4:6 says, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Ephesians 6:18 says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The *Amplified Bible* reads: "With all prayer and petition pray [with specific requests] at all times [on every occasion and



in every season] in the Spirit, and with this in view, stay alert with all perseverance and petition [interceding in prayer] for all God's people." Only God knows what our return on investment is when we pray.

Another return on investment is liberty. When we are saved and pray to God, we have the liberty to tell God what we need and reach His throne. In John 15:7, Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." In Matthew 21:22, Jesus said, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Prayer gives us liberty as a return on investment. We can praise God in a testimony when He answers our prayers.

We need to invest in Bible study and reading. Reading and

studying are different. As Christians, we need to read God's Word. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *read* as "to become acquainted with or look over the contents of (something, such as a book); to make a study of." *Study* means "a careful examination or analysis of a phenomenon, development, or question." God's Word gives us knowledge of how to live as Christians and be more like Christ.

In Acts, Chapter 8, God told Philip to go and meet up with an Ethiopian man in a chariot. The man was reading from Isaiah the prophet. Acts 8:26-31 reads: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

"Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him."

The Ethiopian man was reading God's Word, but he did not understand it. He needed someone to speak the Word of God to him. Preachers and teachers help us learn, which is why we need to attend the worship services.

James 1:22-23 tells us: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass." We read

in 2 Timothy 3:14-15, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Studying the Bible is an important part of Bible reading. You can read a Scripture and study its context and how it applies to your life. Reading is necessary. You can read a verse, and you may not fully understand it, which allows questions to come up so you can study. If we read

and indulge in God's Word, we will obtain knowledge on how to live as a Christian and be more like Christ.

Christians need to invest in worship. Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Worship is to be taken seriously. We need to go to church and worship the Lord. We should not be lackadaisical and stay home when we do not feel like coming or are tired. It is different if you are sick and cannot come to church.

If you can get to the worship services, that is where you need to be. Worship plays an important part in a Christian's salvation. Our spiritual strength will fail if we do not worship with our fellow brothers and sisters. The return on investment from worship is encouragement from the saints and the Word of God. Worship comes from the heart. We can praise the Lord in person when we go to church.

Brother C. J. Lemaster

Brother C. J. Lemaster is a member of the Church of God youth group in Newark, OH.



God Is in Control

Sister Stacey Kemp

When you agree to do the work of God, you do not always understand everything God might ask of you. To be bold sometimes requires allowing God to take full control over you. Recently, we had an incident happen at our home. We live right beside a main highway. On that morning, my children did not get up in time to catch the bus. For some reason, I did not get up with my alarm. So, my son went out and started the car, and he came back into the house, saying, "Did you know that there is a man outside, walking up and down our fence, and he has a baby?"

Perhaps the fact that I have a small

baby pushed me to go outside to see what was going on. I went out, and, sure enough, there beside my fence was a man with a baby. The baby did not look very good. I ran back into the house, got my phone, and called 911. It seemed like it took them forever to answer the call.

When I went back outside, I asked the man if he was okay, and then I asked him if the baby was okay. He said, "He's cold." Without hesitating, I went over to him and asked, "Do you want me to take your baby?" He said, "Yes."

So he lifted the baby over the fence and gave him to me. The baby was completely soaked and muddy. I ran to

my neighbors with this baby. All the time, I was crying out to God for help. Soon, the police and the medics arrived and checked the baby. Thank God, he was still alive.

Later, I found out that the man was in a car accident and had been walking along the highway with a five-month-old baby. I do not know if he was in shock or what, but I do know that he needed my help.

Without even thinking about what could have happened to me, I had run outside. I asked my husband, "Why did you let me go out there?" and he said, "I had no worries." God had taken complete control of this situation, getting me outside to help that baby. I believe that God has great plans for that baby! Psalm 23:4 says, "I will fear no evil." I had no fear when I approached that man. He just stared at me, but I am thankful to know that I am a child of God.

I am so thankful I could help this baby. This is a lesson to me and my family of the importance of living right, of being the people of God, so we can show people the light, the way of holiness. I am so thankful I have God in my life!

Sister Stacey Kemp attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Brother Jared Decker

Storms are a natural part of life. Some storms are more severe than others. There are an estimated sixteen million thunderstorms worldwide each year, and about a hundred thousand are in the United States alone. Ten percent turn severe. Each year, an average of ten tropical storms develop over the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico. Many of these storms remain over the ocean, and about six become hurricanes. Twelve hundred tornadoes occur each year. Approximately forty-five thousand people die each year from natural disasters.

We all face storms in life, whether we are saved or unsaved. Storms can help us appreciate the sunny days. We would be unable to get rooted as deeply as we should in the things of God without storms. Psalm 55:5-8 reads: "Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings

like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

When a storm comes, we often look for an easy way out or a way around it. Many times, we need to find shelter and wait it out until the sun shines again. Shelter is found in prayer, fasting, going to church, and talking to the saints of God for encouragement and advice. Staying busy in the things of God will help you while you wait for your trial to end.

Self-Inflicted Storms

We all go through different storms. Some are caused by our actions and choices. These trials are self-inflicted because of disobedience or bad decisions. Jonah brought a storm on himself because of disobedience.

Jonah 1:1-7 says: "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jo-

nah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

"But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let

us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."

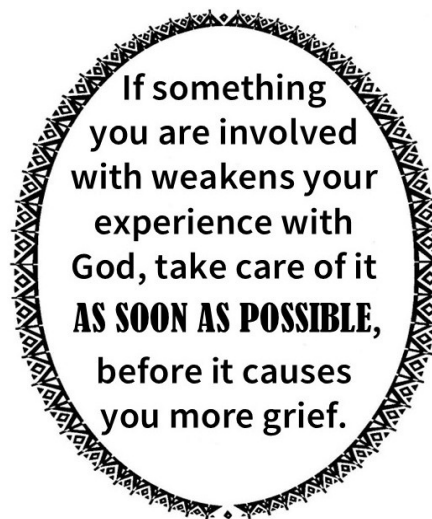
Verses 15-17 read: "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah 2:1 states, "Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly."

God brought a literal storm, but we can compare this to spiritual storms. How much easier would it have been for Jonah if he had listened to God in the first place? Many times, we take detours in life because we want to go our own way instead of asking God for directions. Take time for verification from God when choosing a job, making a financial decision, finding a boyfriend or girlfriend, or where God wants you in the church. It can help you avoid long detours and unnecessary heartaches.

Bad decisions affect you and those around you. Sometimes, it affects others before it affects you. The men on the ship with Jonah were afraid because they were tossed about in the storm while Jonah was on the lower deck sleeping, unaware of the storm created because of him. People who leave the church to have their own way and do what they want do not realize the bondage that comes with sin. Instead of allowing God to have control, they let sin have control. God will build up your life, but sin will break it down.

Making Bad Decisions

Samson went through an unnecessary storm. Judges 16:6-15 reads: "And Delilah said to Sam-



son, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liars in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread.

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be

bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth."

Young person, if you are dating someone who wants you to do something God is not pleased with, they may say, "If you love me, you will do this." You need to turn and run away! Verses 16-17 say, "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

No matter how strong you may think you are, something can take you down. Samson was the strongest man in the Bible, but a Philistine woman took him down. He should not have been with her in the first place because the Philistines were enemies of Israel. Many young people say, "There is no one in the church for me." They want to go to the world to find a companion. You need to pray about getting the right companion and make sure your boyfriend or girlfriend is not hindering you spiritually.

What is your Delilah? Is there something or someone you are involved with who tears you down or weakens your experience with God? I encourage you to take care of it as soon as possible before it causes you more grief.

False Accusations

Revelation 12:10-11 says: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

The devil likes to falsely accuse the saints, especially tender-hearted ones. The devil may not tempt you with worldly things such as alcohol, drugs, or other vices, but he will come at you with accusations. He likes to make you think you have sinned and cause you to doubt your salvation. He puts thoughts in your mind and then tells you, "If you were saved, you would not have those thoughts." What goes through your mind is not sin; what stays in your mind and takes root can become sin. It has been said we cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building a nest there.

Sometimes, the devil will tell you that you have sinned, but he will not tell you what you did. If you do something wrong, God will put His finger on it and tell you exactly what you did wrong and how to correct it. First Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace."

Do not allow the devil to discourage, accuse, or confuse you. If he can take away your joy and peace, he has done his job. He knows if he can discourage you, you will be unable to work for the Lord as you should. He wants you to feel that you have no testimony. Remember, you can overcome "him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [your] testimony."

Winds of Depression

Another storm cloud that comes over us quickly and viciously is the chilly winds of depression. Years ago, I had a deep depression come over me. I do not know where it came from, but I felt smothered and confused. I appreciate the testimony of a dear brother who said God healed him from anxiety. Anxiety and depression are real, and they can tear you down and make you feel you can do nothing for the Lord or your family. I could not pinpoint a reason for the depression, but I remember coming to church one Sunday morning feeling very low. Brother David Watson preached a message, and I felt like it was just for me. Brother Vern Plyler gave his testimony on how God delivered him from depression. That service felt very personal, and I thank God for it.

My depression was still there, but God sheltered me in the middle of the storm. I remember many mornings waking up and asking God if the trial was over. I suffered for months and prayed on the way to work for God to give me peace and joy again. It was not in my time, but I will never forget the day He lifted the burden from me. It was as if I could finally hear the birds sing and see the sunshine. I was so happy I bought flowers for my wife. I wanted her to know how much I appreciated her because she stood by me through it all. She felt alone during that time, too. Thank God, He delivered me from that depressed state of mind.

I learned some things from that trial I could not have learned any other way. I appreciate the little things in life more. God gave me more compassion and patience for others, especially those going through similar trials and those who are afflicted. He gave me a whole new perspective. Job 23:10 says, "But he

knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

First Peter 4:12-13 reads, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Isaiah 64:8 says, "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." When storms come upon you, remember God is in control. You can make it through for His glory. He wants to mold you into a better Christian. Before He molds you, He has to apply the heat to make you more like the image of Christ.

Financial Storms

Many have experienced a financial storm come along and blow money everywhere but into the savings account. My wife and I have been through financial storms. Sometimes, they come one after another. We have had car problems, our air conditioner and furnace broke down, and our septic system needed to be replaced. All of those things were expensive. Whether you are saved or unsaved, the trials of life happen to all of us. Thank God for supplying all our needs, providing food for our table, and blessing me with a great job. I appreciate working for a good boss. We have money to pay our bills, and I am grateful.

Through all of these trials, the Lord has shown me that wealth is not found in your bank account. True wealth is in your relationship with God, your spouse and children, and having the necessities of life. Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his

riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Not everyone can handle worldly riches. God will bless you according to what He sees you can handle. First Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is the root of all evil." Money itself is not evil, but if you do not put God first, it can lead you on an easy path to all kinds of evil. Money can enhance whatever kind of person you are. If you are greedy, being rich will make you more greedy. If you like to give when you have little to offer, you will likely provide more when you have money. If you are depressed, money can make you even more depressed. If you have an addiction, money can enhance your addiction.

Hebrews 13:5 says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have." Be careful not to always talk about the things you wish you had. Be content with what you have. Sometimes, when people get into financial trials, tithing is the first thing that gets put on hold instead of being the first thing taken out. Malachi 3:8 says that you rob God if you withhold your tithes. If you put God first, He will take care of you.

Storms of Affliction

Many are under the storm cloud of affliction. The enemy would have us believe that God does not heal like He used to. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." What has changed? We know God has not changed, but humans do. Maybe we have less faith than we once did, or we have too many thoughts and cares of the world on our minds. The world around us can get too noisy, and it affects our connection with God. Faith requires a good connection.

Even if you have faith, sometimes, God wants you to carry an

affliction. Second Corinthians 1:6 says, "And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." God sees the big picture. An affliction may be what you need to stay saved. It helps you stay humble and keeps your flesh under. Remember, God will give you the power to push through. Second Corinthians 12:9 reads: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Whether your affliction is for a short while or lasts for years, lean on God; He will give you the power you need.

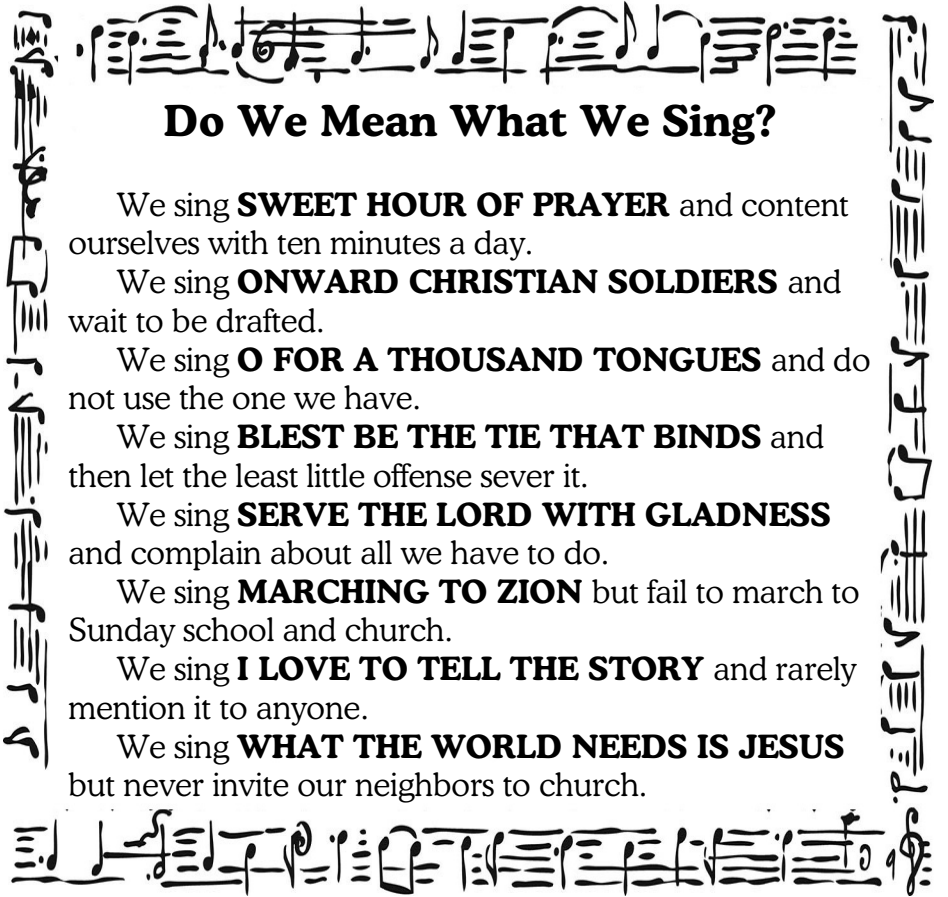
What foundation are you building on? Matthew 7:24-27 states: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came,

and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

The world is like the foolish man living on the sand with no hope or care for tomorrow. When the storm comes, he is washed away. Thank the Lord, God's people have hope and a strong foundation. When the storms come, and the winds blow, we can take hold of the Rock, Jesus Christ, and not be swept away. Thank the Lord for the Rock of our salvation.

(Compact Disc TR-2945)

Brother Jared Decker attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



Do We Mean What We Sing?

We sing **SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER** and content ourselves with ten minutes a day.

We sing **ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS** and wait to be drafted.

We sing **O FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES** and do not use the one we have.

We sing **BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS** and then let the least little offense sever it.

We sing **SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS** and complain about all we have to do.

We sing **MARCHING TO ZION** but fail to march to Sunday school and church.

We sing **I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY** and rarely mention it to anyone.

We sing **WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS IS JESUS** but never invite our neighbors to church.



Crucifying the Flesh

Romans 6:6 *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

Galatians 5:24-25 *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Colossians 3:5 *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

Crucifying the flesh is one of the most difficult things a Christian will ever have to do because we live with our flesh day in and day out. The Apostle Paul said he had to "die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31) because of things that came up. Our flesh is made of passions and desires, and we

have to contend with those things.

Some things you can lay down easily. Perhaps the preacher says, "The Word of God teaches us this," or you may read in the Word during your daily devotions that God wants you to do something. There are times when it is rather easy to do. Other times, it is more difficult, which is when you have to crucify the flesh and put it down.

Mark 8:34 says, "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Matthew 19:29 tells us that for Christ, we must forsake father, mother, houses, and lands, but Luke 14:26 says, "And his own life also." That is where it becomes difficult because we are human. We are flesh and blood

with desires, passions, and things we want to do. We have aspirations and plans for our lives. It may be a certain job. We may want to go here or there, do this or do that, yet that may not be what is best for us.

When God reveals His will to us, saying, "This is not what I want you to do," depending on how strong our desires are, we may have a battle on our hands. Yet, the battle is never to a point that we cannot be an overcomer. In salvation, God has given us everything we need. Isaiah 59:19 says, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." The Spirit that gets lifted up is Christ in us.

If we carry Christ in our hearts, when we are presented with evil, whatever direction it may come from, we can—with His help—repel and resist it. We must resist the devil, and we also must submit ourselves to God.

When it comes to crucifying the flesh, some people think: "I am already a Christian; I have already denied myself. Why do I need to continue denying myself?" As we go along in life, regardless of our age, we all have the flesh to deal with, but thank God, what rewards there are for those who overcome day by day! The ultimate reward is that heavenly reward, which is what we are all working for.

The word *crucified* means "to put to death, to bind, to destroy the power of." *Mortify* means "to destroy the strength, to subdue, or deaden, to inflict pain or discomfort." As Christians, why is it so necessary for us to do this? Just as we had to deny ourselves when we first came to Christ to be saved, we must continue to do this.

First John 2:15-16 reads: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all

that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Satan is always working, trying to cause us to fall. That is his business. I once heard a man say, "If Satan did not do such a good job, God would fire him." Well, that is true.

Satan knows our flesh is strong, desiring the easiest way, the way of least resistance. Although the flesh is strong, the power of God working in us is stronger. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Whatever is presented to you as negative to Christianity, the flesh can be overcome.

In school, young people often like to take the easy way out. You might decide to take one subject in school because it is not as hard as other subjects. (I always liked lunch.) When it comes to our spirituality, we ought to be getting a little deeper into Christ. To do that calls for a little more crucifying of self. This will not be easy. You will have to work a little harder at it, but keep in mind, whatever you do for Him, the rewards are great! One minister said, "Working for the Lord is not a get-rich-quick program, but the retirement is out of this world."

Something about our humanity desires gratification. It is part of our human nature, but you can overcome those things. First John 2:15-16 tells us there are three main ways the enemy has to work through: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All temptations come through one or more of those avenues.

What is the "lust of the flesh"? Sometimes people lust after popularity, a particular position, someone else's gift, or someone else's girlfriend or boyfriend. Lust will cause you to reach out for forbidden things if you do not

learn how (through the grace of God) to restrain your natural-given appetites. I remember one young lady who was so desirous of a certain young man. She felt she could not live without him. She was warned, "That one is not the best for you," but she went against that counsel, leaving God for that young man.

God has a plan, and if we do our best to seek Him, submitting our desires and everything we have to Him, He will not mislead us. He will not lead us astray. When God leads us in a certain area, it will be a blessing to us. We may have some problems, but when we do things God's way, we have something to stand on.

One time, concerning a particular position, I asked the Lord, "Is this where You want me to be?" I realized there would be some hard places to go through, and there were. But when I was settled in my heart and mind, knowing that I was where God wanted me, when the hard times came, I always had something to look back to. I said, "Lord, You showed me that right there." That is part of what crucifying the flesh is all about.

There are two kinds of wills, as far as God is concerned — a *permissive* will and a defined, *perfect* will. That *defined, perfect* will is what you should work toward. That is where all the "goodies" are. The *permissive will* of God allows or permits you to do this or that. It is not really what God wants you to do. One of the biggest difficulties I have seen is when people have an opportunity to take a better job with a better pay, with a better position. You might ask, "Doesn't God want us to have good things?" Yes, He does. However, if that requires moving to an area where there is not a true Church of God congregation, would that move be better or worse? Financially speaking, it would proba-

bly be definitely better, but spiritually speaking, people who make that choice often eventually dry up and spiritually die.

We must allow God to direct us. When He tells us what He wants us to do, especially if it is against our desires, that is when we have to start digging. Is it easy to crucify the flesh? No. Sometimes we have to pray and fast. Sometimes we really have to get in earnest. There have been things in my own life I desired. Several years ago, some desires tried to crop up in my heart, and I had a real battle on my hands. I said, "God, I know this is not right." Yet, the flesh still tried to reach out. God brought victory to me, and I am thankful for that.

Sometimes people will mistreat you, and the flesh wants to retaliate. There is always a way to doing something right. Years ago, I had a job where I was working the best I knew how. In fact, I was doing my job plus two or three other jobs that pertained to this job. I was off work sick for a week. While I was gone, a young fellow was put there. He started jumping around, doing this and doing that. When I came back, the boss told me: "I am not satisfied with the way you are doing something. I am going to put that young man on your job."

While we should stand up for what is right, we have to do it the right way. I told my boss: "I have done my best to do a good job for you. I have gone without my lunch and laid aside my breaks. However, if you are really unhappy with me, I can be gone in fifteen or twenty minutes." I did not have to jump up in his face, swear at him, or carry on. There is a right way to do things. Dear one, with God's help, you can do things the right way.

The next one is "the lust of the eyes" — what we see. It might be a house or a car that we are tempted to go after. Satan tempted Eve when she saw the Tree of the

Knowledge of Good and Evil. That was the only one God told them not to partake of. Lot saw the well-watered plains. Achan saw a Babylonian garment, some silver, and a wedge of gold, but they did not see what was on the other side. God may allow you to reach out and take hold of those things. That is the permissive will of God. Sometimes, you do not see what goes along with that until it is too late. Many people do not see the end of the matter.

Satan seeks to blind us to reality. He appeals to us through our sight, showing only the attractive side of things, not where those things will lead us in time. The man who began drinking did not see that he would eventually become an alcoholic. All that looks good is not always good; what shines is not always gold.

We read in Proverbs 4:25-27: "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil." We are to look straight ahead. When we look straight ahead, we are looking at the ultimate goal, the final reward. If we keep our eyes on the prize, as the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:14, we will not be as apt to be hindered by some of these things.

The closer you can get to the center of God's divine will for your life, the less effect earthly lusts and passions will have on you. You will never be free from them, regardless of how long you live. That is all part of what the battle is over. However, the closer we get to God and the more we strive to be like Him, the less effect some of these more trivial things will have on us.

The third one John mentioned is "the pride of life." There is something about our humanity that wants to be seen and accepted. It is important that we do

not allow this desire to override our Christian principles. The people at Babel wanted to make a name for themselves. Another example is Absalom, who wanted to be the king instead of David. He worked against his father, using all kinds of dirty tricks to undermine his father. He was seeking a name for himself — the pride of life. We cannot allow those kinds of things to get into our lives.

We may be gifted to speak, sing, or teach. If we are not careful, we can allow ourselves to think we are really somebody. When I came to the Church of God in 1965, I remember Brother Cecil M. Washington. He was a highly educated individual, but he never portrayed that kind of spirit. He could expound on the Scripture, but he never had the attitude, "I am really somebody whom people ought to meet." Our gift should always be seasoned with much grace.

Pride causes one to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Matthew 23:12 states, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." We must walk in a humble manner. If we get to

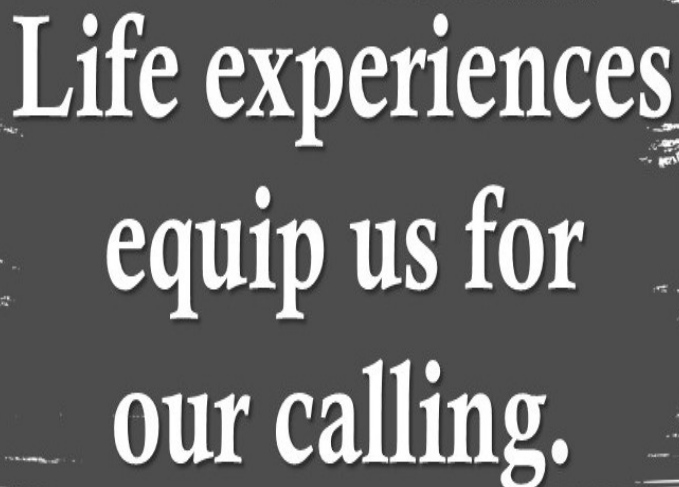
thinking we are someone, God knows how to put us down.

First Peter 2:11 reads, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Crucifying the flesh includes abstaining and staying away from those things that war against our souls. First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." There is no greater person the enemy would like to see fall than one of God's saints. He is after the young and the old. He is working to mar your experience one way or another. He does not care what direction it comes from. As long as he can spot your garment and make you impure, he has succeeded in his battle.

Dear one, do you want to be spiritual? You can be if you desire to be, but it requires crucifying the flesh. Thank God, with God's help, there is victory. Keep your eyes on the prize. Do not deviate from the path of right.

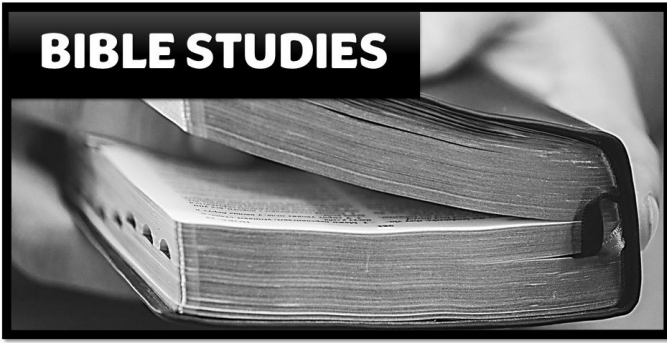
Brother Fred Barrows

Brother Fred Barrows went to be with the Lord on January 29, 2024.



Life experiences
equip us for
our calling.

BIBLE STUDIES



SOME TRUTHS REGARDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Many people are looking for Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom. Many religious advocates hold this position. However, that position conflicts with what the Scriptures teach concerning both the nature of the kingdom and when the kingdom was established. This Bible study presents several Scriptures and brief expositions to clear up some misconceptions regarding the Kingdom of God.

John 18:36 *My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.*

This proclamation of Jesus to Pilate reveals the Kingdom of God is not, nor ever will be, a worldly, temporal kingdom. It also reveals the warfare we engage in is not of a literal nature. This is clearly set forth in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. Many fail to realize Christ never intended, nor does He intend, to establish a literal, earthly kingdom.

Luke 17:20-21 *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

The Kingdom of God is not of a nature that can be literally seen. This is why Jesus proceeded to teach that we should not give any attention to cries concerning, "Lo here! or, lo there!" Then Christ declared, "Behold, the kingdom of God is WITHIN YOU." Thus, "the kingdom of God" is a spiritual experience or a spiritual reality that is "within you." Some may raise the objection that the Greek offered it as "among you." Regardless, it still confirms the truth that it is a spiritual reality not seen by the natural eye and also that it was a present reality in the first century.

Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

The Kingdom of God is not something literal or temporal; it is not something that is fleshly oriented, or designed to feed the flesh or fleshly desires. This verse reveals the nature of the kingdom is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is an experience "the Holy Ghost" brings to the hearts of men. "Righteousness, and peace, and joy" are spiritual qualities that come to an individual when he or she "serveth Christ" (verse 18).

Matthew 6:10 *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

This Scripture is often misunderstood. Some try to utilize it to advocate a future coming kingdom, but look closely at the words of our Lord. Here it is recorded as, "Thy kingdom come." Sadly, many stop with this expression and erroneously conclude it is a literal, future event, but we need to view that phrase in its context. The next part informs us *how* and *when* this kingdom experience comes to an individual. "Thy will be done IN [not on] earth, as it is in heaven." To understand this, we must understand what is God's "will"? First Timothy 2:3-4 says, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who WILL have all men to be saved." Therefore, God's "will" is for "all men to be saved."

Next, we must look at what is the "earth" Jesus was speaking of in this verse? Where does salvation come to? Second Corinthians 4:7 explains "we have this treasure IN earthen vessels." Then, in 2 Corinthians 5:1, the Apostle Paul told of what he was speaking, stating it is "our earthly house of this tabernacle." When we submit to God's "will" being done "in [our] earthen vessels" and we are "saved," that is when the kingdom experience of "righteousness, and peace, and joy" is brought to us "in the Holy Ghost."

Again, the nature of "the kingdom of God" is not literal or temporal. It never has been, and in reality, it never will be. Christ never designed to reign in this physical world, but He came to establish a kingdom to reign in the hearts and lives of men.

Luke 16:16 *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

The next truth we must address is *when* was the kingdom established? Look at the words of Jesus in this verse. It would be impossible to press "INTO" something that did not exist. When Jesus commenced His ministry, Matthew 4:23 tells us He was "preaching THE gospel of THE kingdom." Responding appropriately to "the gospel" is the manner in which one "presseth into" the kingdom. Notice the exclusivity — it is "THE kingdom." There is only one.

There is not another to come at some future time.

When the Apostle Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost to that Jewish audience, he declared to them that God "would raise up Christ to sit on his ['David'; verse 29] throne" (Acts 2:30). Then, he declared to them in Acts 2:32, "This Jesus hath God raised up." This verse makes it plain that Christ has been raised and is now sitting on David's throne. This is not a future event but a present reality, as is the kingdom.

Mark 9:1 Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

The kingdom began to be preached with John the Baptizer; it then advanced by the preaching of Christ; and now "every man presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). Consider, Jesus said it would "come with power" before the people He was addressing would "taste of death." There are only three possible conclusions we can draw from Jesus' words:

(1) He lied! I think we can handily dismiss that conclusion for we know lying is sin, and He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

(2) Somewhere there are men still living who are two thousand years old! I think if that were the case, it would be newsworthy,

and we would have heard of such. So, we can reject that conclusion as well.

(3) The ONLY conclusion left is that "the kingdom of God" came "with power" in the lifetime of those to whom Jesus was speaking, those who were living in the first century. Indeed, "the kingdom of God" did "come with power" when Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," the power of the Holy Ghost, which occurred on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 33).

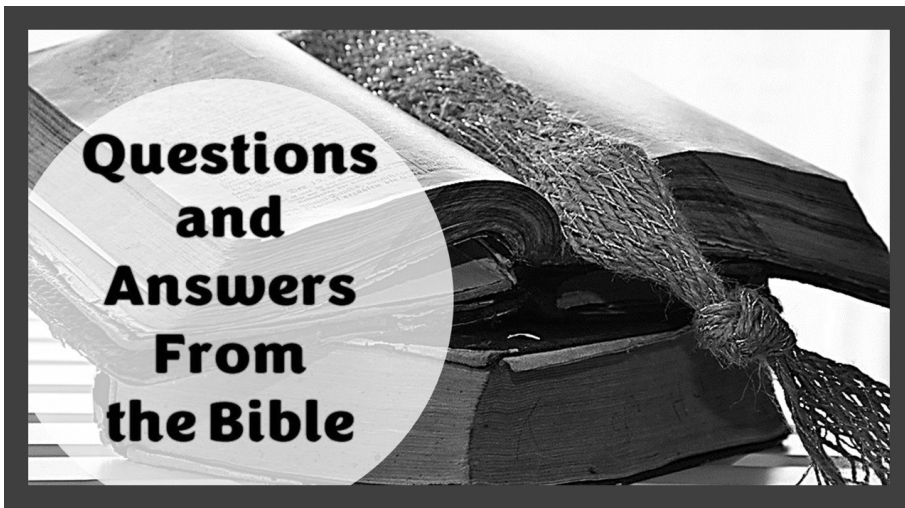
The Kingdom of God is spiritual, not literal. It is a present reality, not a coming event. The kingdom is an experience, and Jesus successfully established it with the work of His First Advent. There is no purpose, need, or time for a future coming kingdom. Christ's desire is to reign in the hearts of men now, and the good news is that He has a victorious people over whom He reigns as King now.

There is a great danger in advocating there will be something in the future as the devil can use this to cause men to procrastinate in dealing with the need of their souls.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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

A promotional graphic for the 2024 Winter Camp Meeting. At the top, the text "2024 WINTER CAMP MEETING" is displayed in large, white, bold letters against a dark background. Below this, there are four main sections arranged horizontally. From left to right: 1. A laptop icon with the text "MORNING & EVENING MESSAGES" on its screen. 2. A silhouette of a person wearing headphones, with the text "YOUTH MESSAGES" below it. 3. A silhouette of a person in a suit holding a book, with the text "TEACHING SERVICES" below it. 4. A QR code with the text "GODSACRES.ORG" below it. Above the QR code is a small heart icon inside a circle. At the bottom of the graphic, the text "AUDIOS & VIDEOS ONLINE" is written in large, white, bold letters.



**Questions
and
Answers
From
the Bible**

WHAT IS THE SYMBOLICAL MEANING OF THE "NEW HEAVENS" AND THE "NEW EARTH" (2 PETER 3:13)?

To properly understand these expressions, we must view them in the greater scheme of Scripture. We must lay "line upon line" and go "here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:13). Isaiah 34:16 says every Scripture has "her mate" and that "his spirit . . . hath gathered them."

The expressions the Apostle Peter employed of "new heavens and a new earth" were first introduced in Isaiah 65:17. What these expressions represent becomes clear when verse 17 is read in continuity with verse 18. In verse 17, the Prophet Isaiah spoke of "new heavens," and in verse 18 (using a common Hebrew teaching style known as parallelism), he explained what the new heavens refer to.

In verse 18, Isaiah penned, "I create Jerusalem." This "heavenly Jerusalem" is representative of the "church" (Hebrews 12:22-23). The "new earth" (verse 17) is "her people" (verse 18). It is this new people who "have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7), who are "a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17), or as the Greek says new "creations," who compose this New Testament church.

Peter lifted Isaiah's prophecy and placed it in the midst of his Epistle, which is speaking of the Second Advent. However, verse 13 has nothing to do with the Second Advent. In

this passage, the Apostle was dealing with two lines of thought: (1) "the day of the Lord will come" (2 Peter 3:10), with an explanation of the occurrences of that day; and (2) "Seeing then that all these things [or in view of this coming event] . . . what manner of persons ought ye to be" (verse 11). He proceeded to tell us to be ready for that day, we should be "in all holy conversation and godliness."

In view of this coming fateful day, Peter revealed the need to be looking for an experience that makes us a "new earth" and puts us in the "new heavens" (verse 13). In this verse, he told us to "look for new heavens and a new earth," and in verse 14, he explained what they are: "Seeing that ye *look* for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." These words describe both the personal experience ("new earth") and the position where that experience is nurtured and sustained ("without spot, and blameless," the church "not having spot . . . holy and without blemish"; Ephesians 5:27). Thus, this "new heavens" is "heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

In this text, Peter was dealing with dual thoughts: (1) the coming Second Advent of the Lord, and (2) the experience and church He has

left in place to prepare people for His coming.

CAN A CHRISTIAN EAT FOOD KILLED BY A NATIVE DOCTOR IN A SHRINE?

According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, a *shrine* is "a place of worship, usually one centered around some sacred object or scene." Let us look at some general principles. When Noah came off of the ark in the patriarchal period, the Lord established Moral Law to guide them. Genesis 9:4 and 6 tell us: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. . . . Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." These timeless moral laws emanate from God's moral nature. Some "native doctors" offer human sacrifices, and to slay an individual to eat (cannibalism) would be morally wrong.

If the meat was offered to a religious idol, then a host of other moral principles apply. If it was not human meat and not a sacrifice to idols, I do not see a Scriptural prohibition. But assuming it was meat sacrificed to idols, then 1 Corinthians, Chapter 8, provides guidance. In verse 4, the Apostle Paul instructed those who had been saved from a heathen, idol-worshiping culture. He wrote, "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols . . ." He then set forth three things that must be considered. These three principles apply to far more than just "the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols" (verse 4).

Principle (1): Knowledge. There were those who had "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) but their "knowledge" was causing them to be puffed up (1 Corinthians 8:1). They were not exhibiting "charity" to the newer converts who had not come to their level of

"knowledge," or whose spiritual maturity had not developed as quickly as others. Paul told those Corinthians, if they were puffed up and did not exhibit "charity" (verse 1), then "he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (verse 2).

In verses 4-6, Paul set forth the falsity of those idols, and since they are "nothing," then the eating is nothing and of no consequence. In verse 8, he stated, "For neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse." In reality, neither makes a difference unless one is involved in the practice of idolatry. First John 5:21 instructs, "Keep yourselves from idols."

Principle (2): Conscience. Paul revealed in verse 7 that it is a matter of conscience, stating, "For some with conscience of the idol unto this

hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol." Because of their past experience and the immature development of their experience at the current time, they could not disassociate it from their previous pagan practices—"their conscience being weak" (verse 7).

First John 3:20 tells us, "If our heart [several renderings offer it as 'conscience'] condemn us, God is greater than our heart [conscience]." An individual should not violate his conscience, but the "conscience" must be educated in truth. Therefore, the Apostle was instructing the Corinthians to exhibit patience and "charity" to those whose understanding has not developed to maturity.


Principle (3): Consideration. This principle is set forth in 1 Corinthians 8:9-13. Verse 9 speaks of becoming

"a stumblingblock to them that are weak." Verses 10-12 speak of ones being so brash in their actions that Paul posed the question, "Shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Paul so strongly denounced their activity that he styled it as, "Ye sin so against the brethren, and . . . ye sin against Christ." Paul then announced the consideration in verse 13, writing, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh." This consideration is a principle that can be applied by the Holy Ghost to many different situations throughout life.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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TR-3318	12-27-2024	Recovering Yourself Out of the Snare of the Devil	Bro. Allen Polston
TR-3319	12-28-2024	Let the Urgency of Revival Fire Continue	Bro. John Gill
TR-3320		The Four Seasons of Life: Spring Time	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
TR-3321		An Offering in Righteousness	Bro. Allen Polston
TR-3322	12-29-2024	What Must I Do to Be Saved?	Bro. Brandon Gonzalez
TR-3323		The Four Seasons of Life: Summer Time	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
TR-3324		Three Divine Things You Can Do Without Literally Seeing	Bro. Allen Polston
TR-3325	12-30-2024	A New Commandment	Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3326		The Four Seasons of Life: Fall Time	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
TR-3327	12-31-2024	Until I Went Into the Sanctuary of God	Bro. Bryce Davis
TR-3328		The Four Seasons of Life: Winter Time	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
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Upcoming Meetings

SUMMERSVILLE, WV
March 23-30

REVELATION MEETING: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Preaching from the Book of Revelation nightly.
For more information, contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047
Website: ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com & FB page: The Church of God, Summersville, WV

NEW CASTLE, IN
March 31-April 6

REVIVAL: Westwood Church of God, 1518 Railroad Street, New Castle, IN 47362
Service times: Monday-Friday 7:07 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Polston @ 765-521-8284

MEDINA, OH
April 7-13

REVIVAL: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. Food will be provided following the Friday night and Sunday morning services.
Evangelist: Brother Nathan Harding, Sierra Vista, AZ
For more information, contact: Pastor Mike Miller @ 234-249-9309
Website: MedinaChurchofGod.com

MT. PLEASANT, PA
April 19

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Service time: 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation.
MOTELS: Holiday Inn Express, 724-547-2095 (This is on the same road as the church.
Please mention that you are there for the church meeting.)
Super 8 Motel in New Stanton, 724-925-8915 (on I-70W, 10 miles north of the church)

April 20-27

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

SUMMERSVILLE, WV
April 21-27

REVIVAL AND FELLOWSHIP MEETING: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evening Evangelist: Brother Abraham Burton, O'Fallon, MO
Service times: Monday-Thursday 7 p.m.; Friday 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m.;
Saturday & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Meals will be provided by the congregation following the services on Friday-Sunday.
For lodging or more information, contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047

MINERVA, OH
April 28-May 4

REVIVAL: Mt. Zion Church of God, 13353 Lincoln Street SE, Minerva, OH 44657
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Leamon Whitehead @ 330-868-1016

CANBY, OR
April 30-May 4

REVIVAL: Church of God, 522 NW 2nd Avenue, Canby, OR 97013
Service times: Wednesday-Saturday 7 p.m.; Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Evangelists: Brother Steve & Sister Sheri Strelecky, Newark, OH
For more information, contact: Pastor Reggie Stegmeier @ 503-201-5622

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