

QUESTIONS JESUS ANSWERED

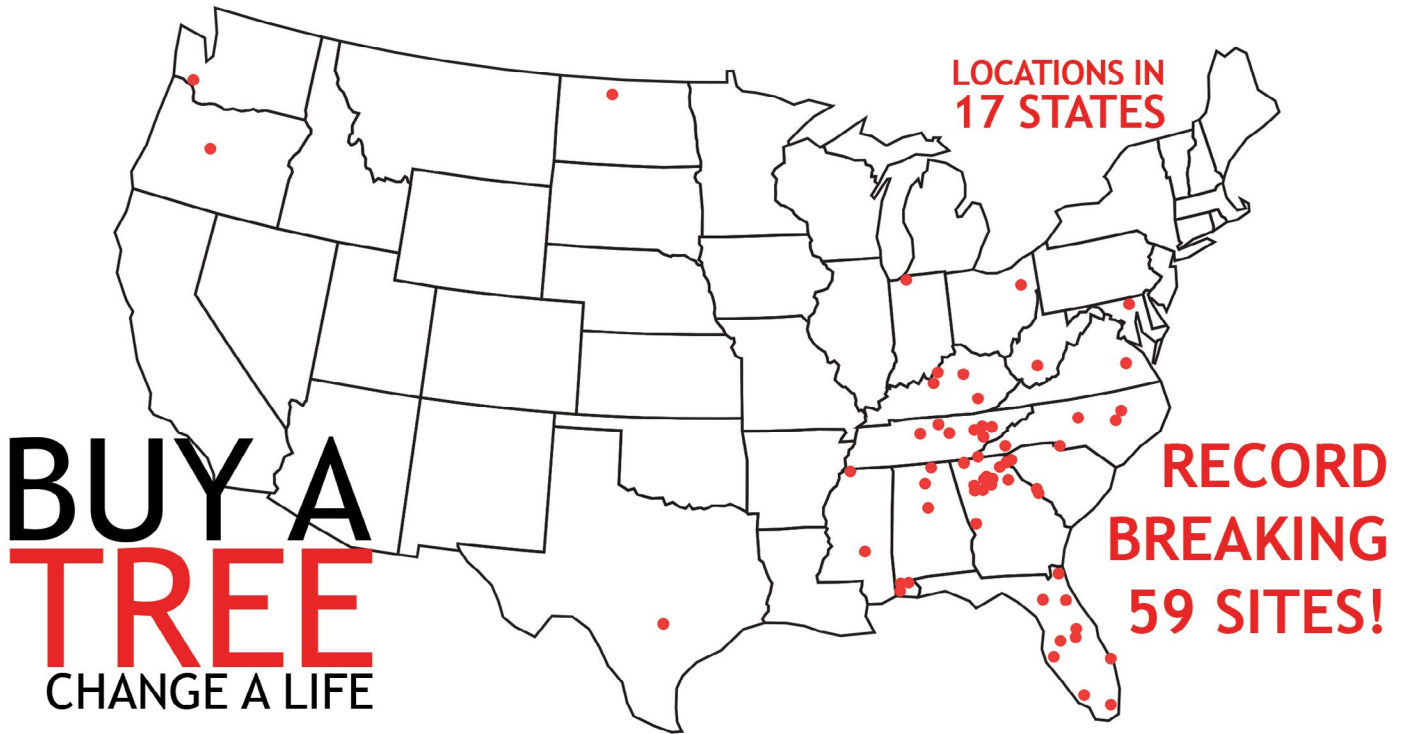
EVANGEL

November / December 2021



“He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.”—Luke 24:27 (NASB)

BUY A TREE. CHANGE A LIFE. works with churches to sell Christmas trees raising money to help children globally and locally! What began in 2012 with one church has turned into a nationwide program that helps children in some of the most challenging places in the world and right in our own communities! Join the movement. Buy a tree. Change a life.



**BUY A
TREE**
CHANGE A LIFE

Purchase your tree this Christmas at one of the following locations:

Daystar Church
Jerry Lawson - Cullman, AL
Metropolitan Church
Jason Browning - Birmingham, AL
New Life Chapel
Mike Williams - Madison, AL
Oak Park Church
David Smith - Mobile, AL
Pathway Church | Moffett
Travis Johnson - Mobile, AL
Pathway Church | Airport
Travis Johnson - Mobile, AL
Abundant Life Ministries
Anthony McDaniel - Largo, FL
Ascent Church
Jason Ginn - Stuart, FL
Christ Church Orlando
Paul Valo - Orlando, FL
Destiny Community Church
Rocky McKinley - Newberry, FL
Open Door Church of God
Steve Burkowske - Palatka, FL
Life Pointe Church
Richard Whitter - Homestead, FL
Parkway Life Church
Randy Holdman - Naples, FL
Plant City Church of God
Jeff Robinson - Plant City, FL
Ridge Community Church
Rodney Cannon - Dundee, FL

Riverlife Church
Jerry Jeter - Bradenton, FL
Calvary Children's Home
Powder Springs, GA
City of Refuge | Atlanta
Bruce Deel - Atlanta, GA
Cornerstone Church | Athens
Scott Sheppard - Athens, GA
Hope and Life
Tony Brock - Lawrenceville, GA
LifeBridge Church
Aaron Gable - Kennesaw, GA
Life Church
Bob Petty - Baldwin, GA
McCaysville Church of God
Zac Kea - McCaysville, GA
Mercy Ridge Church
Tim Bailey - Rossville, GA
Neighborhood Church
Torrey Herrin - Buford, GA
New Life Church
Bryan Matthews - Augusta, GA
Oasis Church
Wesley Weatherford - Hephzibah, GA
Restoration Church
Chuck Ramsey - Alpharetta, GA
River of Life Church
Dan Rogers - Hamilton, GA
The River Church
Jim Milligan - Cumming, GA

The Pointe Church
Chad Smith - Toccoa, GA
Central Church of God
Robert Sluder - Portage, IN
Eastside Praise
Chris Smith - Louisville, KY
Man O' War Church
Mitchell Tolle - Lexington, KY
New Hope Ministries
Mike Addison - Corbin, KY
Restoration Worship Center
Carl Smalls - Radcliff, KY
City of Refuge | Baltimore
Billy Humphrey - Baltimore, MD
Waco Church of God
Jeremy Smith - Mize, MS
Silo Square
Southaven, MS
Farmington Heights Church
Daylon Mooneyham - Wilson, NC
Prentiss Church
JD Woodside - Franklin, NC
Princeton Church of God
Matthew Cornett - Princeton, NC
West Asheboro Church of God
Travis Cooke - Asheboro, NC
Eagles Wings Community Fellowship
Travis Hovde - Minot, ND
Woodlawn Church
Matt Coutcher - Canton, OH

Fathers House
Clint Wills - Bend, OR
Garden Sanctuary
Patrick Conley - Rockhill, SC
TCWC Church
Tracy Hamilton - Seneca, SC
Alcoa Maryville Church of God
Paul Dyar - Maryville, TN
Carthage Church of God
Seth London - Carthage, TN
Gateway Church
Charlie Weir - Franklin, TN
Heritage Fellowship Church
Jason Sharpe - Oak Ridge, TN
New Hope Church
Tom Sterbens - Kodak, TN
North Sparta Church of God
Steve Gerhart - Sparta, TN
Redemption Life Church
Michael Cox - Powell, TN
Real Life Community Church
David Sanchez - New Braunfels, TX
Enon Church Of God
Bryan Ogle - Chester, VA
Valley View Church
Cole Pruitt - Longview, WA
Beckley Church of God
Harold Newsome - Beckley, WV



If you want your Christmas tree to change a life,
locate the site closest to you by visiting:

www.buyatreechangealife.com/2021



contents

Nov / Dec 2021 • Volume 111 / Issue 6

QUESTIONS JESUS ANSWERED

- 10** **The Other Person**
Jerald Daffe
- 12** **Costly Worship**
Coleman Smart
- 14** **When Hard Things Happen**
Nicki S. Kinley
- 16** **Let the Children Come**
Tamitha Lynch
- 18** **A Plan for Pastoral Success**
Harold Bare and Travis Bradshaw



FEATURES

- 27** **Submission Deadlines: General Assembly Agenda**
- 28** **Four Groundbreaking Military Chaplains**
Charles and Sharon Howell
- 30** **The Package**
Joyce Noel Wyatt
- 36** **Finding Hope and Beauty in Rural Mississippi**
Lance Colkmire



IN EVERY ISSUE

- 5 My Pentecostal Testimony: A Spirit-Filled Life**
Paula Day Johns
- 6 FINISH: A Message for Perilous Times**
Tim Hill
- 7 On Mission: Hope Begins Here**
- 8 Standpoint: Don't Post That!**
Lance Colkmire
- 9 Stats**
- 20 Talking Points**
- 21 Global Connect**
- 26 Church of God Chronicles: The Hollywood Harvest**
Leslie Brannon Bradford
- 32 Newsmakers**
- 40 Currents**
- 46 Resources**

SPANISH

- 42 Finalecimos: Un Mensaje Para Tiempos Peligrosos**
Tim Hill
- 43 La Santa Cena**
Enoe Cortazar May
- 44 La Predicación**
Débora Zambrano



EVANGEL MAGAZINE STAFF

Lance Colkmire	<i>Editor</i>
Elaine McDavid	<i>Assistant</i>
Bob Fisher	<i>Graphics</i>
Esther Metaxas	<i>Copy Editing</i>
Ryan Ivester	<i>Subscriptions</i>

PATHWAY PRESS LEADERSHIP

John D. Childers	<i>Divisional Director</i>
David Ray	<i>Director</i>
Lance Colkmire	<i>Editorial</i>
David Gray	<i>Marketing</i>
Carrie Rice	<i>Accounting</i>
Mike Burnett	<i>Printing</i>

CHURCH OF GOD PUBLICATIONS BOARD

Tony D. Cooper, Doug Baker, Kip Box, Mark Carver, David Jarvis, Cheryl Johns, Richard Lopez, Angel Marcial Sr., James McIntyre, José Daniel Montañez, Tommy Powell, Samuel Santana, Harvey Turner Jr., Lillian Turnipseed, Carlos Morán (consultant)

INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Timothy M. Hill, Raymond F. Culpepper, J. David Stephens, David E. Ramirez, John D. Childers

The *Church of God Evangel* (ISSN 0745-6778) is edited and published bimonthly. ■ Church of God Publishing House, 1080 Montgomery Ave., P.O. Box 2250, Cleveland, TN 37320-2250 ■ Single annual subscription, \$17; 15-copy bundle, \$34 bimonthly; 5-copy bundle, \$16 bimonthly ■ Single copy \$3 ■ Periodical postage paid at Cleveland, TN 37311 and at additional mailing offices ■ ©2021 Church of God Publications ■ All rights reserved ■ POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Evangel, P.O. Box 2250, Cleveland, TN 37320-2250. (USPS 112-240)

WE BELIEVE: (1) In the verbal inspiration of the Bible. (2) In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (3) That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor. (4) That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins. (5) That justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. (6) In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost. (7) Holiness to be God's standard of living for His people. (8) In the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart. (9) In speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. (10) In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (11) Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement. (12) In the Lord's Supper and washing of the saints' feet. (13) In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years. (14) In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.



A SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

by Paula Day Johns

OFTEN THINK about the possibility of having been born into a non-Pentecostal family and how different my life would be. I look back to my childhood days, when my mother and father took me to a small country church where the power of the Holy Spirit was present. The people are still so vividly in my mind as I remember how uninhibited they were manifesting the gifts of the Holy Spirit—prophecy, praying for the sick, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and more.

I cut my teeth under the church pews on a blanket, watching peoples' feet go up and down as they praised and worshiped the Lord. I thought everyone had church the same way we did, having not been exposed to any other kind of church worship. My Pentecostal heritage has always been valued by me, and I feel quite privileged to have it.

The Holy Spirit has kept me continuously through my lifetime. The Lord saw this country girl, filled me with the Holy Spirit, and gave me a boldness to serve Him. He has been foremost in my life. I married at a very young age, 15 years old, to a non-Pentecostal, but God sent us forth for ministry at the ages of 20 and 24, respectively. He was soon filled with the Holy Spirit and we were called into pastoral leadership. We operated in the Spirit

and led others to the knowledge of an active presence of the power of God.

The gifts of the Spirit produced healings and infillings of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people we served. There were occasions of demonic spirits leaving people, messages in tongues and interpretations being spoken, and the gift of faith being manifested. If we had not had the Pentecostal experience, we would not have been bold enough to expect these kinds of manifestations.

My husband, Clyde, suddenly left this planet to be with the Lord almost five years ago. If it had not been for the knowledge of the power of God, and knowing Clyde is in the presence of the Lord, I most likely would have withered as a blade of grass. Instead, the Holy Spirit has kept me, and I have grown deeper and wiser as a result of my Pentecostal walk.

I am thankful for the heritage of the Church of God—from the Shearer Schoolhouse Revival in the summer of 1896 in Cherokee County, North Carolina (predating the Azusa Street Revival), until this present day—many have found the experience of Pentecost.

Today's Pentecostal church services may be packaged in a different wrap, songs sung from the wall instead of from hymnals, and Biblical truths being delivered in various means, but with the same results—the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire; healings; powerful anointing; powerful preaching of the Word; the spoken gifts of tongues and interpretation, prophecy, the word of knowledge, and exhortation. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is alive and active all over this globe. 🕊

The Lord saw this country girl, filled me with the Holy Spirit, and gave me a boldness to serve Him.



Paula Day Johns M.L.S., is active in ministry and can be reached through "Spirit Spoken Ministries" on Facebook, or at johnspauladay@gmail.com.

It's not just a deterioration of the outside, but the inside that alarms me.

A MESSAGE FOR PERILOUS TIMES

by Tim Hill

EARLIER THIS YEAR I grabbed a clip of my early days of ministry and posted it on social media. Along with my youthful exuberance, I was intrigued by the illustrations—references to societal changes that were taking place in the early 1990s, some three decades ago. I could almost “re-preach” it word for word today. Here are a few excerpts:

We are in a trend in America that is taking us toward Sodom and Gomorrah. We're losing our freedom every day. We are suffering from a collapse of morals and a disintegration of the home. We're in the highest crime rate of all time and the bloodiest century of all time. . . .

We're in this place because America has forgotten God and suffering from a complacent, apathetic attitude. It's not just a deterioration of the outside, but the inside that alarms me. . . . War has been declared on the normal family way of life. War has been declared on Christian values and human decency. We are seldom aghast anymore. . . . The things that used to make us blush, we laugh at; what used to shock us now amuses us. Once you laugh at the moral decay of this world, you can never take it serious anymore.

Someone once asked me, “Does it really make that much difference how much our moral values are affected?”

It's a fact that what we hear affects us positively or negatively, and it's time we get back to a place where we reevaluate what we're looking at and listening to, and where we are going, and rebuild the foundations of moral decency in our lives. . . . These foundations of decency are crumbling in our schools as students run wild and teachers are threatened. These things have crept in because prayers and the Bible have left our schools. Even more tragically, prayer has left our homes.

So many references from that sermon are applicable today—particularly the decay of the family and moral apathy. In that sermon I referenced a series of nine cycles that a society embarks upon toward spiritual decline. Cultures have been observed to start out in bondage and advance to spiritual faith . . . spiritual faith to courage . . . courage to liberty . . . liberty to abundance . . . abundance to selfishness . . . selfishness to complacency . . . complacency to apathy . . . apathy to dependence . . . dependence back to bondage.

How precarious the times were then, and how perilous the times have become in the 30 years since I preached that message.

As I relived that message preached when I was only 30 years old, I was captured by the concluding statement. My verbiage was a little brash and maturity had not seasoned me at that point, but the content was certainly applicable and remains relevant today:

There's not one thing in America today that can't be fixed by preachers that will stand up in the pulpits of our churches and proclaim—“Thus saith the Lord!” There is not one thing in America today that can't be fixed if churches would stop bickering about things that don't make a difference in eternity and get on their knees and get on their face and do spiritual warfare before God with the enemy that is ravaging our country. It can be turned around and the foundations can be built again!

Though the years have certainly brought about many changes in me, one thing remains the same—the passion and the prayer that we as a church stay focused on the FINISH Commitment, courageously proclaiming liberty to form the foundations of spiritual morality again by the power of the Holy Spirit. ☩



Tim Hill, D.D., serves the Church of God as presiding bishop.

HOPE BEGINS HERE

FOR CHILDREN who have nowhere to go and have suffered loss of parenting due to abandonment, abuse, neglect, and death, “Hope begins here” is not a cliché.

These words represent the beginning of a journey toward healing and wholeness. Situated among the horse and cattle ranches of Marion County, Florida, The Ranch provides a rural atmosphere that is conducive to nurture and growth.

This ministry believes “children grow up best in healthy families. When it is necessary for a child to live apart from his or her family, we provide quality and compassionate care, and remain focused on getting the child and family reunited. When reunification is not an option, our focus becomes the best option for permanency for the child.”

At The Ranch, “called, committed, and competent caregivers provide prevention, intervention, restoration, and empowerment to at-risk children and families. From this location, Heart of Florida (www.hofyr.org) partners with select organizations to develop training and support for children’s ministries in the U.S. and around the world.”



The Ranch’s director, John Sweet (left), receives donation from Open Door Church of God and Pastor Steve Burkowske.





DON'T POST THAT!

by Lance Colkmire

When we fuss with each other on Facebook, who is helped?

RECENTLY IN A rental-car line at the Jackson, Mississippi, airport, a woman looked at my “Finishing in the Spirit and Power of Pentecost” tote bag and loudly said, “Pentecost—we need an outpouring of Pentecostal power.”

I said, “Yes, we do.”

“I’m United Pentecostal, and I have spoken in tongues,” she responded. “What church are you with?”

“Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee.”

“Yes, I know about you all,” she said. “We baptize in Jesus’ name only!”

I simply nodded and looked elsewhere. A public airport was not the place to have a theological debate. I could imagine onlookers thinking, *There go those Christians again!*

A vastly larger forum where too many Christians are arguing about all kinds of things is social media. When we fuss on Facebook about masks, vaccines, and partisan politics, what do we accomplish? Or when we dare people to disagree with our beliefs about the end times or predestination, who is helped?

If Facebook had existed in first-century Corinth, posts like these would have popped up from the city’s contentious church members (based on 1 Cor. 1:11-12):

Asher: Evangelist Apollos preached the greatest message of all time last Sunday!

Uri: If you like long and academic, it was great; but I follow Paul—he started our church.

Moshe: I follow Simon Peter. Don’t forget that he lived with Jesus for *three years!*

Uri: But when he was under pressure, Peter failed Jesus three times. Who can trust him?

Asher: And Peter knows fish; Apollos knows the Scriptures.

Uri: But who pastored this church for three years? Not Peter, not Apollos, but the *Apostle Paul*.

Paul wouldn’t have had time to be on Facebook. But when he was told about the infighting, he wrote, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all you speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you. . . . Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1:10, 13 NKJV).

Disagreeing about leadership was only the beginning of the Corinthian church’s conflicts.

Sex and marriage. Some believers thought all bodily desires were evil, so they belittled marriage. On the opposite extreme were those who believed almost anything goes—including a man being in a sexual relationship with his stepmother (5:1-2). Paul responded to all this by affirming Christian marriage, endorsing celibacy for some, and emphasizing sexual purity for everyone (6:15—7:9).

Fellowship and worship. When the Corinthians gathered for a fellowship meal, they overate and drank too much, thus disgracing the Lord’s Supper when they received it. Also, the believers loudly disagreed about which spiritual gifts were the most important, causing chaotic worship services. Paul told them, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (14:40).

Lawsuits. There were such sharp disagreements among church members, they were filing lawsuits against each. Paul declared, “Brother goes to court against brother, and that before unbelievers! As it is, to have legal disputes against one another is already a defeat for you” (6:6-7 CSB).

As Christians today, it is “already a defeat” for us when we publicly dispute with one another over moral matters, worship practices, or legal issues. Even worse, it is a defeat for the cause of Christ, besmirching His holy name. We must do better! 🕊



Lance Colkmire is managing editor of Church of God Publications.



WHAT DOES THANKSGIVING MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY?



—Statista.com



U.S. adults who say their best guess is intelligent life _____ exist on other planets

	Does	Does Not
All adults	65%	34%
Protestants	51%	47%
Catholics	67%	31%
Atheists	85%	15%
Agnostics	85%	15%

—Pew Research Center



CHRISTMAS HISTORY

1611

First Christmas card sent

1836

Alabama—first U.S. state to make Christmas a legal holiday

1843

First commercial Christmas card produced

1870

Christmas became a U.S. federal holiday.

1914

Scores of German, British, and French troops in Belgium celebrated a spontaneous Christmas Eve ceasefire.

1968

Apollo 8 astronauts read opening lines of Genesis as they orbited the moon on Christmas Eve.

THE OTHER PERSON

“But Lord, what about this man?” (John 21:21)

IT HAD BEEN a long, exhausting night for Peter. He and six of his fellow disciples had fished all night, but hadn't caught even one fish. As they steered their boat toward the shore, Jesus was watching. He directed them to throw their nets on the right side of the boat, where fish could be found.

Their obedience resulted in an excessive number of large fish—153, to be exact. Such a large catch should have torn their net. However, it remained strong, and all the fish were brought to shore.

After Jesus served the disciples a morning meal of fish and bread, He turned His attention to Peter. Three times he questioned Peter's commitment by asking, “Do you love Me?” (John 21:15-17).^{*} This might have been due to Peter's considering the possibility of returning to the fishing business. (In verse 3, Peter had declared, “I am going fishing,” sounding like he intended more than a single overnight trip.)

In response to Jesus' repeated question, three times Peter said, “You know that I love You.” Jesus then concluded the dialogue with a specific description of what would occur in Peter's future. The prophetic words indicate that as a young man, Peter could tighten his own belt (dress himself) and go where he desired. However, a time would come when others would dress and lead him. “You will stretch out your hands” (v. 18) speaks of suffering crucifixion in the years ahead. This reminds us of Peter's earlier claim that he would lay down his life for Jesus (13:37).

Note that Peter did not question or respond to what Jesus indicated to be his future, even though Jesus said he would face great difficulties. Seemingly unfazed by it, Peter concentrated on his fellow disciple, John, wanting to know what Jesus had in mind for him.

Jesus made no attempt to answer the question. He avoided any further dialogue by a direct answer. Basically, He stated it was none of Peter's business. It reminds us Jesus isn't under any obligation to answer our questions about others.

What Stimulated Peter's Question?

Impetuosity? It might have been another one of those times Peter spoke without thinking. Like when Jesus was gloriously transfigured on the mountain, and Peter blurted out the idea of building three shelters there (Matthew 17:1-4).

Or when Jesus spoke of His coming death, and Peter rebuked Him, saying, "This shall not happen to You!" (16:22). Peter tended to "open mouth and insert foot."

We've been there. Instead of thinking twice before speaking, there are situations in which we feel compelled to say something even when we have nothing meaningful to contribute.

Relationship? Peter and John had a number of things in common. They were fishermen by vocation, and they both were members of the 12 men chosen to be Jesus' initial group of disciples. They were also members of Jesus' smaller inner circle who had witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and saw Him bring a girl back to life (Mark 9:2; 5:36-42). One may speculate that Peter's question was a matter of concern since he and John had so many common experiences. That seems unlikely, but without knowing Peter's thought process, it is possible.

Curiosity? Probably. But why didn't Peter ask about his own brother, Andrew, or one of the other disciples? Why John? Well, John had a special relationship with Jesus. At the Last Supper, prior to Jesus' crucifixion, John had leaned into Jesus and asked which of the Twelve would betray Him (John 13:25).

Comparison? Maybe. It seems logical for Peter to want to know what was in the future for his fellow disciples. What would be their path in life? This was not necessarily wrong, if spoken with the right spirit and intentions.

If we are perfectly honest, many of us have asked the same basic question at various points in our lives with Christ:

- Why is that person enjoying such good health?
- Why does she seem to get the best opportunities?

- Why is that family so financially stable?

- Why does he seem to be exempt from severe trials?

- Why does ministry seem so easy for them?

Yet, we tend to avoid asking hard questions concerning our personal lives. It is much easier to ask about other people's lives. We neglect those questions that disturb our complacency while concentrating on others near us.

Reviewing the whole encounter narrated in John 21, Peter quickly moved from the previous "Do you love Me?" questions Jesus asked him.

We tend to avoid asking hard questions concerning our personal lives. It is much easier to ask about other people's lives.

It seems he would have wanted to know more about what Jesus had in mind for him in feeding and caring for "lambs" and "sheep" (vv. 15-17). But, no, that did not happen.

No wonder Jesus moved him back to reality. He told Peter to keep his attention on his designated path instead of looking at others and the Lord's intention for them.

What Did My Dad Mean?

At age 52, my dad had a devastating stroke that paralyzed his left arm and impacted his left leg, causing him to walk with a kick-out gait. Prior to this life-changing event, he had pastored small churches, necessitating his being a tentmaker to support our family and minister in rural Dakota towns while at the same time renovating church buildings and parsonages. He learned to plaster, lay bricks/blocks, finish sheetrock, build furnaces, and

do many other tasks. With his farm-family background, he also worked in the fields. Sometimes when I took lunch out to him, his face was dusty with evidence of tears having flowed down his cheeks as he prayed and wept over his people.

Dad loved to read and desired to spend time in his little office studying. Instead, his office and prayer closet were usually the platform of a Minneapolis Moline tractor, from which he also cultivated soil, planted seeds, and harvested crops.

After Dad's stroke, our family was in dire financial straits. There was no income. Yet, he never verbally

questioned why he had a stroke that shortened his ministry. He never asked why it had not happened to someone else. *What about him?* was never in his thinking. His faith was unwavering.

My dad used to say to me, "Son, you are standing on my shoulders." I didn't understand it at first. I'm taller, have more education, and my feet are bigger than his size-7 shoes. Later I understood it. I can't fill his shoes. His faith and sacrifices far exceeded mine to lay a foundation for my ministry.

Thanks, Dad, for setting the example of dedication to serving the Lord and not worrying about others. ☩

Jerald Daffe, D.Min., is professor of pastoral studies at Lee University. His new book, *Spiritual Revitalization*, is available from pathwaybookstore.com.

All Scripture verses are from the New King James Version.

COSTLY WORSHIP

by COLEMAN SMART

“Why waste such expensive perfume?” (Mark 14:4 NLT)

IF YOU'RE A CHRISTIAN, there have probably been moments in your walk with God when you didn't feel like following through with leading a lifestyle of worship. Whether that's meant being obedient to a calling . . . giving to others when you don't have it to give . . . taking a step of faith . . . dedicating time to reading Scripture and praying . . . or even something as seemingly small as being engaged in a worship service, no doubt at some point your heart just wasn't in it. I've been there.

There is a reason it's sometimes hard to live out our worship. It is because every action has a price tag. For instance, if you're committed to working out, there are some days you get off work early, you have gotten a lot of sleep, and you don't have any major things calling for your

attention. On those days, going to the gym feels great and it doesn't cost you much to take the time to go. There are other days, however, when you might have a huge day at work or school, you haven't gotten much sleep because you have been so busy, and there seems to be a million things calling your name. On those days, your commitment to the gym costs you something.

There are times when living out our worship (in whatever capacity that may be) feels easier because circumstances are in our favor. Is that wrong? Absolutely not. But during difficult days and seasons, an act of worship costs us more. It's sacrificial to worship during those times.

When it comes to the subject of costly worship, I think about the anointing of Jesus in the home of Simon:

And while [Jesus] was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. But Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me” (Mark 14:3-6 ESV).

This ointment was so expensive it could have been sold for nearly a year's wages! Some observers in the room became indignant. They were angry and annoyed that the woman had, in their eyes, wasted this luxurious perfume. They thought they had a better idea of what this ointment should have been used for. They probably thought she was crazy for doing this. They thought she had gone too far and had spent her resources foolishly.

Let me suggest this: You do not have to be enslaved to the opinions of others as it relates to the cost of your worship. (It is, however, the responsibility of the local church leaders to ensure that worship is done “in order,” 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Not everyone will understand why you devote so much of your energy to your calling. Not everyone will understand why you approach the throne of God with reckless abandon. You don’t have to listen to the voices that tell you it’s not worth it and your worship is a waste. After all, what others see as a waste, God sees as a priceless “sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15).

After the critics scolded the woman, Jesus quickly spoke up and affirmed her worship. At the times in your life when voices of negativity say you’re in too deep, pause for a moment to hear the affirming voice of Jesus: “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.”

What, though, did the writer of Hebrews mean by “sacrifice of praise”? It means to participate in an act of worship “despite”—despite dark circumstances, despite what others think, despite a bad report, despite the cost. The word *sacrifice* here refers to a literal sacrifice which would lead to the victimization of something. It implies that something had to die—a victim would result from this act. I am persuaded it is the flesh we are to victimize in this situation. It is the flesh that would hold us back from offering God praise and living out our worship. The flesh says “the cost is too great”; but in sacrific-

ing the flesh, we are able to offer to God our praise and lead a lifestyle of worship in the “despite” situations.

So, what are you and I bringing to the Lord? Does our worship cost us something, or do we go through the motions expecting God to take joy in our worship when it has cost us nothing?

When I attended Lee University, I traveled with Danny Murray and Voices of Lee. It was one of the greatest blessings of my life. We would work relentlessly on our music, grinding away at single phrases for hours. It was hard work.

Often as we worked, our leader would allude to 2 Samuel 24. In this passage, King David was attempting to purchase land from a man named Araunah because the Lord had instructed David to build an altar there. Araunah insisted on giving King David the land free of charge, but David’s response

What others see as a waste, God sees as a priceless “sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 13:15).

is what my director emphasized most. David said, “No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God that cost me nothing” (v. 24 ESV).

We believed we were called of God to minister to others through music, and our director instilled in us the principle that if we are going to offer something to God, it cannot and will not be cheap. Our work was our worship. After all, we were working and singing as an act of worship not to any person or construct, but to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Mr. Murray often concluded the inspirational moment by alluding to Malachi 1, saying, “I’m not going to bring a crippled lamb to the altar.” Are we willing to say the same?

For the woman whose story we get a glimpse of in Mark 14, simply bringing the alabaster flask into the room with her would have cost her nothing. The oil was still contained within the sealed container. The oil had the *potential* to be an extravagant offering, but until the flask was *broken*—until the oil was *accessed*—it meant nothing.

In order to offer the best of our worship, our “flask”—our *flesh*—has to be broken. In order to practice a lifestyle of worship, sacrifices must be made. In reflecting on the anointing of Jesus in Bethany, Charles Spurgeon asked, “Is anything wasted which is all for Jesus? It might rather seem as if all would be wasted which was not given to Him.”

No sincere sacrifice to the Lord will ever be made in vain. ☩

Coleman Smart serves North Cleveland, Tennessee, Church of God as music and worship associate. csmart@nccog.com

by NICKI S. KINLEY

WHEN HARD THINGS HAPPEN

“Don’t You care that we’re going to drown?” (Mark 4:38 NLT)

DROWNING IS SAID to be one of the most brutal ways of dying. Survivors have described the feeling as what it must be like to have lava burning a person from the inside out!

So we can imagine Jesus’ disciples were riding pretty scared through a violent storm that was about to capsize their boat. This event was so life-altering that it is told in three of the Gospels, which indicates God has something powerful to say to us if we have “ears to hear” (Matthew 13:9).

Mark’s telling of the story paints a picture of near hopelessness and desperation. Jesus had spent the day teaching in parables, and now the disciples found Him sleeping on a pillow in the middle of their mess. In spite of their walking step-by-step with Jesus day after day, listening to His teachings, and witnessing Him perform miracles in other people’s lives, they were terrified. With a storm rocking their literal and proverbial boats, they cried out, “Teacher, don’t You care that we’re going to drown?” (Mark 4:38 NLT).

As a Christian therapist, and even in my own walk with Jesus, this is likely the most common plea I hear from people struggling to push through the overwhelming weight of depression and anxiety. “Drowning” is often used to describe the grasping for any sort of lifeline, only to get pulled under again by waves of despair.

Just as many of the fishermen-turned-disciples knew what to do in the middle of a raging storm, we as Christians might go through all the motions of trusting. We read the Scriptures, try to pray, and may seek



help from trusted Christian professionals. Yet, what if our efforts fail to contain wave after wave of desperation that is trying to take us under?

In reading Mark's telling of this experience, we can hear the frustration the twelve faith-brothers were feeling. They were fighting for their lives while Jesus had found a soft, dry place to take a nap. Such frustration was shared by "Sandy," a recent patient who shared that every prayer for peace and for God to calm the raging storm in her mind seemed to fall flat around her, never reaching the ceiling, much less the throne of Heaven.

Sandy was going through all the spiritual motions—posting Scripture verses, anointing the walls of her home, calling on her Bible-study friends to pray against the spirit of anxiety and depression that was drowning her—but she found no relief.

One of the most common experiences for Christians I have worked with in counseling is the frustration associated with having to go *through* really hard things instead of, by God's grace, being exempted from the storms. So often we try to avoid the hard things in life, but this passage in Mark 4 shows God taking Jesus himself through the path of a storm in order to bring His followers to a new depth of faith and understanding of who He is.

Jesus needed those closest to Him—the ones who would soon give birth to the Church we are now a part of—to really understand who He is. He used their fear, frustration, and helplessness to show them He is big enough to command the universe.

As I worked with Sandy—an intelligent, motivated self-starter who was running two successful businesses—the Holy Spirit kept leading me back to the word *surrender*. My work as a cognitive-behavioral therapist is typically driven by the principle that by *doing* something, we can pull ourselves up by the boot straps and mind-muscle our way out of most anything. However, all the busy work Sandy was already doing to manage her anxiety and depression seemed to only cost her time and energy, which were already in short supply, without any sustainable positive outcomes. In spite of it going against everything my conventional therapeutic training had taught me, I shared that I believed God was whispering "surrender" to this driven, successful, type-A personality.

As Jesus' disciples rocked from side to side in a boat being overtaken by wave after wave threatening to take them out, I'm sure the idea of surrendering to the torrent was the last thing on their minds. Like many of us, we often get caught up in the "do's" of getting ourselves out of the mess we find ourselves in, working tirelessly to beat the storm ourselves without fully acknowledging the power and influence we have left sleeping in the "hull" of our lives.

We started out discussing the question the disciples asked Jesus, but after He calmed the storm, Jesus had a question of His own to ask the exhausted boatmen (and us): "Do you still have no faith?" (v. 40 NLT).

If you're like me, you've heard a thousand sermons on this passage saying if the disciples had just had faith enough, they could have spoken to those waves themselves. While this may be true in theory, we find out a couple of verses down that they were still finding out who Jesus really is—much like you and I do when life knocks the wind out of us. They asked each other, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (v. 41 NASB).

For Sandy, that word *surrender* became a challenge she accepted. Through prayer, study, and practice, she discovered the more she released things to God's care rather than trying to arm-wrestle them into submission herself, the more controlled and safe the world around her felt. On the most difficult days, she learned more about the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit by allowing her heart to rest in Him. She learned the pain of the moment—much like the storm that rocked the disciples one fateful night—is temporary and something God would use to make her stronger and take her deeper in Him.

When trouble comes to your life—and it will as long as you live on this side of Heaven—don't get so caught up fighting the storm that you let your faith and source of peace lie sleeping. Allow your heart to be receptive to discovering even more of who Jesus can be and what He can do to get you to the other side. ☮

Nicki S. Kinley and her family live in Bryant, Arkansas, where she serves as a clinical social worker/therapist. nicki@divinetherapyar.com



LET THE CHILDREN COME

by TAMITHA LYNCH

“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1)

THE KIDS IN my neighborhood are often overlooked, neglected, cast aside, and even mistreated. In Ecuador, 8 of 10 children suffer some form of abuse. Many of those (nearly 40%) experience sexual abuse. As the adults in my neighborhood argue over “Who is the greatest?” they need to hear what Jesus had to say when His disciples asked this question.

Jesus replied to the disciples’ question with an object lesson. He called a young child forward and said they needed changed hearts—they needed to “become as little children” (Matthew 18:3). The young child on His lap became the example. Jesus added, “These little ones believe in me. It would be best for the person who causes one of them to lose faith to be drowned in the sea with a large stone hung around his neck” (v. 6 GW). Wow!

Let us break down Jesus’ response. First, we are to make ourselves LESS—to be humble, believing, and vulnerable—just as a child. We are to believe in Him and rely on Him as we give Him our everything and choose to be vulnerable to His will.

Young children are known for believing anything we tell them. When I was a child, my cousin and I convinced her younger sister that we didn’t have belly buttons and she wasn’t supposed to have one. This younger child humbly believed with blind faith. She trusted with complete confidence. This is how we should place our hope and belief in God.

Jesus never tried to protect His image as a “distinguished” citizen. In fact, He seemed to enjoy stirring things up to make a point. His use of a young child as the model for how to be great was one of those shocking moments to everyone. In their culture, children were loved, but they had about the same level of rights as a slave. They were certainly not taken seriously, nor seen as having characteristics an adult should emulate. In fact, to care for or “welcome” a child was seen as lowly work. Jesus shook this paradigm by showing that caring for these children was how to achieve greatness.

As a missionary, I work with at-risk children. I am surrounded by children who are vulnerable because of poverty, violence, trafficking, malnutrition, and simple health risks. Throughout the Bible, we see that God’s heart breaks for the vulnerable and forgotten. That is why Jesus said, “Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me” (v. 5 NKJV). Later, Jesus said when His followers feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoner, it’s as if they are ministering to Him (25:35-36). There is no mistake about it—Jesus

QUESTIONS JESUS ANSWERED

insists that we care for “the least of these” (v. 40).

Jesus’ response warns us against leading children astray or causing them to stumble. The childlike vulnerability that helps us have greater faith in God can be exploited by those with malicious intent. This is a point at which we often have an opportunity to do meaningful ministry in helping a child heal from the trauma or pain that someone else has inflicted on them. Multitudes of children continually experience these human stumbling blocks. You would be surprised at the number of children’s pastors or teachers who seek my help on trauma-informed ministry to children. These ministers—from small country churches to urban megachurches—are all seeking guidance on how to provide healing for the hurting kids in their churches and neighborhoods. We have the privilege of facilitating these little children to go to Him for healing.

I already told you a little bit about the kids in my neighborhood and the great difficulties and trauma they face. My family first began to do children’s ministry in this neighborhood on the outskirts of Quito, Ecuador, in 2012. There was NO other evangelical presence in this neighborhood, and there were many signs in the windows of homes that basically warned Christians not to knock on their doors. But we had candy, a safe place to play, and lots of love that piqued the interest of the kids.

Our after-school program grew quickly to about 40 children, and then suddenly they were GONE! We learned the local priest and the school principal were warning parents to keep their kids away from our ministry because we would “brainwash” their children.

The gossip and buzz continued to grow, to the point that there were rumors of some neighbors calling for indigenous justice. They said, “We should put that pastor in the middle of a tire and light him on fire.” As my husband now says with a smile, that was a BAD day to be a missionary!

Eventually, the buzz quieted, and the novelty of our presence wore off. Parents who continued to allow their children to attend the program told other parents of the positive changes they were seeing in their children. Attendance began to grow again. We continued to welcome the children and introduce them to God’s love. Eventually, families began to trust us. Today, there are 130 children in the program, and many of their parents now volunteer with the children while also participating in programs for domestic-violence prevention and Bible studies.

There is nothing novel about this approach. It is simply following Jesus’ teaching to treat the children as if they were Him. In practical terms, our holistic ministry includes providing consistent love and assistance in tangible ways. Education was greatly lacking, so tutoring and special classes were provided. Illness was plaguing the children, so water-filtration systems were installed in their homes.

When we quench a child’s thirst or clothe a child, it’s as if we are ministering to Jesus.

Physical and sexual violence were rampant in the homes, so instruction about conflict resolution and respecting each other’s bodies was provided. Our ministry team learned about trauma-informed ministry that combines psychological practices with Biblical principles in order to help children find healing and hope.

Shoes, clothing, toys, food, rescue from violent situations, professional counseling, a shoulder to cry on, someone to pray with, and the HOPE of life in Jesus Christ are all available to these children. Now, many families in the community are experiencing healing and restoration. The community paradigm has been impacted and transformed. And the work of removing stumbling blocks continues according to God’s divine plan.

Everyone wants to be great and do great things in life. In order to accomplish that, Jesus said we must become like children and care for His children. This is something each of us can do wherever we live, for there are hurting children everywhere who need love.

Let all God’s people be challenged to prioritize ministry to children, as Jesus taught. To protect them. To advocate for them. To listen and give importance to their voices. To allow them to participate. To treat them as if they were Jesus standing right before us.

Our contexts are different and the “how” will vary, but the mandate is the same. Let us journey together toward God’s ideal of greatness by helping the children come to Him. 🕊

Tamitha Lynch and her husband, Bobby, are career missionaries who lead Project M:25, offering benevolent care and ministry to at-risk children in Quito, Ecuador. projectm25.org

SUCCESS

SUCCESS

FAITH

A PLAN FOR PASTORAL SUCCESS

by HAROLD BARE (with TRAVIS BRADSHAW)

“How can we know the way?” (John 14:5)

AFTER LAILA and I (Harold) were married, we honeymooned with the aid of a beautiful 1959 Silver Hawk Studebaker named “Betsy Sue.”

Unlike Henry Ford and his efficient assembly lines, the Studebaker brothers believed quality required attention to detail. Each Studebaker was handmade. However, investing that amount of resources into a single vehicle was not cost-effective. In 1966, Studebaker closed its last manufacturing plant. Meanwhile, assembly lines continued to evolve as the need for cars grew.

Times and seasons require changes in methods, strategies, and skills. Enthusiasm without knowledge and adaptability is doomed to the status quo, or less. For those in ministry, the message within the Gospel remains constant, but its delivery is ever-changing.

“Lord, how can we know the way?” the Apostle Thomas asked Jesus. Many sermons have used this text for messages about how to be *born again*. However,

Thomas asked this question in response to Jesus’ statement to His disciples (who were *already* born again), “Where I go you know, and the way you know” (v. 4 NKJV). Therefore, Thomas was not asking how to become saved, but rather, how to *serve*.

Jesus was their Rabbi. At this time in history, students did not choose their mentor, teacher, or rabbi. Instead, the rabbi chose his students based on their potential to emulate him and his teachings (John 15:16). In so doing, others would recognize the student’s master simply by observing the student’s conduct.

By inquiring, “How can we know the way?” the inquisitive Thomas was asking a question of method. How could the disciples do the things Jesus did to become like Him? Thomas understood that skills would be required.

Passion is not enough. Energy without strategy is wearisome and futile.

Thomas was in pursuit of discipleship that would bear fruit. He wanted others to see he had been with Jesus, and that Jesus was his Master. Thereafter, he grasped the

methods of Jesus and gave his life for the Gospel as a church builder, possibly in southern India.

For pastors, their life and sermons become building blocks for congregants. The pastor models discipleship to family and community. Their primary objective is to lead people to salvation in Christ and then teach them how to follow and serve. Only half of the Great Commission is fulfilled when we bring people to Jesus.

After pastoring two churches spanning 44 years, Laila and I have transitioned into serving pastors and their families. We demonstrate care through listening, paying for meals, and building friendships. When invited to do so, we offer suggestions for personal and vocational growth.

As young people serving a congregation, we made financial sacrifices and occasionally borrowed money to attend conferences led by successful ministry leaders. Paying registration fees, traveling, and buying materials stressed our budget. We listened to fascinating stories

spiced with humor and triumph, but we rarely shook hands with the “celebrities.”

From experience, we gradually learned that gaining one practical idea out of a meeting, conference, or sermon was time well spent. Hearing hero stories from “stars” describing successes, with no failures, was time wasted.

Ministry is challenging and complex with highs and lows. There are failures or times that feel like failure. Many of our paradigms for leadership are experimental. They work for one pastor, but not another. They work for a season, but not all the time. Family, health, education, and finances are factors that influence ministry.

Learning how to *delegate and lead staff* (paid or volunteer) requires training and mentoring. Lack of self-discipline and failure to develop a successful leadership paradigm can lead to poor health and discouragement.

Evaluation should be part of every endeavor. *SWOT*—analyzing **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats is important. It is too easy to “spiritualize” failure as simply “God’s will.”

In reality, *most ministry failures are the result of inadequate planning and failure to recruit and resource qualified leaders.* Each day requires a plan and follow-up evaluation. Prayer and meditation should include asking God to reveal wisdom for projects and priorities. Retreating with core church leadership to a quiet place annually is vital and strategic. Jesus regularly engaged in retreats with His disciples for review, planning, refreshment, and to refocus vision.

Beyond delegation, informed leadership, evaluation, good planning, and leader identification, *ministry demands continual education and development.*

Formal education is the traditional means to develop knowledge and is increasingly required by many denominations. Universities, Bible colleges, and seminaries offer helpful residential and online courses.

Informal education is invaluable. Regular reading on a broad range of subjects is important. Developing friendships and relationships with community members and professionals is wise and strengthens resources.

Christian mental-health professionals can be wonderful resources, whether for personal mental health or as consultants when working with individuals in need. Mental well-being is vital.

On-the-job training has been modeled for millennia. Eli was Samuel’s mentor. Jesus’ disciples traveled with Him for three years. Trade-craft professionals learn from masters.

Serving as an associate pastor or volunteering with successful ministries can be an invaluable experience. It is better to flourish as a teacher, youth leader, or assistant than to fail as a pastor. Serving in our area of giftedness is essential (Romans 12:6-8).

Health is a priority. The mind cannot function well if the body is not healthy. Taking vitamins and drinking water is preventive medicine. Reducing reliance on fast food requires discipline. Making the time for regular exercise is a path to better health and living longer.

Poor health and obesity limit ministry. Studies report that more than 75 percent of pastors in the U.S. are overweight, with up to 50 percent having chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol.

Migration may be required to be in the Lord’s will. Ministers must be willing to migrate to attend college, serve internships, apprentice as associates or volunteer with successful leaders, pastor, or enter missionary service.

Recommendations

- Make time for daily prayer, meditation, and reflection. Busyness for the sake of ministry, or for any other endeavor, must never supplant the peace of mind that can come only from being in God’s presence.

- Obtain all the relevant education your time and resources can afford. Theology, practical ministry, education, business, sociology, and psychology are wonderful fields of study for ministers. Practice lifelong learning.

- Take note of other speakers to learn how to improve speaking skills. Think constructively, not negatively.

- Carry a pen and paper or technology capable of taking notes. Distinguish between private notes and public notes. Realize that *delay* results in information *decay*.

- Read generously.
- Seek the counsel of professionals in a variety of human service-related fields.
- Deliberately seek out the counsel of successful pastors and religious educators, even across denominational lines.

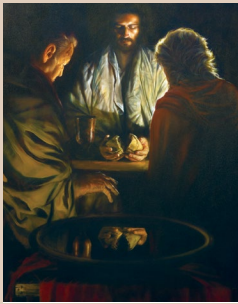
- Be willing to be an associate pastor or apprentice until you are prepared to lead a congregation.

- Make health, marriage, and family a priority. If your ministry is shortened by 20 years because of preventable health problems, or if your marriage fails because of neglect, or if your children become estranged, then valuable resources are wasted and your life will not be well-lived.

- Be willing to go where God leads you, and be willing to stay until He releases you.

The Apostle Thomas asked the right question: *How?* We cannot *do* if we do not know *how*. And if we cannot *do* and *know how*, we cannot *be* like the Master. We need skill. Our love for Jesus and our calling is holy. The Holy Spirit is tasked with teaching us the way Jesus wants us to go so we can follow with confidence and excellence. The onus is on us to seek and learn skills to fulfill the Great Commission. ☩

Drs. Harold and Laila Bare are missionary-ambassadors traveling nationally to encourage pastors and their families of pastors. **Dr. Travis Bradshaw** is director of geographic studies for Liberty University.



QUESTIONS JESUS ANSWERED

“What are you and I bringing to the Lord? Does our worship cost us something, or do we go through the motions expecting God to take joy in our worship when it costs us nothing?”
—Coleman Smart, p. 13

Is worship of Almighty God genuine if it is not costly?

.....

“So often we try to avoid the hard things in life, but this passage in Mark 4 shows God taking Jesus himself through the path of a storm in order to bring His followers to a new depth of faith and understanding of who He is.”—Nicki S. Kinley, p. 15

What is an important lesson you have learned about the Lord by going through a hard place?

.....

“Let all God’s people be challenged to prioritize ministry to children, as Jesus taught. To protect them. To advocate for them. To listen and give importance to their voices. To allow them to participate. To treat them as if they were Jesus standing right before us.”—Tamitha Lynch, p. 17

How well do you represent Jesus to the children who are connected to your life? How could you better serve children?

30 YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

A SMOKY MOUNTAIN GATHERING

REACHING A JUBILEE GENERATION

APRIL 26-28, 2022

GATLINBURG CONVENTION CENTER

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION NOW-OCTOBER 31ST \$70

FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION VISIT:

WWW.SMOKYMOUNTAINGATHERING.COM



WITH DR. TIM HILL

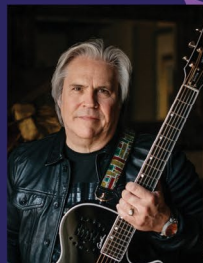
SPECIAL GUESTS:

DOYLE DYKES

THE MARTINS

DENNIS SWANBERG

THE NEW SPEER FAMILY



GLOBAL CONNECT

A Monthly Update From The World of Missions



WHEN WE REACH OUT, GOD REACHES IN!

God reached down to earth with the gift of His Son. We reach out with the gift of Jesus to the world.

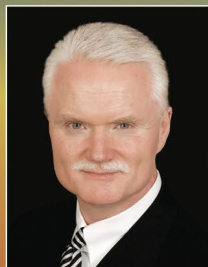
It isn't hard to imagine a dad forlornly considering how he will provide for his family because the COVID lockdowns eliminated his day job. It isn't hard to hear the echoes of a family crying because their home and belongings have been washed away by flooding or blown away by a hurricane. We can even sense the loneliness of a widow or orphan who is pondering

what might happen to them because there is no one to provide shelter, food, or clothing.

Would you please take a moment to consider the poor and how through Christ's Birthday Offering you can reach out to them? Psalm 41 begins: "Blessed are those who consider the poor." This is a promise to all who consider what they can do and how much good it will do. That scripture goes on to promise: "The Lord will deliver them in the day of trouble. The Lord will



DAVID M. GRIFFIS
Director
@DMGriffis



M. THOMAS PROPES
Assistant Director
@MTPropes



CHURCH OF GOD
**WORLD
MISSIONS**

www.cogwm.org • @cogwm

1.800.345.7492

preserve them and keep them alive, and they will be blessed on the earth”(MEV).

Christ’s Birthday Offering is a wonderful way to reach out with the gift of Jesus to those poor in spirit due to life’s circumstances and to those who are poor due to natural disasters. Consider those who are poor in health, because of COVID and other diseases that are overwhelming and reach out to the poor who have never heard the Way, the Truth, and the Life found in Jesus.

Peace on earth and glory to God in the highest!
Jesus, the Gift of God, has come to enable us to be

His hands, His feet, and His messengers as we reach out. Church of God World Missions will be able to provide food, medicines, and humanitarian help because of your family’s gift of \$20.21 given to honor Jesus.

Last year alone, your giving helped feed villagers, ministers’



families, rebuild churches, and sustain orphans and widows in South and Central America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Please consider this statement, “No one has ever become poor by giving.” Saving someone’s life is a special privilege.

Church of God World Missions Director David

M. Griffis asks this: “In 2021, let’s give Jesus the largest birthday gift He has ever received through Christ’s Birthday Offering.” Remember, “*When we reach out, God reaches in!*”

Your offering of \$20.21 will represent your hard work, your time, your heart, and most of all, your careful consideration to represent Jesus to the poor. We invite you to take part in Christ’s Birthday Offering. To give, please visit cogwm.org/cbo, or call 1-800-345-7492. Church of God World Missions is thankful for our prayer and financial partners. May you and your family be filled with the joy of Christ during this Christmas season. ☺



Project #020-0803

A GOD-DIRECTED EMPHASIS



No one could have possibly ever imagined the impact or the extensive outreach of the Christ's Birthday Offering when it was initiated in 1962. The offering commemorates God's gift to the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.

An endeared humanitarian outreach of Church of God World Missions through its many years, CBO has lightened horrific loads of despair and provided necessities for those suffering natural disasters, loss of lives and possessions, and helped individuals and churches endure catastrophic events. Often, COGWM is one of the first to extend assistance, even to those



thousands have been kept alive through subsidized funds for the potatoes.

The great attribute of CBO is that anyone can participate with a manageable contribution. A gift of \$20.21 (always the amount of the concurrent year) can bring about

immeasurable outcomes in desperate situations. Many congregations feature CBO as a December fund-raiser for their churches, and multiple families use it as a tool to teach their children the practice of giving to the less fortunate and disenfranchised.

Psalm 112:5 says, "A good man shows generous favor, and lends" (MEV). To give is the characteristic of a follower of Christ. The feeling of contributing to such a worthy endeavor cannot be sufficiently explained. Donors have always made a dramatic difference, and what better way to offer hope and comfort, not only during Christmas, but all throughout the year.

No truer statement can be made about the mindset of World Missions regarding Christ's Birthday Offering other than—*When we reach out, God reaches in!* 🙏

not part of the Church of God. CBO's ministry leaves an imprint worldwide on the lives of people affected—a light in the darkness!

The needs are varied . . . such as distributing potatoes yearly to sustain our Ukrainian brethren during winter. Literally,



HONORING COGWM MISSIONARIES WHO PASSED



CAROL FRIEND, wife of recently deceased Missionary Rodney Friend, passed away from Covid September 17, 2021, in Cleveland, Tennessee. Carol and her husband began their missionary journey in 1990 as teachers in Romania. In 1995, they were appointed as education coordinator of Europe. The Friends were then reassigned in 2006 to the European Theological Seminary in Germany.

After serving as career missionaries for 15 years, they assumed a pastorate in Houghton Lake, Michigan (Carol's home), until health issues took their toll on Rodney. Carol loved helping people and embraced Rodney's ministry as her own. They wanted to serve God in whatever field He opened and in the place most needy.



DENISE MILLS, wife of Missionary Michael Mills, passed away August 27, 2021, in Ecuador. She was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on January 13, 1961. Serving as interns from 1993 until 1994, the Mills were then appointed as career missionaries until 2010. After an absence of some years, they returned to Ecuador in July 2020. Their hearts were to disciple and train leaders. Denise will always

be remembered for her loving, exemplary Christian spirit and the desire to assist others. When first arriving in Ecuador in 1994, Denise did not know any Spanish, but in 2006, she received her exhorter's license having taken the exam in Spanish! Denise is survived by her husband, Michael; a son, Sean; a daughter, Brianna, and her husband; as well as several grandchildren.



JEAN ELIZABETH LePAGE, missionary and wife of David LePage, passed away September 11, 2021, on the island of Guernsey where they resided after their retirement from World Missions. Born January 31, 1940, in Sauchie, Scotland, Jean became a trained nurse. Jean served alongside her husband as overseer of Malawi (1980-1994); project coordinator in North Central Africa; first regional superintendent in East Africa; regional superintendent West Africa; and national missionary evangelist in Africa.



MARVIN JOHNSON, former missionary and World Missions Board member, passed away on September 16, 2021, in Cleveland, Tennessee. In his earlier years, Marvin was a pastor and evangelist, then became overseer of Trinidad, Tobago, and Grenada; a World Missions Board member (eight years); overseer of the Virgin and Leeward Islands; WM field representative; and WM associate representative. He also served on other boards and committees throughout his ministry, as well as was a speaker at various conventions. Marvin organized a Romanian church in Florida. He received an honorary doctorate from Southeastern Theological Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida. His call to the missions field began at age 15 while on a missionary trip to Mexico. From that time on, his love for missions was a priority in his heart.

NEWS: FIRST AFRICA WINTERFEST EVER!

The first Africa Winterfest was held September 3-5, 2021, according to COGWM leadership for the continent. Though Covid restrictions and protocols in Zambia made travel very challenging, hundreds came from the Eastern Province, the Copper Belt, and throughout the capital city. Attendees came from as far as Kenya and Zimbabwe, as well. The event was held in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. Organizers were short-term missionary Dr. Randall Parris, who serves as youth ministry coordinator of Central, Eastern, Southern, and Western Africa; and Scott Rains, director of the Berea Theological University College, who also partnered with regional and local youth leaders. Relevant workshops were conducted, along with



hosting Teen Talent. Deepest gratitude is extended to the organizers for their input, hard work, and dedication to making this momentous occasion take place. The younger generation was tremendously blessed and challenged.

CONNECT WITH US



www.cogwm.org
@cogwm
1.800.345.7492



Blueprint for the Future

ePlatform

DOE1 is a brand new solution for the Church of God for the future. The platform seeks to provide education to a wide area of responsibilities for training our ministers and laity.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Every person can access biblically based videos on topics like marriage, parenting, youth, recovery, leadership, finances, and much more.

AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

- Affirmation of Calling
- Biblical and Theological Education
- Church Planting
- Discipleship
- Faith and Culture
- Leadership
- Prayer
- And many more...

New Content

Every Month



THE HOLLYWOOD HARVEST

by Leslie Brannon Bradford

WHEN PASTOR Garland E. Stout began a capital fundraising campaign to build a new worship facility for the Elberton Church of God, it never occurred to him one of Hollywood's most famous crooners and "Rat Pack" member would be one of the participants.

Completed in 1945, the worship facilities on Clairmont Avenue had become inadequate for the thriving Christian community in Elberton, Georgia. Under the pastorate of Chester Edwards, a seed for future expansion was planted in 1973 with the purchase of four acres of land on the Hartwell Highway thoroughfare. The arrival of the Stout family during

March 1975, coupled with the young pastor's infectious attitude to complete the new facilities, proved to be the dynamic needed to fulfill the vision. Without surprise, the desire to "rise and build" spilled over into the congregation.

The Elberton Church was a strong yet small congregation and would need additional funding beyond their current means. Pastor Stout had already had great success in fundraising during his former pastorates, and when various fundraising proposals were brought to the table, he presented an idea of a letter-writing campaign. The parishioners mailed letters requesting contributions from families, friends of church members, and local businesses. Troy Nix, a member of the congregation, believed it would be beneficial to request donations from famous individuals or


people of great notoriety as well. Mr. Nix mailed 40 letters to prominent individuals.

Soon a check arrived in the mail from "Ol' Blue Eyes" himself, Frank Sinatra, for the sum of \$5,000. At first, Pastor Stout was skeptical, thinking the check might be bogus. The check was inspected by his wife, Maxie, who worked as a bank teller, and she assured her husband the check was authentic. When the check was shown to the congregation the following Sunday, they were flabbergasted! The story of Sinatra's generous donation was reported in local papers, and as far away as Virginia and Toronto, Canada. Mr. Sinatra's donation helped the congregation to complete tasks in building the church that otherwise would have been omitted due to financial constraints. The finished project consisted of a brick building with a full-size basement and modern amenities common to churches of its time. Events to celebrate the completion and formally dedicate the facilities were held on July 24, 1977, with Floyd J. Timmerman, Executive Committee member, as the keynote speaker.



Pastor Garland Stout holding the check from Frank Sinatra



Today, Garland and Maxie Stout are retired and reside in Sebastian, Florida. Mr. Nix still lives in the Elberton area. The Elberton Church of God continues to meet in the same location and shares their campus with another congregation. The current pastor is James Gunn. Forty-four years later, the gracious gift from Mr. Sinatra is still producing a harvest for the kingdom of God! 

Leslie Brannon Bradford, M.A., is an ordained bishop and the executive pastor of Christ Fellowship Church of God in Hartselle, Alabama.

Submission Deadlines

2022 GENERAL COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS



To All Church of God Ministers/Laity:

In anticipation of the 2022 International General Assembly, this notification serves to communicate the process for the submission of items for consideration and possible placement on the International General Council Agenda.

Potential agenda items are to be sent to the International Executive Council (IEC) in order to be considered for the International General Council Agenda. The IEC is charged by the Bylaws of the Church of God with the responsibility of setting the agenda for the International General Council.

The notifications below are made in light of the requirements of the Bylaws of the Church of God as well as the International General Assembly Minutes:

—Agenda items relating to the Bylaws of the Church of God need to be submitted to the International Executive Council by January 3, 2022. This will allow the International Executive Council time to consider these items by its January 2022 meeting. There is a 90-day notification deadline to the International General Council required by the Bylaws of the Church of God concerning amendment of the Bylaws (*2018 International General Assembly Minutes*, pp. 64-65).

—Regular potential agenda items for the International General Council need to be sent to the International Executive Council by March 1, 2022. This will allow the IEC time to consider these items by its April 2022 meeting. There is a 30-day notification deadline to the International General Council required by the Bylaws of the Church of God concerning regular International General Council items (*2018 International General Assembly Minutes*, p. 67).

—Agenda items regarding doctrine as prescribed by the Declaration of Faith are to be submitted in writing to the International Executive Council twelve months prior to the meeting of the International General Council (*2018 International General Assembly Minutes*, pp. 69-70). The deadline for submission of these items for the 2024 International General Assembly is April 3, 2023.

Submissions should be sent to:
Church of God International Offices
International Executive Council
P. O. Box 2430
Cleveland, TN 37320-2430

We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio, Texas, for the 2022 International General Assembly scheduled for July 26-29. ☪

by CHARLES and SHARON HOWELL

FOUR GROUNDBREAKING MILITARY CHAPLAINS

EVERY YEAR SINCE 1919, our nation has halted all government activity on November 11 to honor our veterans for their military service to defend the United States Constitution and to make the world a safer place for democracy. The Church of God has many members who are veterans, and this holiday we recognize four of our senior veterans who are “worthy of double honor” for their ministry as chaplains (1 Timothy 5:17).



Edward E. Shoupe was born on May 18, 1924, in Youngstown, Ohio. He was ordained in 1955 and became the *first* Church of God military chaplain. A WWII Navy veteran (1942-45), an alumnus of Lee College, an honor graduate of Florida Southern University, and a Methodist Seminary graduate, he was commissioned in July 1956 as a chaplain in the US Air Force Reserve. The Air Force called him to active duty two years later.

After attending AF Chaplain School, Shoupe reported to Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio for his first assignment.

His wife, Doris Parrish, whom he married in 1943, and their three children (Donald, Myrna, and Colette) accompanied him to every assignment whenever the USAF permitted. For the next 21 years, Chaplain Shoupe nurtured the souls of airmen with the Word of God, visited and prayed for the sick and wounded, and honored in burial those who died serving the nation.

In addition to stateside AF bases, his overseas assignments included a three-year tour in Madrid, Spain, and one year in Thailand. For his outstanding service, he was awarded the Presidential Meritorious Service Medal in 1970. Retiring in August 1979 at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, he remained active in ministry until his wife of 67 years died in 2010. Chaplain Shoupe (age 97) died shortly before this Veterans Day, but approved this tribute before his passing.



Robert D. Crick was born on October 12, 1930, in Chester, South Carolina. In 1948 he married Jeanette Lee, then gave his life to Christ, was filled with the Holy Spirit, and joined

the Church of God. From 1952 to 1955, he served as an enlisted airman in the US Air Force. Afterward he attended Lee College. In 1958, Crick graduated from Trinity University and completed his M.Div. at Vanderbilt Divinity School in 1960.

In 1961, Robert Crick became the second Church of God ordained pastor to be commissioned to serve as a US Army chaplain (following the late James Layne). After graduating from Chaplain School, he and Jeanette reported to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for his first assignment. Only 17 days later, he deployed to Germany to serve as chaplain to a tank battalion in response to the Berlin Wall crisis.

He was our first airborne chaplain and made more than 300 parachute jumps, deploying in August 1966 with the 173rd Airborne Brigade into Vietnam. These “sky soldiers” conducted the only combat parachute jump of the war on February 22, 1967, and they were the most decorated unit to serve in Vietnam.

Chaplain Crick was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor on three different occasions and the Legion of Merit. He was also the first of our chaplains to become a Clinical Pastoral Education supervisor. At every military assignment, Robert, Jeanette, and their three children (David, Jonne, and Dale) were involved with local Church of God civilian ministries.

Retiring from active duty in June 1978, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Crick became the first director of the Church of God Chaplains Commission in August of that year. He served as the director for

32 years until he retired to care for Jeanette, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She passed away on August 25, 2014, after 66 years of marriage. Dr. Crick is 91 years old this Veterans Day, continues in great health, and resides in Cumming, Georgia.



Richard Y. Bershon was born on August 14, 1931, in Haydraw, South Dakota. He graduated from college in 1953 and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Air Force. He was assigned to the 17th Bomb Wing in Korea, which moved to Japan during the Korean War (1950-53).

On April 2, 1955, Richard married Beverly Elliott of Denver, Colorado. They had a happy marriage and raised a son and a daughter. Released from the Air Force in 1955, Richard was appointed pastor of the Church of God in La Junta, Colorado. After the 1956 General Assembly, the Bershons moved to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Graduating from seminary in 1960, Richard was ordained by the Church of God.

While pastoring in North Dakota, Richard applied and received orders to attend the US Army Chaplain School in January 1962. His assignments included one tour in Germany, one combat tour in Vietnam as a brigade chaplain in the 101st Airborne Division, two unaccompanied tours in Korea, and various stateside installa-

tions. He was the first Church of God chaplain to graduate from Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. While serving in the Army Reserve, he concurrently served as the chief of Chaplain Ministry at the V.A. Medical Center in Tomah, Wisconsin. In 1986, Bershon became the first Church of God chaplain to be promoted to the rank of Colonel.

Having served 34 years of active and reserve duty, Chaplain Bershon retired from the Army in 1988, but continued to serve as chaplain at the V.A. Medical Center in Biloxi, Mississippi. Beginning in 1995, he served 12 more years as chaplain at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home in Hot Springs, South Dakota.

After a few hours of illness, Beverly Bershon died on August 31, 2016. Richard is 90 years old this Veterans Day and still lives in Hot Springs.



Hugo S. Hammond was born on October 13, 1932, in Anniston, Alabama. He served four years as an enlisted sailor (1951-55) and then enrolled in Lee College, where he earned an AA degree. Upon graduation he enrolled in Oglethorpe University and completed a BA degree in 1959, and then completed seminary at the Candler School of Theology, Emory University, in 1962. Hugo married Letha Pennington in 1958, and they had four children (Wendy, Karen, Jerome, Alisha).

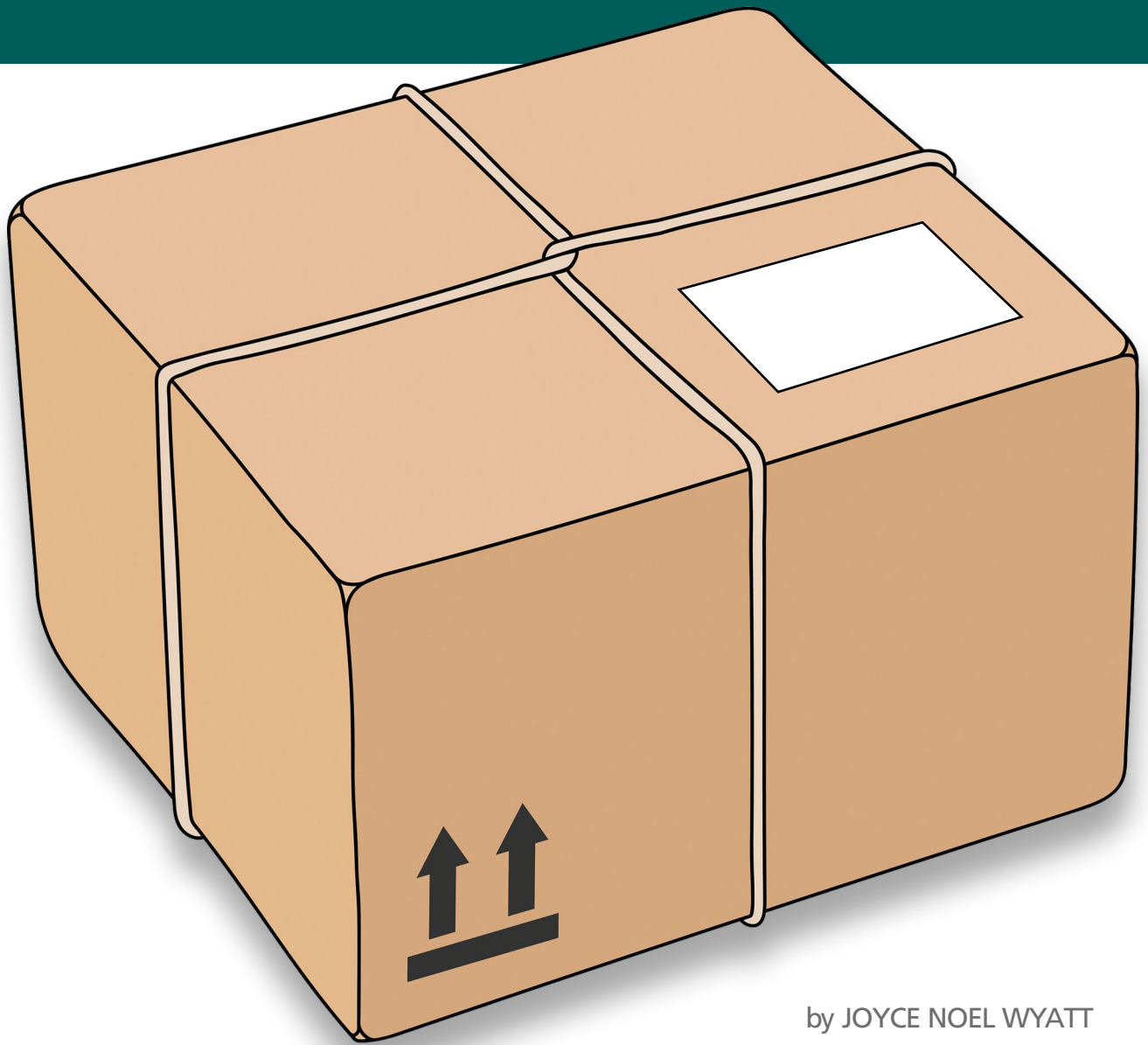
Hammond first pastored a church in Cumming, Georgia, and then moved south to pastor the Church of God in Baxley, Georgia. Called by the Holy Spirit and urged by C. Raymond Spain, Pastor Hammond applied and was commissioned as the first Church of God chaplain in the US Navy in 1969. After graduating from the USN Chaplain School in Newport, Rhode Island, his first assignment was at the naval hospital in Great Lakes, Illinois.

Chaplain Hammond served with distinction in all of his assignments. But his proudest moment was serving as the command chaplain of the aircraft carrier *USS Saratoga* when it forced the Palestinian Liberation Front hijackers of the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* to land at the Sigonella, Sicily, Naval Air Station in 1985.

Hammond served as a member of the Church of God Chaplains Commission for eight consecutive years (1978-86). In 1989, he became the first Church of God chaplain to be promoted to Captain on active duty. After serving more than 30 years in the Navy, Hammond retired from the chaplaincy. Then he pastored a civilian church for ten years. Chaplain Hammond is 89 years old this Veterans Day and resides with his wife, Letha, in Savannah, Georgia.

We thank all our veterans for their service this national holiday. And we remind you of a faithful promise: "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them" (Hebrews 6:10 NIV). Chaplains, we haven't forgotten you either. We salute you for your ministry in uniform this Veterans Day. ☪

Chaplain (Col.) Charles Howell and his wife, Sharon, are retired and living in Evans, Georgia.



by JOYCE NOEL WYATT

The PACKAGE

BREATHING A SIGH of relief, I sat down in my chair. Finally, the package was on its way!

A few weeks before, I had opened the door to my son's room. Looking inside I saw the drums, the pennants on the wall, and the basketball on the floor. Once again I was reminded that Lawrence, always a homebody, was not among his cherished possessions but was now thousands of miles away in Greece, stationed there by the U.S. Navy. It was 1987. Lawrence and a high-school friend, David, had enlisted shortly after graduation, going in on the "buddy system."

On that particular fall day, a sadness came over me knowing Lawrence and David would be spending their first Christmas away from home in a foreign

land. I thought of the countless number of people who had experienced and were now experiencing such grief for the same reason.

"We've got to do something for those boys," I told my husband. "I'll get together a special package, and we'll mail it early so they will get it in time for Christmas."

For weeks, I meticulously shopped for special items for both boys. David had lost his mother a year

earlier, and I purchased some things I thought his mom would have bought for him.

I was pleased with my purchases except for one item I could not find—a particular sports jacket that Lawrence had wanted while still in high school. I thought it would be a wonderful surprise and would complete the package. Thankfully, on the day I was about to give up looking, I found the jacket and added it to the package.

The package included fudge and cookies. I wrapped each piece separately and with extra care. At last, the box was ready to mail. I was so excited!

Christmas Eve came, and Lawrence called. This was years before cell phones and video messaging, so we corresponded primarily through letters. How thankful we were to hear his voice on that Christmas Eve.

“Did you get your package?” I was eager to know.

“What package?” he asked.

“Your dad and I sent you and David a huge package over a month ago.”

The boys never received the package, and we never found out what happened to it. I was heartbroken beyond words. Just to think they would have no gifts from us to open on Christmas was almost more than I could stand. I thought about how every single item had been wrapped carefully and with love. Thankfully, in my grief God brought to my attention that His love would get me through this disappointment and others that would follow.

During Lawrence’s years of military service, he eventually ended up

on a ship during the Gulf War, enemy mines in the water below, but throughout that frightening ordeal he was unharmed. How thankful we were on the day he arrived safely back on American soil! On that cold, balmy day, as the ship pulled into port, we saw our son on the deck waving at us with tears in his eyes. Suddenly, it dawned on me that, yes, our package to him and David had been lost, but greater than anything I put in that package was the gift they did receive—God’s protection throughout their time in the Navy.

Recently, my friend Naomi shared with me an event regarding a Christmas package. It included a new Bible for her dad and a blanket for each of her

“I’ll get together a special package, and we’ll mail it early so they’ll get it in time for Christmas.”

parents. Naomi remembers meticulously choosing the new Bible for her dad. “I felt compelled to buy one for him,” she said, “but I didn’t know why.” In a few days, she learned why.

At the time, Naomi and her husband were ministering in Germany, and she knew she needed to get the box mailed early in order to reach the U.S., but there was a delay in sending it.

While the package was in transit, her parents’ house caught on fire and burned to the ground. Mom had grabbed her Bible on the way out of the house, but Dad’s Bible had burned up. Losing their home was a horrible and painful experience, but they thanked God they got out safely.

The package arrived one week later. If it had arrived when planned, it would have burned up in the house. God was right on time. I think Naomi can still visualize the smile on her dad’s face when he opened that package.

As I reflect on these stories, I’m reminded of the special package God sent so many centuries ago. It never got lost and wasn’t delayed, but came right on time. It was a Christmas package wrapped in love and sent to all the world—“a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32). The gift was His beloved Son, Jesus. Within Him was a heart full of love and compassion so He could understand everything we would go through. On that first Christmas, as the baby Jesus was lying in the manger, very few people knew He was our Savior, our Redeemer, the Lord of lords, and the King of kings. I’m so glad I know Him!

By the way, both Lawrence and his friend David received Jesus into their heart a long time ago and continue, with their wives and children, to serve Him every day.

What a package the Father sent!

Joyce Noel Wyatt and her husband, Ron, live in Kodak, Tennessee. For many years they served as houseparents at the Church of God Home for Children in nearby Sevierville.

The Gift of a Miracle

Corbin, Ky.—The stats my doctor gave me for COVID-19 were as follows: “Ninety-five percent of people are fine. They may feel rough and have a few days recovering at home. Four percent, like you, Mark, have some complications. And there is a one percent mortality rate.”

I spent 12 days in the hospital, 5 in ICU. At the beginning, they gave my wife no hope of my recovery. It was not anything we ever expected. We had worn our masks and used wisdom. I had no preexisting conditions. I worked out regularly and maintained a relatively healthy lifestyle. I had never been admitted to the hospital. There was no apparent reason for me to fight the kind of battle I did at age 51, with my wife facing the possibility of a young widowhood. But when she and my family prayed, they felt impressed that God was not done with me yet. He gave us the gift of a miracle.

It is difficult to wrap one’s mind around something like that. I am still working to process it and respond in the way God desires as I move forward. An acrostic for *GIFT* has become our way of trying to bring some meaning to our experience.

G—Growth. Peter speaks of our growing in the knowledge of Jesus (2 Peter 3:18). When we face things we have never faced before, we learn to know God in ways we have never known Him before. Through the sickness and recovery, I was forced to adjust my pace. I had gotten out of alignment. My inner world was filled with more striving than resting. I am learning to embrace some mid-course adjustments. “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10 NKJV).

I—Intercession. The COVID turned into pneumonia. The doctor had never seen lungs as bad as mine since the virus broke out. I was first placed in a COVID unit in a corner room without a window.

Six other patients occupied the rooms down the hall. Nurses stood near my door to pray. I was the only one who survived. I mourn for those families, and I thank God and cannot comprehend His mercy to me. The only way I know to describe it is that a spirit of intercession turned things around. People in other countries who knew me prayed.



Mark and Jennifer Hisle

People all over our region who barely knew us prayed. People whose religious background did not include spiritual warfare, were awakened by the Spirit in the middle of the night and rose to pray. And our church especially prayed. On a Friday night, they spent an hour on a conference call interceding, then took hour-long shifts and prayed through the night. Suddenly, things began to turn. My oxygen levels began to rise, and I came home in a few days without any assistance.

F—Favor. A major part of the difficulty of this sickness is the isolation. Absolutely no one was allowed into the ICU. But when they knew it might be life or death for me, the staff gave my wife 15 minutes to see me through the glass and talk on our phones. People who know us realized that we have always been

a package deal and convinced those in charge that it may make the difference. As I gained strength, so many of the staff in the unit knew God was touching the pastor. They went out of their way even to get me the coffee I like. And I felt God’s favor. Back in a private room, I was hooked up to so many machines I couldn’t go far. All I could do was stand. But I sang every song of praise I knew, and I literally watched my oxygen levels go up.

T—Tomorrow. When my wife, Jennifer, dropped me off at the ER, she saw them loading a body bag. Satan tried to root fear in her heart, saying, *That is the way Mark will leave here.* When she was leaving from the ICU visit and I feebly returned her goodbye wave, the devil whispered, *That is the last time you will ever see him.* She needed assurance from the Lord. He supplied that from Philippians 1:22-24. I am no better than anyone else. And Heaven would have been better for me, obviously. But the Spirit spoke to her that God still had a purpose for me here. Confirmation was also given to my daughters and mother.

God had a tomorrow for me, and I am overwhelmed by that. There are tomorrows in other ways as well. In 2020 we had to believe God through complications with our first grandchild and a son-in-law’s COVID hospitalization. It was the hardest year our family has ever faced. I am grateful now for the help of God to have imparted some bedrock spiritual convictions in our children which have kept them through unprecedented days. I can identify with David: “O Lord my God, I cried out to You, and You healed me. O Lord, You brought my soul up from the grave; You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. . . . Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:2-3, 5 NKJV). It is hard to find adequate words. But I thank God for the gift of a miracle.—Mark Hisle



ONLY A CLICK AWAY

Cleveland, Tenn.—The Church of God Division of Education (DOE) has been challenged to provide education for a wide area of needs for Church of God ministers and laity. Dr. David Ramírez (Executive Committee



Michael Reynolds

liaison) believed the DOE needed something that would dynamical-ly prepare it for the future. The DOE staff began working on a futuristic imperative solution, called DOE1. Dr. Michael Reynolds, ministerial director of the

School of Ministry, and Ramirez have worked together to bring their vision to fruition.

Nellie Keasling, editorial coordinator for the DOE and School of Ministry, talked with Reynolds about this new initiative.

Q. Dr. Reynolds, what exactly is DOE1?

DOE1 is a virtual digital response to the needs of Church of God ministers for lifelong learning. The courses being developed are mini-courses which will be easily accessible and user-friendly. They are spiritual, sanctifying, and Scripturally sound. We are using scholars, practitioners, accomplished ministry leaders, and pastors to teach the material. The platform will have places for both English and Spanish courses which will be both informative and enriching.

Q. What has the DOE1 accomplished so far?

We have created a state-of-the-art production studio housed within the DOE offices. We have created courses in both English and Spanish, as well as recruiting professional talent to teach the courses in both languages. Some examples of the courses being offered are:

In English:

- Relevant Preaching—Bill Lee
- How to Plant a Multiethnic Church—Sean O’Neal
- How to Minister to Marriage and Family Needs in Your Church—Daniel J. Vassell Sr.
- Establishing a Prayer Ministry in the Local Church—Pam Brewer

In Spanish:

- *Técnicas de Enseñanza*—Jenny Lopez
- *Métodos Educativos*—Enrique de Jesús
- *Teología en el Ministerio*—Daniel Alvarez
- *Ruta Hacia la Salud Emocional*—Ivelisee Lopez Delgado

We are currently delivering content to North America and Latin America and intend to deliver it globally.

Q. Who is being served?

The DOE1 is a virtual training ground for ministers, engaging them in lifelong learning. By enrolling and taking these mini-courses, they will earn a certificate.

DOE1 also offers specialized training to the laity in the form of Mobilize Ministry. This training will bring fulfillment to laity who desire to work in the church, but not necessarily head up a ministry. Those who wish to be lay leaders and lay ministers may also gain the needed training and certificates.

Q. What is the vision of DOE1?

DOE1 will deliver education around the globe, on demand, and with high quality for both laity and ministers in the Church of God. In the future, we will enable parties to become lifelong learners and raise their overall level of efficiency.

We invite you into the future with us. You may explore DOE1 by going to doe1.org.

A CENTURY OF MINISTRY

Bristol, Tenn.—From humble beginnings in a tent revival in July 1921, Grace Point Church of God (formerly Shelby Street COG) has been blessed to be a part of the Bristol community for 100 years. The Reverend I. H. Brabson, who conducted the tent revival, became the church’s founding pastor.

On July 11, the church held a centennial celebration, giving thanks to God for His faithfulness and blessings. General Overseer Tim Hill was the guest speaker. The church’s former pastor, J. W. Norris, along with the current pastor, Richard Baker, also took part in the celebration.



LEE MOVES UP—In the 2022 *U.S. News and World Report’s* Best Colleges, Lee University ranked #27, moving up six spots from last year, within the top 50 “Best Regional Universities—South” category, which includes both public and private universities. The ranked schools are evaluated in up to 15 areas related to academic excellence.



Deceased Ministers

BEST, Benjamin E.; 76; ordained bishop; Arkansas; Oteka Best (wife)

BLACK, Lee Walker; 85; ordained bishop; South Carolina; Lynn Black (wife)

BREAZEALE, Carl Eugene; 90; ordained minister; South Carolina; Frances Breazeale (wife)

CARTWRIGHT, Floyd D.; 85; ordained minister; Oklahoma; Annette McGuffee (daughter)

CLOUD, Ricky F.; 60; exhorter; Indiana; Donna Cloud (wife)

COUTURE, Rene Wilfred; 76; ordained minister; Kentucky; Therese Couture (wife)

DEMOREST, John W.; 71; ordained bishop; Virginia; Michelle Demorest (daughter)

DOUGLAS, Timothy Lee; 63; ordained bishop; Texas; Lila Douglas (wife)

EDGE, Ernest Lee; 80; ordained bishop; Arkansas; Carolyn Edge (wife)

FOX, Delores Ann; 78; exhorter; Florida; Joy Langford (daughter)

GIBBIE, Ronnie Larry; 73; ordained bishop; North Carolina; Sylvia Gibbie (wife)

HOLLAND, Dennis Hall; 80; ordained bishop; Georgia; no contact information

IRONS, Aubrey Erwin; 80; ordained bishop; Oklahoma; Martha Irons (wife)

LEGEER, John Richard; 72; ordained minister; Maryland; Elsa Legeer (wife)

LOGAN, Donald Ray; 86; ordained bishop; Tennessee; Elizabeth Bailey (daughter)

LOWERY, Willie Lloyd; 88; ordained bishop; Illinois; Jamie Lowery (son)

MARSHALL, Proctor W.; 84; ordained bishop; North Carolina; Dorothy Marshall (wife)

MITCHELL, Herman Lee; 59; ordained bishop; Alabama; Doris Mitchell (wife)

PRUITT, James K.; 59; exhorter; Arkansas; Glenda Pruitt (wife)

RING, David Carlton; 80; ordained bishop; Georgia; Chris Ring (wife)

RIVERA, Heliodoro; 85; ordained bishop; Florida; Mirna Osorio (wife)

SMITH, Archie Leroy; 74; ordained bishop; Arizona; Edna Smith (wife)

STARNES, William E., Jr.; 87; ordained bishop; South Carolina; Rex Allen (son)

TILLER, Patricia Ann; 73; exhorter; Virginia; Melinda Lane (daughter)

TOOLE, Bobby Gene; 80; exhorter; Georgia; Reneé Butler (daughter)

WEATHERMAN, Frank Daniel; 74; ordained bishop; South Carolina; Priscilla Weatherman (wife)

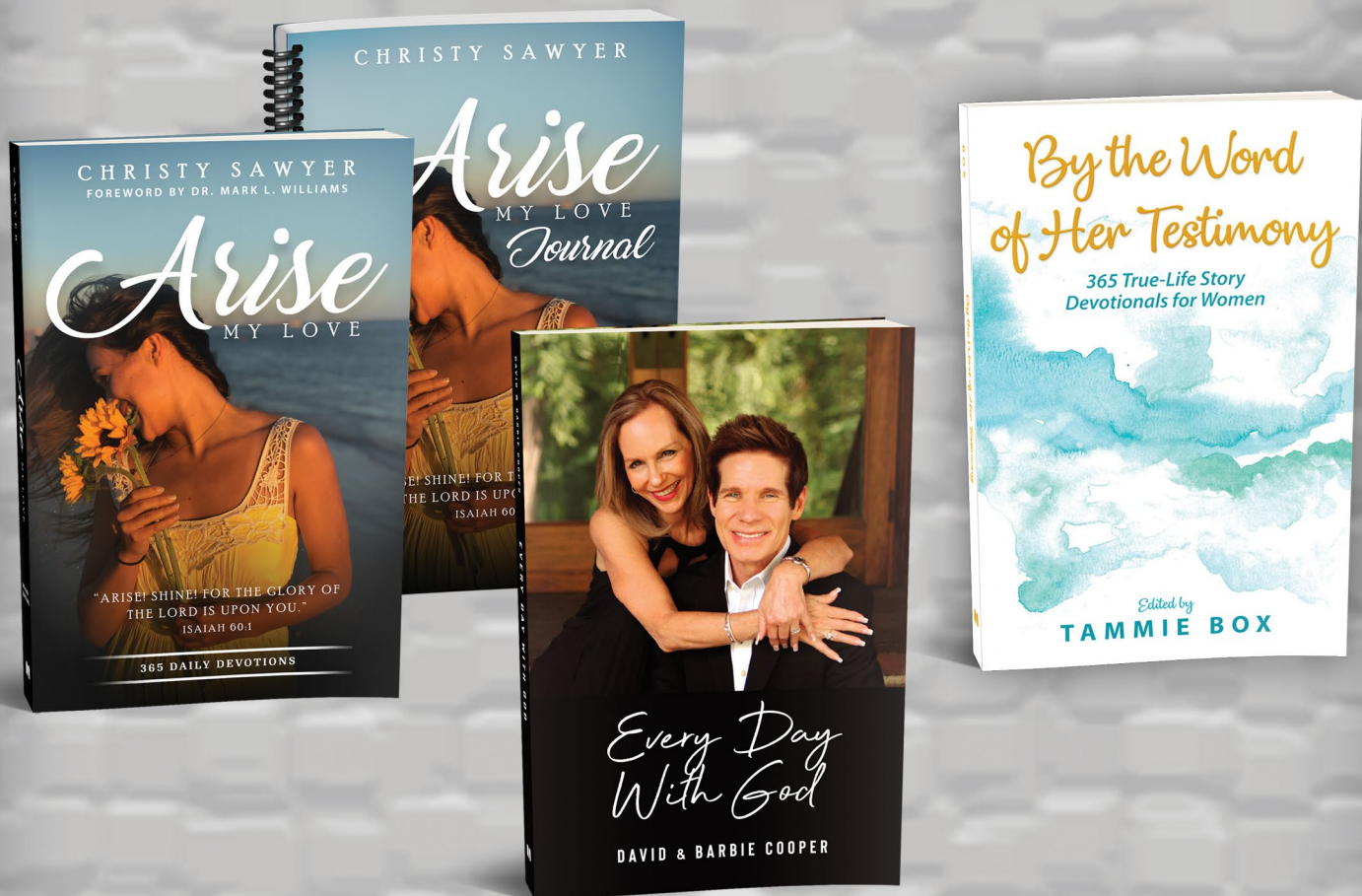
WEAVER, James “Donnie”; 83; ordained bishop; Virginia; Clarice Weaver (wife)

WEAVER, Tony Michael; 70; ordained bishop; Florida; David Weaver (son)

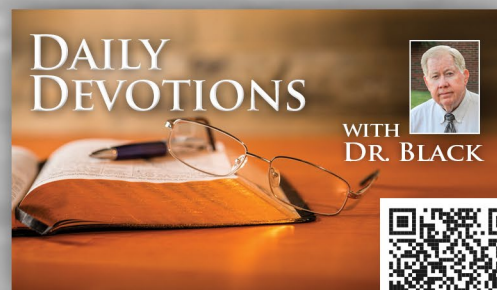
WOODSON, Harold Franklin; 71; ordained bishop; Georgia; Marie Woodson Gore (mother)

CHURCH OF GOD PUBLICATIONS

Available Fall 2021/Winter 2021-22



JOIN US AS WE READ THROUGH THE BIBLE!



**Hold your smartphone camera over a QR Code within the frame that appears on the screen.
You will then be directed to click the link and sign-up to receive these free daily resources.**



800-553-8506
pathwaybookstore.com



by LANCE COLKMIRE

FINDING HOPE AND BEAUTY IN RURAL MISSISSIPPI

AT 8:55 ON SUNDAY morning, September 12, I took a seat on the front left pew of the Waco Church of God in tiny Mize, Mississippi (population, 315). Seated behind me were perhaps 30 men. Nearly 40 women and several children were seated on the right side of the church.

At 9:00, several singers, a pianist, and a drummer took their respective places. We all stood and sang the first song of praise, “I Know Who I Am” (with the tattooed guy right behind me singing in full-throated worship).

One of the worship leaders was Meagan Roberts, whose face glowed as she sang. After service, I heard her incredible story.

“My dad left when I was 3 years old, which created abandonment and rejection issues,” she said. “My childhood was chaotic and dysfunctional, and my mom had lots of different relationships. There was a lot of arguing.

“I was seeking love in all the wrong places, and had my first son and got married when I was 14. At age 15, I started using alcohol. By 17, my husband and I had two kids.” She eventually gave birth to two more children.

Meagan became very depressed, and was diagnosed with various mental disorders. “I was medicated with psychotic drugs for 12 years, which didn’t do any good at all. I had been put in mental wards 40 times when I quit counting. I lost my mind. And, like my father, I left my own kids.”

Meagan was in a terribly abusive relationship when she reached out to Brittany Layton, a friend from high school who was directing *Beauty From Ashes* (BFA)—a

new recovery ministry for women. “I knew if I didn’t leave, he would end up killing me,” Meagan said.

Brittany recalled, “Meagan probably had the worst psych problem I’ve ever seen. Cops had to help us get her out of that situation.” That happened in December 2019.

After completing BFA’s nine-month residential program and three-month “second step,” Meagan became a staff member, now serving as a house-mother who pours into other women. “The Lord has given me a spirit of confidence,” she said. “Three of my kids are with me, and my oldest son is on a praise team at another church, living with my aunt.”

How It Started

The morning I visited the Waco Church of God was a typical Sunday. Everyone in the 9:00 service was either a resident, a relative, or a staff member of *Beauty From Ashes* or its partner program for men, *Voice of Hope*. Three residents (two women and one man) gave their testimony, each followed by a boisterous standing ovation. Then, Pastor Jeremy Smith preached a challenging message, “Who Is in Your Shadow?”

Jeremy grew up in the shadow of his parents, Darrell and Loretta Smith—a well-known Church of God pastoral couple in Mississippi. Eight years ago, he was appointed pastor of the Waco Church (which holds a second Sunday service, at 10:45, for those not directly involved in recovery ministry). I asked him how the church got involved in reaching out to people with addictions.



Church and recovery leaders

“My wife and I both have addicts in our family. And we began ministering to Jon and Brittany Layton, who were part of our church but had drug addictions.”

Jon, who attended high school with Jeremy, had been addicted to meth for two decades. Brittany had joined him in using meth “in order to spend more time with him, but it spiraled out of control,” she said. “I had a really good job, but my physical appearance was going down, and our home life was really, really bad. Lot of physical, emotional, and mental abuse going on, and our kids were watching.”

Pastor Smith and Jon’s praying parents received prophetic messages about God using Jon in ministry, and they kept praying. Smith said, “I was determined to know God can change anybody. It was dangerous going to their house at times, but I was a real stubborn pastor.”

Jon admitted, “I cussed him out numerous times, telling him to leave me alone.”

Finally, the Laytons lost custody of their children, and their house burned down. “Brittany agreed to go to a rehab program, and Jon finally sort of agreed to go,” Jeremy said.

Jon soon dropped out and was determined to find his kids, whom he had not seen in a month. “I was on my way to get my kids and kill anyone who got in my way, but I had two blowouts.”

Pastor Jeremy told him, “Jon, this is a clear sign that God is intervening. This is your last chance.” And Jon returned to the recovery program.

Beauty From Ashes

In 2015—two years after accepting the Waco Church pastorate—Jeremy saw a “For Sale” posted in front of the Magee Church of God (11 miles from Mize). He told his wife, Jennifer, “We



Jon and Brittany Layton with their youngest children

need that building,” but he did not know why.

He called Chris Moody (who was then Mississippi’s state administrative bishop) about the property. Only four people were attending the Magee Church, which was in disrepair. Smith said, “Bishop Moody worked with me and the Magee pastor to the point that I knew we would get the building, but I didn’t know when.” Under the current state bishop, Melvin Shuler, the building transfer became a reality.

Meanwhile, being Brittany’s pastor, Smith was allowed to visit her in rehab. She told him she wanted to help broken women after she finished the recovery program. On Smith’s final visit with Brittany in rehab, she again said she wanted to help broken women, and he told her they had the place. So, two years ago, Beauty From Ashes was started in the former classrooms and fellowship hall of the Magee Church.

“When we stepped out to open Beauty From Ashes, we stepped out with nothing,” Smith said, “but I had a determination not to use church funds to operate it. Mission America and the Church of God in Mississippi gave us the first donations. Then several busi-

nesses helped us with renovations.”

When the first couple of residents moved into BFA, “we got some close ties with judges in our area, who sent us some girls in need. And every time we’ve had a need, money has come in from somewhere.”

One woman sent a donation for the exact amount needed for a van.

The same thing happened when chairs were needed to replace the Magee Church’s water-damaged pews.

Jeremy added, “A guy who owns a fish house, whose wife is a gospel artist, pretty much funded renovation of the fellowship area into a dorm area.”

Jennifer said, “When we needed a plumber, one showed up out of the blue, willing to donate his time.”

There are currently 25 women in recovery at BFA. Several of their children live with them in the church’s renovated facilities.

One BFA housemother, Raylene Shoemake, has been on board since the ministry’s beginning.

Voice of Hope

In fulfillment of prophecy, Jon is Pastor Smith’s partner in ministry as director of Voice of Hope, the men’s recovery program which began in summer 2019. It is located in the former Raleigh Church of God (21 miles from Magee; 14 from Mize). But this is a temporary home, as the ministry is acquiring a former jail which will be converted into a spacious facility with a large living area, recreation space, and room for family visits.

Some of the men who have come into the program have construction skills, which helps with renovations. And there are mechanics who make the many repairs on the ministry's 15 vehicles (14 of which were donated).

Jon said, "Our church's music pastor's dad came through our program, after being on meth longer than I am old. He has graduated and is doing great. We now have a Church of God pastor's son who spent years in prison. And another man, Josh, who should be dead."

The men can secure jobs while in the program. Getting them to their respective workplaces costs about \$1,500 per week in fuel.

In September, Conrad Johns became a VOH house director after completing the program. He grew up in Parker, South Dakota, where he began drinking and using drugs at age 11. After getting his fourth DUI ticket at age 23, he went to Teen Challenge there, graduated, and flourished for a time, but "God was not the Lord of my life." He eventually lost his job, his car, and his family, and moved to Topeka, Kansas, where he tried to drink himself to death one night.

When he survived, a friend took him to a detox center the next morn-

ing. Through a series of events, God brought Conrad to Raleigh, Mississippi. "Two weeks after coming to Voice of Hope, one night the forces of darkness were hitting me as I tried to read my Bible in my rack. The Lord said, 'Just thank Me. I'm your peace,' and He gave me an overwhelming sense of peace."

Conrad added, "Four days before my graduation, Jon told me, 'I want you to be my house director.' That night, the Lord said to me, 'Why pray about it? I've put it in you.'"

Thrift Stores, Glue, Vision, and Revival

Two men and five women serve the two recovery programs as paid staff. They are paid through the tuition of residents, but the ministry also has some beds for those who are indigent. They operate three thrift stores—two in Magee, one in Collins—where women work to help pay for their tuition.

Pastor Smith called Jenna Chisolm, the ministry's administrator, "the glue who keeps things on budget and holds me accountable," while he credits his wife with "the vision for expansion." Jennifer said when welcoming a new resident, their "initial needs—medical


issues, legal problems, and mental and spiritual concerns—are addressed." A key player is Jeremy's mother, Loretta, who is a professional counselor.

Every Sunday night at 6:00 in the sanctuary of The Well (the church in Magee), church members join with the recovery programs' residents and staff for a "revival service," the pastor said, with 150 to 200 people typically in attendance. Jeremy preaches monthly, with guest ministers preaching on the other nights.

Rebecca's Testimony

Rebecca Massengill, 41, manages two of BFA's thrift stores. She said her father was verbally abusive and an alcoholic, while her mother and her grandmother were Sunday school teachers. She was baptized at age 9; tragically, she was molested the same year.

In middle school, Rebecca developed a same-sex attraction, and ran away from God because she felt she had "already been condemned to hell." A life of homosexuality ensued, and she tried to fill her inner void through Wicca, a pagan religion. After suffering a neck injury, she became addicted to prescription pain pills, "which snowballed into crystal meth, heroin, and intravenous drugs," she said.

Rebecca continued, "On January 6, 2020, God sent me to Beauty From Ashes. I felt loved when I came through the door. They looked at me as a person. Most important, they encouraged me to read the Word of God. In the Word, I met Jesus. I realized He could change me. He freed me from addiction and homosexuality. I tell the younger ladies, 'If He can do it for me, He can do it for anyone.'" 



Learn more at Voice of Hope Recovery or Beauty From Ashes (Magee, MS) on Facebook, where a donation link is available. P.O. Box 99, Magee, MS 39111.

A number of scenes captured in August by AP photographers around the world showed the central role that faith plays in providing both material and spiritual help in the wake of disaster and death, whatever the cause.

Placerville, Calif.—Seated in a camping chair next to packages of food and water, Grayson Howard plays the guitar in the parking lot of the Green Valley Community Church, which became a shelter for evacuees from the raging Caldor Fire.



Karachi, PAKISTAN—Hundreds of men attend funeral prayers over 13 wooden coffins containing victims of an explosives attack.



New Delhi, INDIA—An Afghan woman prays as other Afghans protest outside the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees office to protest against the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and also demanded to be given refugee status in India.





Les Cayes, HAITI—A congregant spreads his arms wide, throws back his head, and cries, “Hallelujah!” during a Catholic mass outside a church damaged by a deadly earthquake.



Days after the earthquake, the misery in Les Cayes was compounded when Tropical Storm Grace swept over the city. Inside a church shelter, a girl sleeps on blankets draped over the hard tile floor.



HARARE, Zimbabwe—The morning sun filters through a tree canopy as Apostolic congregants gather to pray after the government allowed houses of worship to reopen to people fully vaccinated against the coronavirus.



UN MENSAJE PARA TIEMPOS PELIGROSOS

por Tim Hill

Nos encontramos aquí porque Estados Unidos ha olvidado a Dios, tornándose autosuficiente y apático.



Dr. Tim Hill sirve como supervisor general de la Iglesia de Dios.

A PRINCIPIOS DE ESTE AÑO publiqué en las redes sociales un clip de mis primeros días en el ministerio. Me intrigaba tanto mi exuberancia juvenil como las ilustraciones y referencias a los cambios sociales a principios de la década de 1990, hace tres décadas. Puedo predicarlo palabra por palabra. He aquí algunos segmentos:

En Estados Unidos estamos siguiendo a Sodoma y Gomorra. Todos los días perdemos nuestra libertad. Estamos sufriendo el colapso de la moral y la desintegración del hogar. El crimen está en su punto más alto y este ha sido el siglo más sangriento . . .

Nos encontramos aquí porque Estados Unidos ha olvidado a Dios, tornándose autosuficiente y apático. Pero estoy más alarmado por el deterioro del interior . . . Se ha declarado la guerra a la vida familiar normal. Se ha declarado la guerra a los valores cristianos y a la decencia humana. Ya no nos espantamos . . . Las cosas que solían sonrojarnos ahora nos causan gracia; lo que solía sorprendernos ahora nos divierte. Cuando te ríes de la decadencia moral del mundo, jamás volverás a tomarla en serio.

Una vez me preguntaron si de verdad la pérdida de los valores hace alguna diferencia.

Es un hecho que lo que escuchamos nos afecta positiva o negativamente y es hora de que reevaluemos lo que vemos y escuchamos y hacia dónde nos encaminamos y que reconstruyamos nuestra decencia moral . . . Estos fundamentos de la decencia están desmoronándose en nuestras escuelas a medida que los estudiantes se vuelven

locos y los maestros se ven amenazados. Estas cosas llegaron cuando las oraciones y la Biblia salieron de las escuelas. Peor aún, salieron de nuestros hogares.

Tantas referencias de ese sermón aplican hoy, sobre todo la decadencia de la familia y la apatía moral. En ese sermón hice referencia a los nueve ciclos en los que una sociedad se embarca hacia el declive espiritual. Se ha observado que las culturas comienzan en la esclavitud y avanzan hacia la fe espiritual . . . de la fe al valor espiritual . . . del valor a la libertad . . . de la libertad a la abundancia . . . de la abundancia al egoísmo . . . del egoísmo a la autosuficiencia . . . de la autosuficiencia a la apatía . . . de la apatía a la dependencia . . . de la dependencia a la esclavitud.

Cuán precarios era entonces y treinta años después de haber predicado ese mensaje.

Mientras revivía ese mensaje que prediqué a mis treinta años, me sentí cautivado por la última oración. Mi verborrea era un poco descarada porque era inmaduro, pero el contenido todavía es aplicable:

No hay cosa alguna en Estados Unidos que no sea reparable por los predicadores que se levanten en sus púlpitos y declaren, “así dice el Señor”. No hay cosa alguna en Estados Unidos que no sea reparable si las iglesias dejaran de discutir sobre cosas que no afectan la eternidad y en cambio, se arrodillaran y se levantarán para hacerle la guerra al enemigo que está acabando con nuestro país. ¡Podemos tornarnos y reconstruir los cimientos!

Aunque con el pasar de los años ciertamente he cambiado, todavía sigo apasionado por una Iglesia que se mantenga enfocada en el Compromiso Final y con el denuedo del Espíritu Santo proclame libertad y cimente la moralidad espiritual. ☪



LA SANTA CENA

por ENOE CORTAZAR MAY, PhD (ABD)

POR AÑOS HE SIDO partícipe del pan y del vino como un sacramento de relevancia en nuestras iglesias locales.

Tanto en la iglesia primitiva, como en las iglesias a través de la historia, lo han practicado como un elemento fundamental en sus prácticas litúrgicas. El partimiento del pan y el vino son prácticas esenciales de la fe cristiana que cobran importancia cuando venimos a Jesucristo y participamos de la comunión, que es un elemento esencial evidente de la salvación. Cristo por su gracia nos ha otorgado la gran bendición de ser partícipe de este sacramento (1 Corintios 11:23-26). La iglesia Pentecostal a través de sus prácticas cristianas, ha considerado la Santa Cena como un sacramento de gran importancia. Dentro de esta práctica la expresión “dar gracias” (*eukaristein*) cobra relevancia porque indica la cena del Señor en su totalidad.

La Santa Cena como comúnmente le llamamos, es uno de los sacramentos importantes y fundamentales en las Sagradas Escrituras. Fue instituida por Jesús, por lo que es un evento trascendente en el cuerpo de Cristo. Por siglos, la iglesia cristiana lo ha conmemorado como una celebración

de un gran significado espiritual. La Iglesia de Dios en el punto doce de la Declaración de Fe afirma: “*Creemos en la Cena del Señor*”. La Santa Cena o la eucaristía tiene varias implicaciones para la fe cristiana.

De acuerdo a Daniel Tomberlin, la Santa Cena es un elemento clave en la adoración Pentecostal. No es una práctica simple para postergar cada año, sino que debe ser una práctica constante y necesaria en la vida de la iglesia. Jesús dijo: “*Haced esto todas las veces que la bebiereis, en memoria de Mí*” es decir que dio indicaciones para que lo hiciéramos repetidamente y así recordar su muerte. Al igual que la Iglesia primitiva, el culto pentecostal es un espacio de comunión y celebración, que no debe pasar desapercibido en nuestras congregaciones.

En primer lugar, la “Santa Cena” es de carácter santo, es un recordatorio de la muerte de Cristo. “Así, pues, todas las veces que comiereis este pan, y bebiereis esta copa, la muerte del Señor anunciáis hasta que él venga”. El pueblo de Dios lo celebra y cuando lo hace, recuerda a Jesucristo en relación con su muerte y su segunda venida. Cada vez que los cristianos la celebran afirman que

al comer el pan y beber de la copa, proclaman la muerte del Señor (v. 26). Cristo por medio de su muerte, nos hizo partícipes del nuevo pacto que Dios estableció con su pueblo, y del cual Cristo es el Mediador.

La comunión significa mucho más que el pan y el vino, es recordar la muerte de Cristo, su obra redentora, resurrección, ascensión, promesa de su presencia constante con su pueblo, y expectación de su segunda venida, “Hasta que él venga”.

Además, es reconocer la comunión con Cristo con la Iglesia y la unidad que todos tienen en Cristo. Comer el pan “Este es mi cuerpo, que por vosotros es partido”, (Lucas 19:47-48), nos recuerda su sacrificio, su cuerpo escarnecido, (Lucas 19:63-67), su soledad y abandono por el Padre, (Mateo 27:45-46). Jesús afirmó que moriría en el lugar de todos nosotros, (Romanos 5:7-8). El Cordero de Dios, y su sacrificio en la cruz son suficientes para la redención de todos. A través del Espíritu Santo y por la fe participamos del pan de la comunión y nos unimos con Cristo, experimentamos su presencia, poder, sanidad, y liberación. El pan representa

el cuerpo de Jesucristo, pero es un símbolo de comunión vital con Jesucristo.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer afirma que Jesús es el verdadero pan de vida; Él es no solamente el dador, sino el don mismo que hace posible todos los otros dones. Cuando comemos el pan y bebemos de la copa del Señor, somos invitados a su mesa de comunión, de unidad y de amor. Esta es una comida de confesión y reconciliación, es un memorial del amor redentor de Jesucristo y un vehículo de comunión con Dios, y con los hermanos.

La copa representa el nuevo pacto que Cristo ratificó con su sangre. “Esta copa es el nuevo pacto en mi sangre”, (Mateo 26:28; 1 Corintios 11:25). El vino de la comunión representa la sangre de Cristo, sin la cual el nuevo pacto, la nueva relación con Dios y con nuestro prójimo no habría sido posible. Es Cristo que provee el espacio de la comunión, Dietrich Bonhoeffer dijo: “Si podemos ser hermanos es únicamente por Jesucristo y en Jesucristo”. En la comunión, Cristo comparte con nosotros y nos bendice, pero nos invita a partir y a compartir con el prójimo en armonía.

Conclusión. El propósito de la Santa Cena es recordar el nuevo pacto, y testificar que participamos de la comunión con Cristo, y con nuestros hermanos. En la comunión testificamos que somos la nueva humanidad, el nuevo pueblo de Dios, la Iglesia de Dios, en una relación de amor con Dios, y con nuestro prójimo. Nuestro llamado es a la unidad, que solo es posible por Jesucristo. El pan y la copa son una extensión de la Encarnación, al recibirlos somos alimentados para la vida eterna, que es la resurrección a la inmortalidad en un cuerpo de carne y hueso. Jesús se identificó así mismo como el pan de Vida que descendió del cielo, (Juan 6:31-58).

Esta es una cena escatológica porque anticipa la resurrección del cuerpo, y los nuevos cielos y tierra, pero además expresa la esperanza más profunda de la humanidad. La Santa Cena es un medio visible para promover el mantenimiento de la vida espiritual a través de la comunión personal con Dios, y la nutrición para un crecimiento espiritual sano. **Este sacramento es un espacio de comunión, adoración y testimonio.** †



Enoe Cortazar May, PhD (ABD), *presidente Nacional de Educación de México y de Sebime/Instituto Atkinson*

PARA PREDICAR CON efectividad es necesario tener una visión clara de lo que es una predicación. ¿Será tan solo una cátedra de instrucción moral y religiosa? ¿Será un testimonio oral de algo bueno que nos pasó en nuestro diario vivir, o será una simple oratoria motivacional? ¿Qué es una predicación evangélica? ¿Quién lo puede hacer y cuál será el mejor lugar para hacerlo?

Hay cuatro pasajes Bíblicos, con tres diferentes expositores que nos ayudarán a contestar estas preguntas. El primer orador es el Apóstol Pedro. Su discurso o sermón en Hechos 2:14-41 fue una predicación apologética de las profecías del Mesías prometido en el Antiguo Testamento y su cumplimiento en Jesús. Su predicación culminó con un llamado al pueblo al arrepentimiento y a la aceptación de Jesús como el Mesías que habría de venir, y como resultado tres mil almas fueron salvas.

En Juan 4:1-42 encontramos a una mujer Samaritana que después de haber tenido un encuentro con Jesús y aceptarle como el Mesías prometido, dejó lo que estaba haciendo y su cántaro, y se fue a la ciudad a anunciar que había tenido un encuentro con Jesús. Ella no dio una cátedra. Esta mujer habló acerca de su testimonio personal y de lo que había experimentado al conocer a Jesús. Ahora ella iba por la ciudad, invitando a todos, a que fueran a Jesús y lo experimentaran de la misma manera. El resultado de su anuncio se encuentra en la misma narración. “Entonces los hombres salieron de la ciudad para ir a buscarle” (v. 32). Luego ellos regresaron a la mujer y le dijeron “ya no creemos solamente por tu dicho, [si no] porque nosotros mismos hemos oído y sabemos que verdaderamente este es el Salvador del mundo, el Cristo” (v. 42).

El tercer expositor, es el Apóstol Pablo. Él es uno de los más importantes evangelistas del Nuevo Testamento. Él es el autor de trece epístolas que forman parte de la Biblia. De sus exposiciones, quiero hacer énfasis en dos de ellas. La primera se encuentra en su carta a la iglesia de Corinto. Sus dos epístolas a los corintios están llenas de instrucciones morales y religiosas para el diario vivir. Por ejemplo: 1 Corintios 7:2, “Pero yo les digo: para evitar el pecado sexual, es mejor que cada hombre tenga su esposa y cada mujer su propio esposo.” Estas enseñanzas o predicaciones tocan temas de moralidad y dan dirección para vivir conforme a la voluntad de Dios.

La por DÉBORA ZAMBRANO PREDICACIÓN


Pero la instrucción de Pablo no solo se limita a la moralidad. En 1 Tesalonienses 5:8 él le escribe a la iglesia de Tesalónica y los insta a ser sobrios “habiéndose vestido con la coraza de la fe y amor, con la esperanza de salvación como yelmo.” En el versículo 11 del mismo capítulo les exorta a “animarse unos a otros y alentar a los de poco ánimo.” También anima a los oyentes “a estar siempre gozosos” (v. 16). Claramente el Apóstol Pablo estaba dando un discurso motivacional y está instando a todos a que hagan igual. Al final del capítulo, Pablo expresa el propósito de su exhortación, “Que nuestro

espíritu, alma y cuerpo sean guardados irrepreensiblemente para la venida de nuestro señor Jesucristo” (v. 23).

Estos son claros ejemplos que muestran que la predicación Bíblica puede venir a través de diferentes géneros, hombres o mujeres. Que se puede suscitar en diferentes lugares, en una casa, en la calle, en la iglesia. También podemos observar que no hay una definición exacta del formato o estructura de una predicación. Aquí no solo encontramos una predicación apologética de la divinidad de Jesús, también encontramos una cátedra de instrucciones morales y religiosas, un testimonio personal y una exhortación motivacional. Si bien es cierto, éstos ejemplos no dan una definición conclusiva o exhaustiva, pero si nos dan una base Bíblica de lo que constituye la predicación del Evangelio. Una predicación efectiva es el discurso oral que fluye de un corazón que ha tenido un encuentro con Jesús y tiene dos funciones primordiales. La primera, invitar a otros a conocer personalmente a Jesús y la segunda, discipular y animar a los que ya le conocen, a vivir una vida plena en Jesús hasta que Él venga.

Los temas, los expositores, los métodos, los lugares donde se predique pueden variar, lo que nunca puede variar, es el propósito del mensaje.

Por tanto, vayamos por todo el mundo y prediquemos el evangelio a toda criatura para que crean, sean bautizados y estén

preparados para la venida de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. 



Débora Zambrano,
M.Div., evangelista y maestra de Institutos Bíblicos en el Área de la Aahía, California





THE BIBLE, SEXUALITY, AND CULTURE

by David Gray

The Scriptures do speak clearly about one topic that has risen to the top of the hot-topic heap: sexuality. While the Bible is clear about what God expects, alternative views have risen—views that are birthed out of a biased approach.

David Gray is director of marketing and retail operations for Church of God Publications. dgray@pathwaypress.org

HOT-BUTTON TOPICS are everywhere. Masks, vaccines, politics, social justice, police reform, and even pronouns: Almost any topic has the potential to lead to an argument and, often, an offense.

Most of these issues boil down to a matter of personal convictions and perspectives. There is not a clear Biblical mandate regarding most of these topics.

However, the Scriptures do speak clearly about one topic that has risen to the top of the hot-topic heap: sexuality. While the Bible is clear about what God expects, alternative views have arisen—views that are birthed out of a biased approach. Regardless of the interpreters' agenda, their ideas have added to the confusion among even conservative believers.

Over the last two years, I have had multiple friends and family members reach out to me to ask my thoughts on the topic, with some of them confessing, "I just don't know what to believe anymore." It is for this constituency that I am most concerned—for believers who are being influenced and confused by this cultural agenda.

I believe it is imperative that believers not only know *what* to believe on this topic, but *why* they believe it. The days of "The Bible says

it, so I believe it!" are long gone. Oodles of information are at people's fingertips via the Internet. As a result, people can almost instantly discover a multitude of reasons and resources to support almost any perspective they hold.

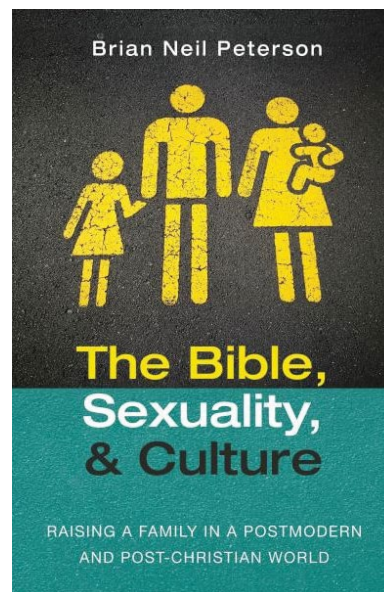
To help in this regard, I highly recommend the new book—*The Bible, Sexuality, and Culture; Raising a Family in a Postmodern and Post-Christian World*—written by Brian Peterson (an associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Lee University). Dr. Peterson presents a thorough Biblical case concerning human sexuality built on what he calls the "Genesis Mandate," which is grounded in accurate interpretation and orthodox theology. He simultaneously tackles the cultural and political shifts we are witnessing in a forthright and unreserved manner. Peterson writes:

The topics in this book are not going to be easy to hear for some people, especially those who are struggling with . . . sexual and moral sins and sexual confusion. . . . There is an ethical and moral standard that is not "relative" and unstable like the shifting sand upon which today's cultural foundations are based. God's Word is firm and will always remain so.

In endorsing the book, Dr. Michael Brown, well-known for the *Line of Fire* broadcast, said: "With today's all-out attack on Biblical norms for marriage,

sexuality, and family, Peterson's book demonstrates that God's design . . . is best. It must be defended and celebrated. This study, grounded in the Word and sound theology, will help you take a stand."

Every Christian who wants to help this generation navigate between Biblical truth and cultural pressures needs to get their hands on this book. It is available through [pathway bookstore.com](http://pathwaybookstore.com). [📖](#)



Do you desire to reach beyond the walls of your church?
If your answer is yes, then we have a place for you.

MEN AND WOMEN OF ACTION

MWOA



WWW.MWOA.ORG

Serving Since 1983



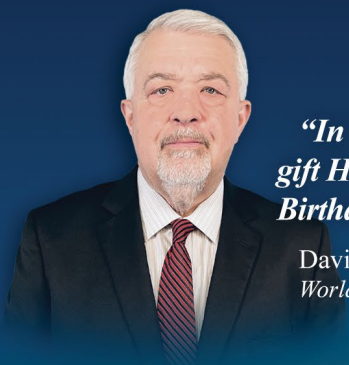
Serving Local Churches - Communities - Stateside - International
Disaster Relief - Construction - Humanitarian Aid - Firewall Project

MEN AND WOMEN OF ACTION
ACTION TEAMS | ACTION NETWORK

Contact MWOA today at (423) 478-7955 | email: ActionNetwork@cogmwoa.org



Christ's 2021-22
Birthday Offering



“In 2021, let’s give Jesus the largest birthday gift He has ever received through Christ’s Birthday Offering.”

David M. Griffis
World Missions General Director

 CHURCH OF GOD
WORLD MISSIONS
www.cogwm.org • @cogwm
1.800.345.7492

SUGGESTED THIS YEAR: \$20.21

**SINCE 1962, CHRIST’S BIRTHDAY OFFERING HAS BEEN . . .
FEEDING, CLOTHING, EMPOWERING, RESCUING, AND RESTORING!**

