

Spring
2013



A Journal for Church of God Leaders

engage

IN THIS ISSUE

Recapturing Vision in the Local Church

Caring for the Shepherd

Spiritual Conversations With Children

Training—Who Needs It?

The Secret of Becoming a Prophetic Preacher

SPRING 2013

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How to Get the Most out of the New *Engage* Format

IF YOU ARE reading this, you have successfully navigated to the new digital edition of *Engage*. It represents a new era in communication with ministers and laypersons who desire to lead their areas of ministry with passion and integrity.

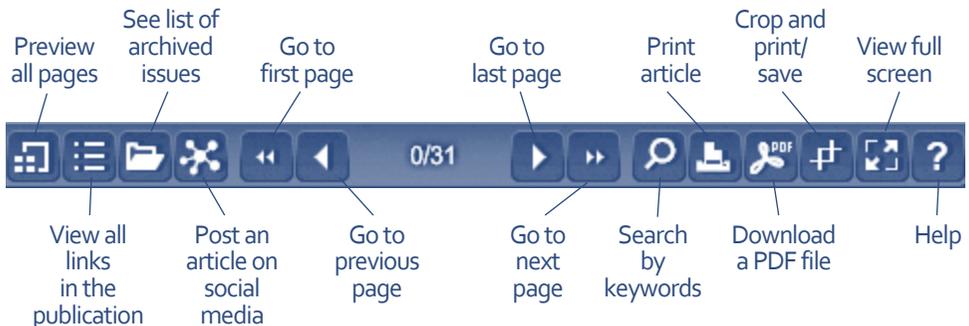
As you scroll through this issue, you will find not much has changed. The layout has been tweaked a bit, and we are using more color photos as opposed to theme graphics. We have brought back some popular columns of the past, including the legal advice section and one dealing with finances in the church. The respective columns are written by Church of God administrative veterans Dennis Watkins and Art Rhodes. In future

issues, we will be introducing new columns which relate to issues such as ministerial care and another of interest to church treasurers.

If this is your first time to visit the digital *Engage*, please take a few moments to get acquainted with all the features accessible through the onscreen icons below.

If you have not already discovered the archived issues, this is a major benefit of this site. The content of *Engage* is timely, yet stays relevant over the years, so the archives can be a great resource.

As you might expect, we are always looking for ways to improve *Engage*, so your input and suggestions are valuable. Please send comments via email to engage@churchofgod.org. ■



Watch for the next issue of *Engage* in August 2013!



AFFIRMATION of MARRIAGE

The Church of God Executive Committee, in session on April 9, 2013, released the following statement pertaining to marriage and the family.

THE CHURCH OF GOD, since its inception, has always believed in “the whole Bible rightly divided.” This belief has its foundation in the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:17: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” The teaching of the apostle Paul found in 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (NKJV).

The Holy Scripture is very plain and poignant concerning marriage and God’s commandments to what constitutes a marriage in His sight. Jesus stated in Mark 10:6-8, “But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.” (NKJV). Paul would reiterate this teaching of Jesus in Ephesians 5:31 by stating, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.” (NKJV).

In the entirety of Scripture, there are no cases found anywhere that cite examples of same-sex marriage, but, on the contrary, throughout Scripture, sexual relationships between individuals of the same sex is condemned and often judged by God. (Genesis

19:13; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Romans 1:24-32)

The Church of God is committed to the winning of the lost to Christ as found in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), and we affirm our love and compassion for all men and women, understanding that all of us were once in the bondage of sin and in need of redemption as so profoundly stated by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (NKJV).

The Church of God affirms its position based upon the teachings of Holy Scripture that marriage is, and only can be, the union of one man and one woman in the bonds of holy matrimony as stated by Jesus Christ in Mark 10:6-9: “But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate” (NKJV). ■

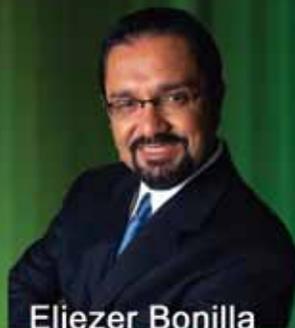
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RECAPTURING VISION WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH: Engaging God in PRAYER

by DANIEL SMITH

IN THE UNITED STATES, there is a growing epidemic of unhealthy churches. This trend is seen within every denomination. It should not be alarming that 80 percent of churches in America are declining (*Breakout Churches*). This fact is supported by the 70 percent of young adults and teenagers who are dropping out of churches today (*Essential Church*). When looking at these statistics, it becomes clear that the church is slowly, if not rapidly, dying. In order for the church to thrive again in a way that transforms the culture around it, you must engage God in PRAYER. By engaging God in PRAYER you will follow a six-step process that will lead your church toward recapturing a vision. Pastor, you must pray more, read more, associate more, yield more, encourage more, and respect time more.

P—PRAY MORE

Prayer is the key to anything within the church. Without prayer in the life of the pastor, there will be no effective prayer within

the church. A Baptist Press article states that only 16 percent of pastors are satisfied with their personal prayer life and that 7 percent are completely dissatisfied. Pastors must make prayer the first priority of their lives and of the lives of their congregation. Many pastors have limited time to engage God due to their job descriptions. If the church in America is to survive and grow once again, then pastors must put the priority of prayer before anything else in their job descriptions. Prayer must become the church's main program. It is important that pastors pray for three things in their lives and in their churches:

1. Pray to be real with God and others.
2. Pray to be open to God and others.
3. Pray to be obedient to God.

R—READ MORE

Read the Word to obtain the biblical vision for the church. The vision that you should have comes from the following passages: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 4; Luke 4:18-19; John 15:8;

Acts 1:4-8; 26:14-19; and Ephesians 4:11-16. These passages reveal the vision that will fulfill the purpose of worshiping God. This vision for the church is that of an educational experience where the pastor is to lead as a trainer, servant, and builder so disciples will be made who will train others.

Without this vision, the Old Testament passage will come to pass which states: "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18 KJV). The only way that you can recapture the vision for your church is to open up the Scriptures within your life and the lives of your congregation. It is the Holy Spirit who will reveal His Word to you in such a way that the vision will be recaptured in your heart and in the hearts of those you lead. To engage God through prayer means that the pastor must read and study the Word of God.

A—ASSOCIATE MORE

In recapturing a vision, it is important that you associate yourself with the biblical vision. Many pastors are good at preaching the biblical vision for the church, but they are very poor stewards of modeling God's mandate to the church. Pastor, you are called to train, serve, and build the local congregation (see Eph. 4:11-16). Are you happy with your spiritual growth? Pastor, would you be satisfied if your congregation became like you? Sheep will follow only where the shepherd takes them. Are you taking them to a place where they can grow? There are three things that you must do:

1. Model the Word of God before your congregation.
2. Be genuine in all your actions and speech.
3. Be trustworthy.

RELATIONSHIPS MUST BE BUILT WITH OTHERS BEFORE PRODUCTIVITY TAKES PLACE. IF A LEADER FAILS TO **BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH ENCOURAGING OTHERS** ALONG THE JOURNEY, THE RECAPTURING OF A VISION BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE.

Y—YIELD MORE

Yield yourself to God and the people you are serving. As a pastor, it should be your desire to serve others rather than your church serving you. You must understand that your leadership must grow from your relationship with God. It is your relationship with God that will determine your relationship with others. It was the relationship that Christ had with the disciples that led to the effectiveness of the early church's ministry. For Christ taught His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23 KJV).

Become a servant leader and train your congregation to follow you as you follow Christ. There are passages like Acts 6:1-7; Galatians 5:13-15; and Ephesians 4:11-13 which teach servanthood and servant leadership. If you desire to recapture a vision for your church, your church must learn to serve others. Based on this principle, a pastor must serve in order to truly yield to God and to the congregation. It is through service to God and the congregation that a vision will be accepted by the church as a corporate body. Learn to yield.

E—ENCOURAGE MORE

In the process of recapturing a vision for your church, it is important to encourage others, especially the people you are seeking to lead. Kouzes and Posner, in their book, *The Leadership Challenge*, teach that a leader must encourage the heart. They state that a leader must engage in two essential practices—to expect the best from people and to give personal recognition to those you are leading. To recapture the vision, you must expect the best of people, and along the way, recognize people for their accomplishments.

You will never recapture the vision until the church accepts you as their pastor. The title of “pastor” doesn’t mean that you are your congregation’s “pastor.” In the book, *The 5 Levels of Leadership*, John Maxwell teaches that a leader is given a position, but that is all that he/she has at that point. It is the second level of leadership where relationships are formed by encouraging the hearts of those you lead. This will be the foundation for a leader’s effectiveness. Relationships must be built with others before productivity takes place. If a leader fails to build strong relationships through encouraging others along the journey, the recapturing of a vision becomes impossible. Learn to encourage others.

R—RESPECT TIME MORE

Respect for time is one of the main issues within the church today. If you are to recapture the vision for your church you must learn that time is a virtue. Time is the essential test for the pastor and the church. With time there are trials, battles, and great pain. On the other hand, time brings wisdom, patience, and God’s plan. God has called you to train, serve, and build the congregation, which takes

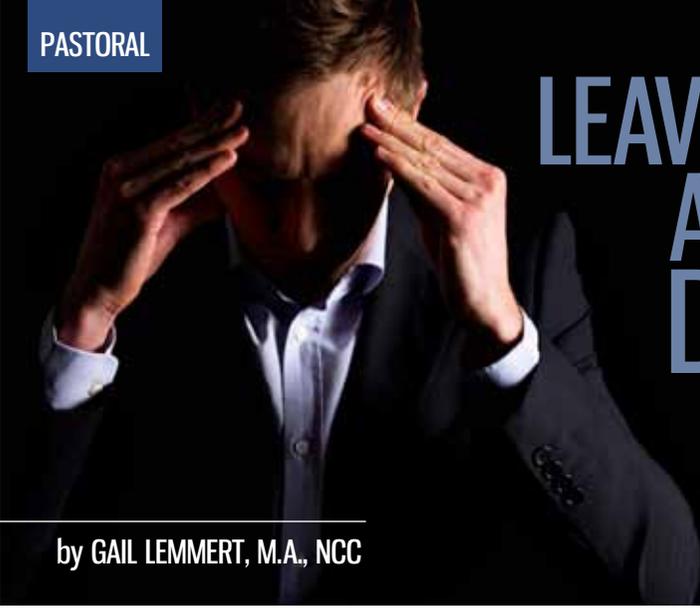
time. The goal is not just to make a disciple, but to make disciples who make disciples. Effective ministry and change will come only with time. Many pastors become discouraged and give up their current place of ministry because of the failure to respect time. As a result, their time or season of ministry does not come to fulfillment (John 15:8). When pastors and churches begin to respect the time that is required of them, it is then that churches will grow again.

The authors of *The Leadership Challenge* teach that there are two elements to developing a vision for the future, which are to imagine the possibilities and find a common purpose. As pastor, it is your responsibility to imagine the future possibilities and find the common purpose by engaging God in PRAYER. ■

Daniel Smith, B.S., M.Div., S.T.M., is the pastor of the Bude Church of God in Bude, Miss. and serves as part of the adjunct faculty at Valor Christian College. Currently he is pursuing a doctor of ministry degree at Liberty University.

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LEAVING IT AT THE DOOR

Caring for the Shepherd

by GAIL LEMMERT, M.A., NCC

WE HEAR A GREAT DEAL about “burnout” in the work place, in marriages, in parenting, and particularly with those who constantly work with people. When we give of ourselves emotionally day after day to others, it can become exhausting—mentally, physically, and even spiritually. *Burnout* is defined in a number of ways: “to be reduced to nothing, to stop working, to become exhausted by stress or work, to wear out, even be destroyed.” Those in ministry or those serving people—pastors, counselors, social workers, nurses, and many other occupations—may suffer burnout at times in their career or calling. What are some practical and helpful ways to reduce stress and the feelings of burnout for all of us who love people and know that we are called to serve? Three areas deserve consideration.

SPIRITUAL

The Bible reminds us that our strength comes from God. Paul said . . .

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength (1 Cor. 1:25 NIV 1984).

Then in 2 Corinthians, Paul wrote:

But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecution, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (12:9-10 NIV 1984).

The Scriptures speak of rest, taking a Sabbath, and being at peace. Psalm 23 says we lie down “in green pastures,” are led beside still or quiet waters, and He restores our soul. God rested from His work according to Genesis 2:2-3. We are instructed to “be still and know that [He] is God” (Psalm 46:10 NKJV).

Spiritual strength and renewal come from spending time in the Word and in prayer. It is the food for our spirit and spiritual

soul. Scriptures in Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, and Luke 4:4 say: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (NIV 1984). Mother Teresa wrote much about prayer. She said, “Prayer gives strength—it sustains, helps, and gives us all the joy to carry out what we need to do. We begin the day with prayer, and we end the day with adoration.” Another quote says, “Prayer feeds the soul—as blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul—and it brings you closer to God. It gives you a clean and pure heart.”

The spiritual disciplines of reading the Word, prayer, fasting, solitude, study, meditation, repentance, confession, submission, and worship are all necessary for healthy spiritual well-being. At the end of the day, we should leave our concerns “at the door” as we walk away.

PHYSICAL

Taking care of ourselves physically requires making choices and practicing discipline. Dr. David Burns in his book, *Feeling Good*, suggests taking control and using wise choices in three areas: (1) exercise, (2) diet, and (3) rest. Our physical bodies are made to move, so exercise, like walking, running, and playing sports, keeps us in better health, as well as in better shape. Exercise also carries endorphins or serotonin in the blood to the brain that strengthens our mental-emotional well being. Exercising three times a week for thirty minutes is recommended for good physical and mental health.

Eating healthy benefits us physically and emotionally. Most Americans do not get the needed amounts of vegetables and fruits in their daily diet. We often know what we need to eat, but convenience and busyness hinder us from eating like we know we should. If

we believe our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, then we are to be good stewards of the body and attempt to eat healthily.

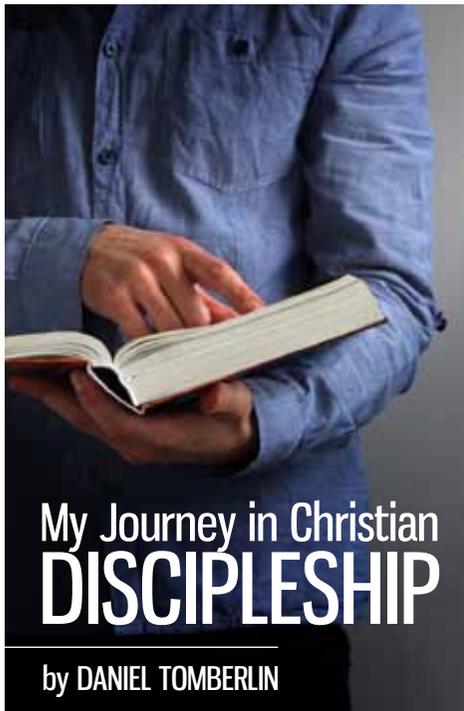
As busy as we are as pastors and leaders, we must get adequate rest. Some research suggests that Americans are sleep deprived because they continue to lead such active lives, putting in too many hours each day. We need seven to eight hours of rest each night in order to be rested for the next day.

These are practical suggestions for each of us in order to make the wise choices needed to be useful in the work of the Kingdom. And when we walk away from the church or the office, we must leave the concerns of the day “at the door.”

MENTAL/EMOTIONAL

As spiritual caregivers, we are responsible for getting our emotional needs met through our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with family and friends. The people we are discipling, mentoring, and caring for may not be emotionally able to give back to us. We may learn from them, but we need others who can pour into us the encouragement and challenging words to help us grow and mature in our relationships with God and others.

We are not the Messiah; we can only do what we can do. Then, we must walk away seeking our own health and well-being by leaving the rest up to the intervention of God and His Holy Spirit, knowing He is at work in the lives of all His children. Paul said, “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil.1:6 NIV 1984). Finding that balance is not always easy, but we must learn to leave some things “at the door.” ■



My Journey in Christian DISCIPLESHIP

by DANIEL TOMBERLIN

I WAS REARED in the Church of God Sunday School. My earliest memories are of the men and women who dedicated their lives to teach the gospel of Christ to children.

I have vivid memories of flannelgraphs, memory verses, and the gold stars on the attendance chart. There can be little doubt that Church of God Sunday School laid the foundation of my Christian faith. Sadly, after my parents divorced (when I was eleven), church became a less significant part of my life.

However, at the age of 15, I got saved during a Saturday night revival service. The following Sunday morning, I returned to Sunday school, church, and the Bible. When I got saved, I didn't own a Bible. But that Sunday after church, I began to read the only Bible in our home—the big coffee table Bible that rest-

ed in the middle of the room, but was never read. I began with Genesis. I read the Bible every day. Sometimes, it was tough and slow... Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and the Prophets were difficult for a teen reader. But I loved the Bible! By the first anniversary of my conversion I had read the complete Bible—twice. Early on, I discovered a text that has guided my life:

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success (Joshua 1:8 NASB).

This text encouraged me to do more than read the Bible; I had to learn how to meditate, to *think* about the Bible. So, I began to look for resources that could guide my study of the Bible. My pastor, Walter Langdon, directed me to the Church Training Course (CTC) books published by the Church of God Publishing House/Pathway Press. The CTC books covered biblical studies, theology, and church leadership. Completing the CTC courses and receiving the certificate was a significant milestone in my journey as a disciple. Also, I attended the Bible Institutes that were sponsored by the Church of God Department of Education. Each of these courses helped me to *think* about the Bible. Learning to *think* about the Bible *sanctified* my mind. Our statement of faith declares that we believe in “sanctification... through faith in the blood of Christ, *through the Word*, and by the Holy Ghost.” The Bible will form the heart and transform the mind (Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17), but the disciple must be diligent in reading, studying, and thinking about the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15).

After I graduated from high school I knew that God had called me into ministry and I pursued the opportunity to continue my study at East Coast Bible College in Charlotte, North Carolina. The professors and staff at ECBC loved the Bible and they taught me to express my devotion to the Scriptures through diligent study. My first professor, Dr. Ken Bell, challenged us on the first day of classes. He said, "Your studies here will be more than a glorified Sunday school class." He was right! Dr. George Voorhis introduced me to the study of theology and the history of the church. He challenged me to think critically about the Faith. My time at ECBC provided the foundation for my ministerial studies. I left ECBC prematurely, eager to begin pastoral work. But I continued my studies through the Lee University external studies program, graduating in 1994, sixteen years after I first started baccalaureate studies.

My journey as a disciple did not end with graduation from Lee University. I continued to study and read theology, church history, and the Bible. I read the books of Pentecostal scholars French Arrington, Hollis Gause, Steven Land, and Christopher Thomas. Many other scholars enriched my study through their books: Walter Brueggemann, N. T. Wright, George Ladd, F. F. Bruce, and many others. The point is that the disciple should never cease to diligently pursue the study of the Christian faith.

In 1999, I was invited to attend the Church of God Theological Seminary (now Pentecostal Theological Seminary). At the time, I was pastoring in Thomasville, Georgia, which was a seven-hour drive to Cleveland. For five years, I traveled to Cleveland with other colleagues from southern Georgia, taking courses in the seminary's Thursdays only program. At the

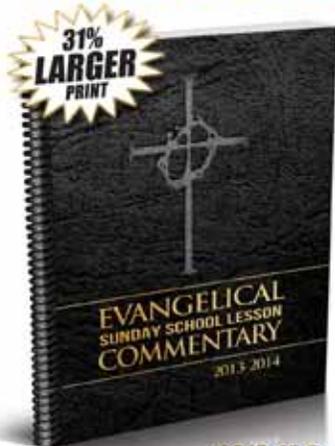
seminary, I found myself studying with some of the finest Pentecostal scholars in the world. There is a myth in many circles that formal theological studies tend to weaken one's faith in Christ. My experience was just the opposite. I found graduate studies to be challenging and enriching. I was graduated in 2004 with the Master of Divinity degree. But I had more than a degree. I had participated in a discipleship journey, a community of faith that continued to form my heart and sanctify my mind. My journey continues. Presently, due to the encouragement of many colleagues, I am enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Pentecostal Theological Seminary.

The life of the Christian disciple is the ongoing walk with Jesus and His disciples—study and life in the church. The Church of God offers many opportunities for discipleship. Nothing can take the place of local church discipleship programs such as Sunday school, children and youth ministries, and small-group adult discipleship. The role of denominational leadership is to provide resources, curriculum, and opportunities for learning. Discipleship requires mentors. Pastors, teachers, and leaders must be dedicated to *teaching* the Word of God and building relationships. There have been scores of church leaders who have contributed to my discipleship journey—Sunday school teachers and pastors in the local church, and professors and instructors in our educational institutions. I am grateful for their contribution to my journey of discipleship. ■

Daniel Tomberlin is pastor at the Vidalia, Ga. Church of God. He serves as coordinator of ministerial development programs in South Georgia. He is the author of Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar.

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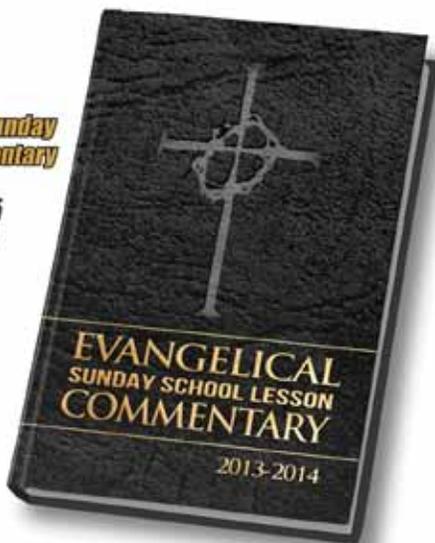
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Two Boring Topics to Start Off a New Year!

WHILE I WOULD like to start the year off with a “riveting” article on exciting topics, I think it would be good to cover two “not-so-riveting” topics that regularly come across my desk.

PROPERTY TAX-EXEMPTION

It’s early in the year, and in some states there may still be time to file a property tax-exemption application for your church property and/or parsonage. This seems like a project that everyone would know to take care of; unfortunately, it is not, and the consequences can be very expensive.

Be sure to confirm that your church has filed a timely property tax-exemption application in your state. The coverage on this issue varies drastically around the country. In some states, if you obtain a property tax-exemption one time, it is good perpetually. In other states, the exemption lasts only for a period of time, such as five years, and then another application must be filed. In yet other states, a timely application must be filed every year or the exemption is lost!

Therefore, take extra precaution to make sure that your property tax-exemption application is properly filed. As we all know, state, county, local, and other governmental entities are strapped for cash; consequently, they are doing anything they can to put exempt properties on the tax rolls. This includes church

properties. It is very sad to have to work with a local church which has not correctly or timely filed its property tax-exemption application and which is looking at a delinquent tax bill amounting to possibly thousands of dollars!

DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS INSURANCE

There are numerous types of insurance coverage which a church’s insurance policy should include, but one which I sometimes find missing is known as directors and officers liability coverage, also known as “D&O” coverage. This type of coverage protects the pastor and officers in the church, as well as the church itself, from liability, resulting from decisions made in the furtherance of their duties on behalf of the church. This type of coverage should give the pastor, trustees, and pastor’s council members some type of insulation from lawsuits, resulting from actions they take or decisions they make in their work for the church. Laymen in the church who offer their time and services for the church as pastor’s council members, treasurers, trustees, and other officers should be advised that the church has purchased this type of insurance on their behalf. ■

Dennis W. Watkins is legal counsel for the Church of God. The writer is not engaged in rendering legal or other professional services herein. If legal advice or expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.



MONEY MATTERS
Art Rhodes

Benefits Board to Offer Health Insurance

MANY YEARS AGO, the Church of God offered a health insurance plan for its ministers and church-related employees. Due to rising costs, that plan was dissolved in the '80s. Since that time, many faithful servants to our congregations have had to search for individual health insurance policies on their own. Regrettably, some have not been able to get insurance, and others have had to pay extremely high rates. Our ministers and church employees too often have become part of statistics, such as the following:

- 49.9 million people in the United States were without health insurance in 2011, or 16.3 percent of the nation's population.
- More than 9 million children lack health insurance.
- Lack of health insurance is associated with as many as 44,789 deaths per year in the United States.

To address this need, the Church of God Benefits Board, through a collaborative agreement with GuideStone Financial Resources, is pleased to announce that it is now able to offer health insurance to ministers and church-related employees of the Church of God across the United States.

The health insurance plans feature quality medical and prescription drug coverage with access to the nationwide BlueCross BlueShield network. There are eight different health insurance options (plus life and disability insur-

ance) available to employees, their spouses and children. To participate, the primary applicant must be actively employed by a Church of God congregation or church-related entity for 20 or more hours per week and a member of the Ministers' Retirement Plan, contributing at least \$500 per year to their retirement account.

Churches with ten or more employees may seek a group quote from GuideStone. As the administrator of the health insurance plans, GuideStone is the benefits board of the Southern Baptist Convention, serving more than 200,000 participants and 36,000 churches through their insurance program.

Because this coverage is offered as a Personal Plan and not part of a denomination-wide group plan, it is possible that some who apply will not be accepted. Further, the rates will vary, depending primarily upon the age of the applicant and the region of the country.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jonathan Stone

Spreading the Gospel in the Google Generation

VIRAL: How Social Networking Is Poised to Ignite Revival

By Leonard Sweet

THE SWEETENER

In *Viral: How Social Networking is Poised to Ignite Revival*, prolific writer and provocative thinker Leonard Sweet delivers more of what we have come to expect from him. You will find him to be reasonable and passionate, calculated and surprising, humble and audacious. Sweet is a *know-it-all* in the best possible sense of the phrase, and the variety of fields and disciplines from which he pulls his information reflects the breadth of his learning.

In *Viral*, you will find yourself at one moment trying to hold on as you are pulled along by sweeping generalizations that sum up entire chunks of human history, and in the next moment trying to slow yourself down in order to understand the careful observation of some seemingly tiny and random object. If you are unfamiliar with Sweet, you might encounter some early disorientation as your mind calibrates itself to his syncopated style. But don't worry, Sweet is a taste that is easily acquired.

SWEET T

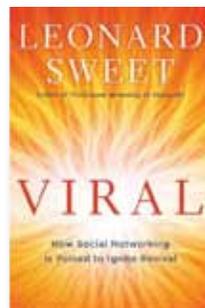
Viral is an assessment of how the Church is situated in contemporary Western culture, and what that situation presents us with in terms of both challenges and opportunities.

Depending on your opinion of that situation, you may experience the assessment as an indictment on the culture, the church, or both. To be sure, the plethora of subjects and ideas covered in *Viral* will leave no one unchallenged. But to read the book as an indictment is to miss the point.

The point is that we have before us an opportunity of historic proportions. Sweet tells the story of the only course taught by Martin Luther King Jr., and the eight students who have the lone privilege of referring to King as their teacher. Yet, none of them saved their course syllabus. None of them held onto their lecture notes. None of them still have their papers that were evaluated by King. The point is that those eight students stood in the presence of greatness, and yet they missed their moment. Sweet unveils the purpose of *Viral* by concluding the story of King's students this way:

One of the saddest things you can say about anyone? They stood in the presence of greatness and missed it. Let's not miss our moment (p. 49).

Yet, this is more than a naively optimistic *we can do it* mantra. In *Viral*, Sweet is keenly aware of the dangers and pitfalls that may very



well cause us to miss our moment. And so he proceeds to give us his best attempt at a road-map. Along the way, he offers a playful variety of analogies, quotes, poems, and metaphors to light the path, as well as some of the compelling and proleptic anticipations that have given him the well-earned title of *America's leading Christian futurist*.

One gets the feeling in *Viral* that we are stopped at a T-intersection. Going back is not an option. So, we must turn one direction or the other. One of the turns is an attempt to run away from what lies ahead. The other turn is an attempt to run toward it. Sweet is hopeful, and so he chooses the turn that runs toward what lies ahead in the hope that Christ not only stands *above* culture, but also works through it in order to redeem and transform it.

SWEET RIDE

Sweet offers a vehicle for the path into the future by constructing a view that we each generally fall into one of two categories—digital natives or digital immigrants (p. 3). In the beginning of the book, Sweet acknowledges the flaws of any generalization that will reduce all people to one of two categories, and reaffirms its absurdity at the end. However, whether you would like to break us down into two cultural families or twenty, Sweet is convinced that the way forward will require some migrating from all of us. After all, “...life on earth is an immigrant experience” (p. 28). Like frogs, we each will have to be as comfortable on cultural land as in cultural water. Thus, he states:

But the fact remains that if we are to move into the future, we need not to practice cultural apartheid, but cultural amphibianship (p. 192).

So, Sweet forges ahead with the identification of two main cultural families, and playfully chooses 1973 (the year that the mobile phone was invented) as his dividing line (p. 14). Those born before 1973 he refers to as *Gutenbergers*, and those born after 1973 he refers to as *Googlers*. Sweet refers to *Googler* culture as TGIF, because it is built upon the following tools of relationships and life: *Twitter*, *Google*, *iPhones*, and *Facebook*. Sweet fans will immediately recall the EPIC paradigm from *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century Church*, a connection Sweet himself finally acknowledges in the book's appendix (p. 197). Sweet makes the interesting suggestion that EPIC represents the best interface for TGIF culture. I would have personally enjoyed an elaboration on the connection between the two.

With the vehicle assembled, Sweet spends the core of the book taking us through each of the four tools of TGIF culture. In each of the four areas, he suggests both the promises and pitfalls that potentially lie ahead for us. He shows how each of these tools is more than a tool; they are reflections of the essence and values of *Googler* culture. He affirms and warns both *Googlers* and *Gutenbergers* on how each of their tendencies might cause them to respond in both helpful and hurtful ways. And of course he weaves into each discussion the varying connecting points between the TGIF values reflected in *Googler* culture and the Kingdom values reflected in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

THE SWEET SPOT

While the journey through *Googler* culture and into the future makes up the backbone of the book, there is something else, in my opinion, which makes up the central nervous

system. I recognized it early in the book and was able to trace the pathway throughout the book as if I were looking at a neural dermatome chart. Sweet never explicitly calls it the heart cry of the book, but it felt that way to me. And let us remind ourselves that the first rule of storytelling is *show, don't tell*. What he shows us in *Viral* is an intergenerational longing in the mode of Malachi 4:6. The plea for the heart-turning of parents and children starts with statements like this:

Each new generation needs to start fresh, but not from scratch. This is one reason Googlers need Gutenbergs, and vice versa. When we separate ourselves from the inherited memories of our ancestors, when the texts and traditions of the past do not join the present, the future is in jeopardy. There is no future without the past (p. 34).

While parents have always needed each other, Sweet believes that the current situation has made it more evident than ever that parents really do need their children. He observes:

Looked at objectively, children need adults to help them assess, understand, and process information. The reversal is that, now, adults need their children to help them access information. In immigrant communities, the children teach their parents the new culture, the language, and the ideas. Today, adults need to listen to their children, because they are the natives and adults are the cultural immigrants (p. 52).

The key for us adults (since I was born in 1973, I claim both the Gutenberg and the Googler culture) is not to simply turn our hearts to our children, but to also turn our hearts to our fathers and mothers, whether living or dead. This is one of the fundamental

ways that reclaiming our past will unlock for us our future. Sweet says it this way:

Every generation has great expectations of the succeeding generations: our failures finally redeemed; our mistakes not to be repeated; our disappointments reversed. These are but a few of the expectations we project on the shoulders of our youth. But before we throw all these great expectations on them, we need to look over our own shoulders to our ancestors, stop giving our predecessors the cold shoulder, and let them lift us up on their shoulders. Life ought to be a robust collaboration between the living and the dead. If we are not careful, TGIF Culture will lose the knack for dealing with the past (p. 85).

Every generation, every time, every epoch needs its Elijah, its Malachi, its John the Baptist. I believe this book is at least one small part in the collective, prophetic voice crying in the wilderness, seeking to prepare the way for the Lord for this time. That is why I highly recommend the book. But if you read it and hear only a conversation about gadgets and generations and generalizations and somehow miss this central nerve—this sweet spot in the story—then you will have missed the whole point. Sweet gives a convincing apology for why *Googler* culture might ignite revival in the Western church. But more than telling us *why* it might happen, he shows us a heart yearning for it *to* happen.

AFTERTASTE

Sweet saves his right hook for the last few pages. I will not give anything away, so no spoiler alerts are needed. I found his summation to be sublime. But I will say this, for Sweet, all things point back to Jesus. And that is the way that it ought to be. You will not be disappointed with the taste he leaves in your mouth. ■

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SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN: The Heart of Parental Discipleship

by JOHN HARRIS

GOD WAS NOT CREATED, but has always been and always will be.” That is a statement that has surfaced on several occasions lately, in different contexts. One such occurrence was from my 5-year-old nephew, Tucker. Recently, Tucker’s Children’s Pastor asked the question, “How was God created?” Instinctively, Tucker gave the answer, but Pastor Ben-G didn’t hear him. By the time that the helpers made mention that he gave the correct response, the answer was on the screen. In trying to figure out how he knew the answer, Ben-G just brushed it off that Tucker had just read it. The only problem: Tucker can’t read!

The next day, my 11-year-old son Ryan came home telling me about his day. His sixth-grade science class was talking about creation

when the teacher mentioned the fact that Christians believe that God created the earth. A conversation ensued in this public school classroom about God and creation. Ryan commented, “Dad, before I knew it I blurted out, ‘God was not created, but has always been and always will be!’”

While it is good that these young boys knew the truth of creation, the background of their knowledge is what is also important. They both come as the result of conversations that I have had with them about core Pentecostal beliefs. We, as parents and church leaders, have a tendency of overcomplicating parental discipleship when in actuality, by its basic nature, it can be simplistic and profound. And, spiritual conversations lie at the heart of parental discipleship.

A great way of maintaining spiritual conversations with our children about truths that really matter to them is by having a **T.A.L.K.** with them.

TIMING is everything. Children are notorious for giving one-word answers to our questions, until they are ready to talk. I am sure you are familiar with this exchange:

“How was your day?”

“Fine.”

“Did you have a good day?”

“Yep.”

“What did you learn today at school?”

“Nothing.”

When it comes to having conversations with our children we cannot force them to talk, instead we have to be ready for the opportunities when they are ready.

ASKING questions is a good method of teaching. Jesus often asked questions of His disciples. He asked questions such as, “Who do men say that I am?” “Why do you doubt?” “Who touched me?” In fact, it has been pointed out that the Gospels record well over 150 questions that Jesus asked. Asking questions has a way of drawing people into conversations. I love asking questions about off-the-wall crazy stuff and then watching God use something so simple to get to important matters of life and faith!

LISTENING requires the cessation of talking. Too often when it comes to children, we talk at them or to them, but not with them. However, in order to have spiritual conversations we must stop doing all the talking and listen to them and what they have to say. This means more than just hearing, but getting to the core of what they are trying to convey to us. When we do this, not only will we learn something, but we will also be able

to discern what is going on in their thinking and in their lives.

KNOWING the children you are discipling is important. Spiritual conversations should be about getting to know God first and foremost and also each other in the process. Recently, I led my family on a totally different family devotion from what we are used to. I made up a chart with all of our names listed at the top of the page and a list of questions about our favorite things on the left column. We spent time listing our favorite things and then what we thought were the other’s answers. What ensued was a great time of getting to know each other better, laughing, and just talking. The Holy Spirit was right in the midst of our time as the fifth member of our family.

Though not mentioned directly, **T.A.L.K.** is the premise behind the *iBelieve* project published by Pathway Press. *iBelieve* is a 103-question catechism designed around the core beliefs of the Pentecostal faith tradition. It is structured in a question-and-answer format, which resembles a conversation that a parent or teacher has with children. In fact, “How was God created” is question number 10. It involves the cooperation between the home and the church as is evidenced in Tucker and Ryan’s experience. If we are to be deliberate in parental discipleship, we must remember to **T.A.L.K.** to our children! ■

John Harris is the administrative pastor of Bay Harbour Church of God, Brunswick, Georgia. He is the author of iBelieve: Declaring My Faith, a Pentecostal discipleship manual for the church and home available at Pathway Press. Also available as part of the iBelieve project is a 6-month creative children’s ministry curriculum, family activity cards, and handy booklets.

RAISING UP A NEW GENERATION TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

by TONY P. LANE

COULD IT BE that we are witnessing the last Christian generation in America? According to a study by researcher George Barna, the greatest probability for individuals making a decision for Christ is 32 percent for those between the ages of 5 and 12, as compared to only 6 percent for people 19 or older! Some missiologists state that in the United States nearly 85 percent of people who make a decision for Christ, do so between the ages of 4 and 14.

The 10/40 Window in missiology points to the need of taking the gospel to a geographic segment of our world. The recently identified 4/14 Window movement describes a demographic frame—a life season comprising the ten years between the ages of 4 and 14. The potential of the 1.2 billion children and youth in this segment of the world's population is

incredible! If we as a church can grasp the awesomeness of this vast generation, we can mobilize an army that can bring about a global transformational impact and significantly alter the course of many nations around the world.

At the 2012 Church of God International General Assembly, a resolution was passed that addresses this need and makes a commitment to addressing the holistic needs of this people group. In order to fulfill this commitment, it is important that every local church understand their role in impacting the 4/14 Window.

AWARENESS

We must do all we can to make our congregations aware of the needs of this people group and all that is occurring among this generation. The Enemy is attempting to divert the



attention of these children and hinder them from fulfilling their greatest potential. Human trafficking and sexual slavery have created bondage for many children who have been kidnapped, abandoned, and raised without hope. In many countries around the world, children are forced into the physical labor and forbidden to have an education. Others live in extreme poverty, without even the basic necessities for quality living. And, still others are drawn to religious cults who are vying for their attention, loyalty, and commitment at a young age. Our pluralistic nation has created an environment in which our children are exposed to a variety of faiths, in their neighborhoods and in their schools, and if we as the church don't build their faith, they will be enticed and drawn away by false faiths. A 4/14 Window awareness campaign must be a priority of every pastor, leader, and church.

PRIORITIZE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

It is important that we prioritize children's ministry in our churches. God is calling us to radically change the way we view children and understand the strategic importance of their callings. Children's ministry leaders must put into place a quality and holistic children's ministry that will make disciples of our children and strengthen families. While building these young disciples, we must aid them in discovering their talents, gifts and abilities and provide opportunities for them to utilize their gifts in the body, even at a young age. Children can worship. Children can lead. Children can minister. Involving children in the local church ministry will provide training for future leadership. Multigenerational worship services will encourage children and help

them to understand that they do indeed matter and have a place in the body. Providing opportunities for missions involvement will expose them to needs greater than themselves and offer them a worldview outside of their own personal worlds. This may include global missions trips, as well as missions trips in their own communities. Encouraging them to participate in YWEA fundraising will open their eyes to children around the world living in the 4/14 Window.

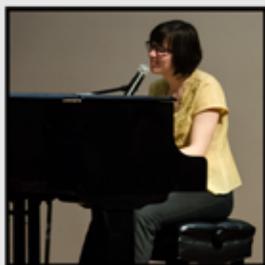
FOCUS 4/14

We must target the 4/14 age group around the world. Ministries that impact this group must become the focus. If the world is going to be transformed, then it is the church's responsibility to raise up a generation of empowered disciples. We can no longer ignore the potential of this vast army waiting for assignment. This will require investments of time, energy, money, and effort. On April 14, 2013, there will be a concentrated effort through a day of prayer and fasting for children, ages 4 to 14 years. Global 4/14 Day is a day set aside to seek God's face on behalf of this vast population group. Go to www.global414day.com and www.cogyouth.org websites to access additional resources and information about the 4/14 Window.

An army of 1.2 billion children is waiting for deployment. We can't afford to lose them, like so many young adults who have walked away from their faith. We must reach them while they are impressionable, assist them with spiritual development, establish them with a biblical foundation, and then send them out in a world that needs transformation! ■

Tony P. Lane is Discipleship and Children's Ministries coordinator in Youth and Discipleship, and author of Changing Ministry in Changing Times.

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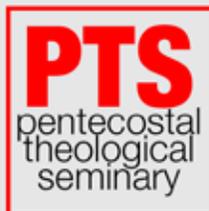
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The Secret of Becoming a PROPHETIC PREACHER

by J. LEE GRADY

EVER SINCE GOD called me to preach, I've battled with deep insecurity about my delivery style. I can't electrify a crowd like T.D. Jakes, pack an arena like Reinhard Bonnke, or get audiences to turn sermons into trendy topics on Twitter like Craig Groeschel or Steven Furtick. Those guys hit home runs when they preach. I get base hits—or strikes.

For years I felt like the reluctant Moses, who complained to God by saying, "O, Lord, I have never been eloquent" (Ex. 4:10 NIV 1984). For years, the Lord kept pushing me out of my comfort zone, urging me to surrender my fears so that I would take the microphone willingly. Once He told me: "I didn't call you to be T.D. Jakes. I called you to be you."

On many occasions after speaking in a church or conference, I would sulk. I battled constant discouragement and wondered if my words had hit the mark. Did I preach OK? Did the message sink in? Finally, I asked an older pastor if he had ever struggled with

disappointment in his pulpit performance. He smiled and told me: "Son, I feel that way every Monday of my life."

I'm learning an uncomfortable secret about preaching: Those who dare to allow God to speak through them will always squirm in holy agony. Preaching the gospel is both a glorious and a horrifying responsibility. When we speak under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and impart the very truths of Christ, we get so dangerously close to Him that our pride is challenged.

This truth is revealed in the story of Jericho. God told Joshua to organize a march around the walled city for seven days. The Ark of the Covenant was to go first, accompanied by seven priests blowing trumpets. On the last day, the walls of Jericho fell flat after the people shouted.

We Charismatics have spiritualized this story in some comical ways. Some of us thought that blowing shofars during every

church service would grow our churches. (In many cases, those churches got smaller because the shofar blowing was so weird!) Others assumed we should march around the church every week or stage all-night shout-a-thons.

I have nothing against shouting, marching, or shofars, but please don't miss the main point of this story: It is powerful prophetic preaching that brings down the walls of spiritual resistance. God's Word must be proclaimed. Notice these points about the Jericho story:

1. The trumpets were rams' horns.

God uses the weak things of this world to confound the strong. The apostle Paul called the preaching of the gospel "foolishness" (see 1 Cor. 1:18). While it is OK to improve your speaking abilities, don't become so polished that you become an orator with nothing to say. Don't try to be sophisticated. You are just a ram's horn.

Some American preachers today wow their crowds with dramatic stories, film clips, trendy graphics, and motivational hype. It sounds good initially. But sometimes, after the applause, we realize it was just a bunch of ear candy. What we need in today's pulpits is less scripted sparkle and more raw, messy, honest, tear-stained pleas from broken men and women who are aflame with the Holy Spirit. Rams' horns came from animals that had been sacrificed. Only consecrated preachers who have died to self can preach a message that will bring down a spiritual wall.

2. The trumpets were blown for seven days.

We love sermons that become overnight YouTube sensations—the kind of messages

that get everyone waving handkerchiefs and dancing in the aisles. But the kingdom of God is not built on one-night stands. When Paul the apostle preached, the results were not always immediate . . . or positive. Sometimes there were riots—and jail time.

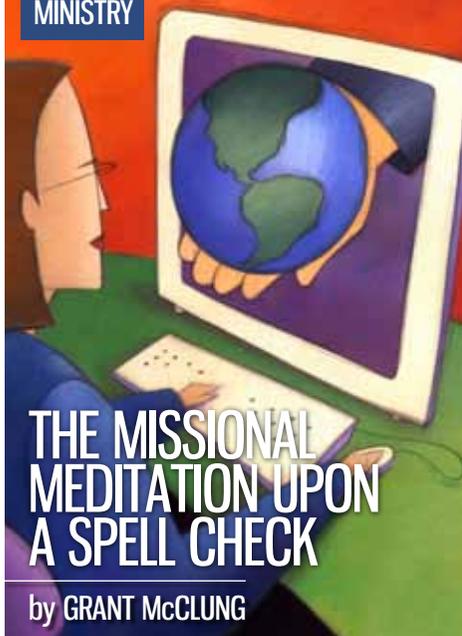
What God is looking for is not one big sensational sermon but a lifetime of faithful preaching. He wants consistency, not fireworks. It's great when we have the exciting, handkerchief-waving moments, but we must realize that God's Spirit is also moving on quiet days when no one shouts "Amen!" and all you hear in the audience is cell phones ringing and babies crying.

3. The trumpets were blown by unnamed men.

The Bible doesn't tell us who blew the trumpets in Joshua 6. We know these guys played an important role, but their names never appear in lights. They trudged through the dry desert around Jericho for seven monotonous days, blowing their horns until their throats were dry and their lips were sore. And in the end, when the walls of the city finally collapsed, Scripture says Joshua's fame increased—not theirs (see Josh. 6:27).

Today, we need preachers who are willing to faithfully speak God's Word with no hope of fame or fortune. If you truly want all the credit to go to Jesus, you won't worry about your performance or your applause. Just do your job. Preach the Word, and the walls will eventually fall. ■

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma and the director of The Mordecai Project (for more information, visit themordecaiproject.org).



THE MISSIONAL MEDITATION UPON A SPELL CHECK

by GRANT McCLUNG

MY FRIENDS AND colleagues know that one of my passions is writing. Like any writer seeking for excellence, I use the “spell check” function in my word processing programs—whether I want to or not! Spell check can either bless you or bug you! Mine continually catches words that I already know are correctly spelled, but spell check “thinks” I have it wrong!

For example, consider the spell check of the words “unreached” and “*unreached peoples*.”

I’ve been writing and teaching about the strategic missions challenges of unreached people groups for years. Thankfully, I had the privilege of teaming with others in the early 1990s to research and publish much of the strategy and focus on unreached peoples for our denominational World Missions ministry. Those developed into broader resolutions and measures that were brought to our International Executive Council and eventually entered into the current record of the

Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) *General Assembly Minutes* as the official-operational prayer, adoption, evangelization strategies towards unreached people groups for our global movement.

So, here is a list of five results I get when I input/type the word “unreached.” I’ll connect a “missional meditation” on each one:

1. “*undetached*” [unattached]—Unreached, unengaged people are lost, “*undetached*” [unattached] from God and His people. Paul reminded a formerly unreached people group in Ephesus that before their attachment to God, they had been, “...separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12 NIV).

2. “*unleashed*”—The Psalmist asked (Psalms 1:2), “Why do the heathen [nations] rage?” Across our world, a global rage has been *unleashed* among earth’s peoples. Angry, searching, on the move, anxious—much [not all] of their fury, hatred, and despair is fueled by sinister, unseen enemies of Christ’s kingdom. They need the hope of the gospel! As the gospel of Jesus Christ enters an unreached people group, reconciliation and peace is the end result! Ephesians 2:14-18 indicates that Jesus Christ, “...is our peace,” and has “put to death hostility” (NIV).

3. “*unsearched*”—Unlike Luke 15 where a shepherd, a housewife, and a father were searching for “that which was lost,” many unreached peoples remain *unsearched*. It has been said that the only thing worse than being lost is—being *lost with no one searching for you*. May that NOT be our indictment at the judgment seat of Christ (i.e. that they were lost and we were not searching)!

4. *“unrelated”*—No matter where I go on this earth, I know I have a physical family (in Tennessee, Georgia, Arizona, California, Texas, and Florida) and a global spiritual family. I rejoice in Paul’s encouragement to the Ephesians—that they have a “family in heaven and on earth” (Ephesians 3:15) and God’s redeemed people, “...are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and *members of God’s household!*” (Ephesians 2:19 NIV). Think of unreached people groups as yet *unrelated* future relatives who are still without a Christian global family. In the words of the old gospel song, when we get to heaven, “Will the circle be unbroken?”

5. *“untreated”*—God’s Word is full of the grief, burdens, and laments of His people (especially the Old Testament prophets) as they cry out for justice and “Shalom.” One of the Bible’s most poignant is the section between Jeremiah 8:20–9:1 where “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (NIV). Seeing the wounded and dying yet *untreated*, Jeremiah cries out, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?”

May 2013 not come to an end without our own personal recommitment to go to the ends of the earth—or across our community—to find unreached people groups to make sure they are no longer *undetached* [unattached], *unleashed*, *unsearched*, *unrelated*, and *untreated*. ■

Grant McClung, president of Missions Resource Group (www.MissionsResourceGroup.org), is missiological advisor to the World Missions Commission of the Pentecostal World Fellowship and a member of the EMQ Advisory Committee.

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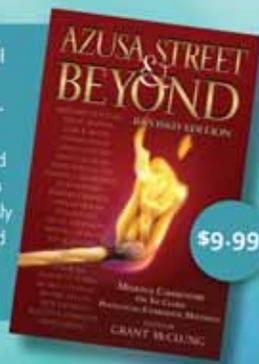
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by DONALD G. BENNETT

TRAINING—Who Needs It?

JESUS BELIEVED TRAINING WAS NEEDED! HE TRAINED HIS APOSTLES FOR THREE YEARS—36 MONTHS!

IN ACTS 4:13, the religious leaders assumed that Peter and John were uneducated men, but the verse also noted that Peter and John had been with Jesus—the best Teacher ever. If anyone could teach them about the Word of God, He could, and believe you me, He did teach them. Notice how He taught the two men on the way to Emmaus after His resurrection: He began with Moses and the prophets and explained what the Old Testament scriptures said about Him.

No wonder Peter could preach such a powerful message on the Day of Pentecost. Peter was not uneducated and ignorant. He had been educated in the Scripture and ministry for three years by Jesus himself.

When the writers of the New Testament are reviewed, it is evident how important training is to God—He chose mostly men who had been educated by Jesus or had been educated in the Scriptures—like Paul—to write the New Testament books.

Just as training for ministry was important in the days of Jesus, education is still meaningful for a healthy, growing ministry. According to *Like a Mighty Army* (page 136), in its early, formative years, the founding leaders in the Church of God “placed a premium on an educated ministry by establishing the Bible Training School” (BTS). Many of its ensuing leaders—men like J. Herbert Walker, Zeno Tharp, and Charles Conn—were trained

in the faith and ministry. Paul H. Walker was another leader of distinction who was trained. Brother Walker left the plains of North Dakota to attend the Bible Training School so that he would be better prepared to fulfill the divine call upon his life. And he certainly was better prepared. For example, he planted many churches in the Delmarva-DC region and the Dakotas that became solid churches and that produced fruitful leaders in the Church of God. He also assisted in starting two training schools—Northwest Bible College and the International Bible College—because he knew the value of training ministers for ministry.

God blesses people who desire Him. This is evident in the Azusa Street Revival. People came to the revival hungry for a deep relationship with God. Many were filled with His Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. With much zeal, they left Azusa Street for countries where they did not know the language, believing that they would be given the language supernaturally. When they arrived, they were sadly disappointed, because the language of the people was not automatically given to them. Although God blesses His people, He does not expect the blessing to be a substitute for preparation in ministry.

God takes note of those who study His Word. The Church of God was established because Richard Spurling did a two-year study of Scripture and church history in quest for a revival of churches. William Seymour endured humiliation due to degrading civil laws, because he wanted to attend Bible school. And God used William Seymour to begin what is now known as the Azusa Street Revival.

WITH MUCH ZEAL, THEY LEFT AZUSA STREET FOR COUNTRIES WHERE THEY DID NOT KNOW THE LANGUAGE, BELIEVING THAT THEY WOULD BE GIVEN THE LANGUAGE SUPERNATURALLY. WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY WERE SADLY DISAPPOINTED, BECAUSE THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE WAS NOT AUTOMATICALLY GIVEN TO THEM. ALTHOUGH GOD BLESSES HIS PEOPLE, **HE DOES NOT EXPECT THE BLESSING TO BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR PREPARATION** IN MINISTRY.

How reasonable it is to see the value of study and training. Because these men devoted themselves to the study of Scripture and God's acts in history, God could use them as leaders in the modern-day Pentecostal outpouring. When individuals like Spurling and Seymour prepare themselves for ministry, God can do amazing achievements through them, like building a worldwide movement known as the Church of God.

The Church of God has provided training for you through the Church of God School of Ministry. You can obtain training in Bible, doctrine, and ministry through the Certificate In Ministerial Studies (CIMS). You can find information about the CIMS program at www.cogdoe.org. ■

Donald G. Bennett is coordinator of MDSOM (Ministerial Development/School of Ministry)



by LORNA GOSNELL

Women's Discipleship Launches OPERATION FREEDOM

THE CHURCH OF GOD must regain its prophetic voice and speak to the social ills of our day, such as abortion, pornography, human trafficking, and the sexual exploitation of children. While we often are insulated from the harsh reality of the exploitation that exists outside the protecting walls of our churches, consider these shocking statistics:

- Some 300,000 children in the United States are at risk every year for commercial sexual exploitation (U.S. Department of Justice).
- Some 600,000–800,000 people are bought and sold across international borders each year; 50 percent are children and most are female. The majority of these victims are forced into the commercial sex trade (U.S. Department of State, 2004, Trafficking in Persons Report, Washington, D.C.).

Human trafficking and sexual slavery have created bondage for many children who have been kidnapped, abandoned, and raised without hope. Jesus said, “He has sent Me to

proclaim release to the captives . . . to set free those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18 NASB).

Sandra Kay Williams, International Women’s Ministry president, and Lorna V. Gosnell, International Women’s Discipleship coordinator, have teamed together to raise awareness of and rescue servant children in Haiti. An estimated 300,000 children in Haiti live as unpaid domestic servants. They are called *restaveks*. *Restavek* is a Creole term which literally means “stay with.” It refers to a child, most often from a poor family in the country who is sent to “stay with” another family in the city. The understanding is that the child will help around the house in exchange for food, shelter, and the rare privilege of going to school. The biological parents hope their child will find a better life in the city. But this better life is seldom a reality. Instead, a child in *restavek* faces not just an enormous workload, but isolation from family and friends, abuse, and, in many cases, a total loss of hope.

For the 2012–2014 Assembly period, Women’s Discipleship has set a goal of raising \$500,000 for Operation Freedom: Rescuing Servant Children in Haiti. Your donations will provide funds for the following . . .

- Transitional Home in Port Salut
- Generator for the Transitional Home

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HAITI LIVE AS
UNPAID DOMESTIC
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Rescuing Servant Children in Haiti

Our Goal \$500,000

The Project Needs
 Transitional (Safe) House in Port Salut*
 Generator for Transitional Home
 Furnishings for Transitional Home
 Van for transporting children
 Care of children**

Stand Up for Freedom
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 Walk/Run for Freedom

*The transitional home is for housing those children that are in danger and in the most critical condition.

**It takes \$10000 per year for the care of 12 children (which provides food, clothing, housing, medical and dental care, school tuition, and staff personnel).

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Contact your state/regional Women's Discipleship Director for more information.

- Furnishings for the Transitional Home
- Van to transport children
- Care of children. It takes \$150,000 per year for the care of 12 children (which provides food, clothing, housing, medical care, school tuition, and staff personnel.)

No amount is too small. Please give to OPERATION FREEDOM: Rescuing Servant Children in Haiti. Send monies through . . .

- Your local Church of God women’s group.
- State/regional Women’s Discipleship office.
- International Women’s Discipleship, P.O. Box 2430, Cleveland, TN 37320-2430.
- www.womenofpowercog.org.

Be sure to specify that your contribution is to be credited to OPERATION FREEDOM (project # 020-8098) a Church of God Women’s Discipleship/ Women With a Mission (WWAM) project. ■

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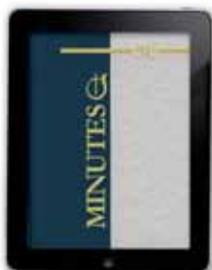
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STAY ON THE JOURNEY

by CRAIG MOSGROVE

DON'T GET OFF the journey." Those words were like honey to my lips when I heard them in Cavite, Philippines. As I was standing in service that night, Planetshakers were leading in worship, and Brother Billy Wilson asked me if he could pray for me for a moment. As he laid his hands on me, the Lord used him in a mighty way to prophetically speak into my life and future. The Lord was saying to me, "Don't get off the journey. Stay on the journey. Don't try to hurry it. The Lord will take you places you have never dreamed of." Praise God! God has me on a journey that He will lead. I have no need to fret.

What simple words. But at the time, they were *thema* to me. As I ended my week in the Philippines this last July, I was about to start the 24-hour trek back home to Cleveland, Tennessee. This was my *intended* travel itinerary, my 24-hour journey, if you will: Manila, Philippines, to Tokyo, Japan; Tokyo, Japan, to Detroit, Michigan; Detroit, Michigan,

to Chattanooga, Tennessee (not Atlanta, Georgia). After a week of such refreshing, I could do nothing other than praise God on my flight from Manila to Tokyo. I arrived in Tokyo, grabbed a Starbucks, and then boarded the 13-hour flight to Detroit. As anyone over six feet tall would do, I spent most of that flight standing near the bathroom. My legs are just not cut out for those small seat spaces. By the time I arrived in Detroit, I was worn out because I did not sleep the night before I boarded the plane (so I was going on about 20 hours of no sleep). It was 12:00 noon in Detroit, and my scheduled flight leaving for Chattanooga was not until 7:30 p.m. that evening. It was scheduled to arrive in Chattanooga at 9:50 p.m. Surely there had to be an earlier flight leaving for Atlanta, Georgia, and then I could catch a flight from Atlanta to Chattanooga and get there way before my flight from Detroit would get me there.

Then the *bright* idea hit me: I will go to the Delta desk and see if they can reroute me to

Atlanta ASAP, and then I can fly from Atlanta to Chattanooga and be home to see my wife and son much sooner than scheduled. So, I approached the Delta desk. Bingo! There was a flight leaving Detroit to Atlanta at 1:30 p.m. I would make it to Atlanta by 4:10 p.m., leave Atlanta at 4:45 p.m. and be home in Chattanooga by 5:30 p.m. I had figured it out. I had managed a way to hurry the journey.

By the time the plane for Atlanta got into the air, I was already fast asleep. Next thing I knew, I woke up, and the pilot said that we had been delayed to land in Atlanta because of a storm. We would be arriving 45 minutes late. I looked down at my watch. It was already 4:45. NO! I had already missed my flight to Chattanooga. Once we landed, the Atlanta airport was more packed than I had ever seen it. I was placed on a waiting list for Chattanooga, and then I received the much dreaded information for someone who had already been traveling now for about 22 hours. I would have to wait until the next morning to catch a flight to Chattanooga. Frustrated and without even a thought about God, I grabbed my carry-on items and began walking out of the airport to catch a shuttle from Atlanta to Chattanooga. I didn't even care if I left my checked luggage behind. I would figure that out later. The two-hour packed shuttle ride would be way better than spending the night in the airport. I had caused myself an absolute headache by switching and alternating my scheduled route.

As I was walking through the packed concourse, the Spirit of the Lord whispered into my heart as clear as day, "What did I tell you this week in the Philippines? Don't get off the journey. Stay on the journey. Don't hurry the journey."

The people around me probably thought I was crazy. I was almost moved to tears. I had caused myself unnecessary pain and headaches all because I attempted to speed up the journey. My impatience had created a mess.

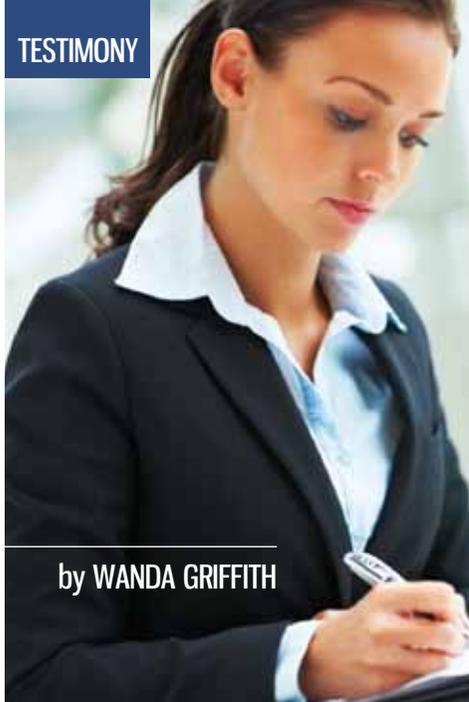
I loaded the shuttle and took the two-hour ride to Chattanooga. When I arrived there, my wife picked me up, and I sat down in the passenger seat. We pulled out of the shuttle station, and I glanced at the clock on her dashboard. It read 9:51 p.m. I had indeed arrived in Chattanooga at the exact same time I would have arrived if I had waited in Detroit for my flight.

It was the same destination and the same arrival time. What was the difference? The difference was pain and an unnecessary mess, all because I tried to speed up the plan.

God will get you where you need to be and when you need to be there, if you allow Him. God will always give His best to us when we leave the choice up to Him. "But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him" (Jeremiah 18:4 NIV 1984).

Stay on the journey. Be patient. He who promised is faithful. We serve a God who is able to form you to become what He has already called you to do. He doesn't wait for you to become proficient before He calls you to a task. The reason God can do it and we can't is because if God calls you to do something, He has the power to form you to whatever He calls you, no matter what you are! You must stay on the journey! ■

Craig Mosgrove is pastor of student ministries at the North Cleveland Church of God.



by WANDA GRIFFITH

WORK IS A CALLING

A CALLING . . . a designation reserved exclusively for ministers and missionaries? None of us deny that Billy Graham and Mother Teresa were called before they began their ministries in evangelism and serving the sick and poor (in Mother Teresa's case). At one time, I thought you had to have a "burning bush" or "Damascus-road experience" to receive a call from God. Not so. Although many experience dramatic callings (maybe not as dramatic as the biblical examples we know), most people do not. Does this mean we are not called? Absolutely not!

While I was struggling with finding my calling, God spoke to me through His Word: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23 NIV 1984). "Whatever you do" includes everything from homemaking to teaching, to keeping books, to writing. To confirm my calling, God spoke through a

friend who phoned me late one evening and said, "There's a scripture in the Old Testament I believe the Lord wants me to share with you."

As I was turning in my Bible to Jeremiah, I thought, *Jeremiah was the weeping prophet who spoke words of doom and gloom to God's people. I don't need that. What I need is hope!* And the message I received was certainly one of hope:

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (29:1113 NIV 1984).

To accept your work (whatever you do) as a calling is to receive a sense of purpose that brings a new passion not known before. It's *still* work, but work that is more fulfilling and meaningful.

Four characteristics usually accompany a divine calling.

1. *A calling is distinctive—unique to each individual.* So don't wait for the blinding light to bring you to your knees. God speaks to us in different ways, but most often He speaks through His Word. In our quiet times of personal meditation and devotion, the important

thing is to know ourselves as God knows us. Usually, our desires follow our gifts and talents, but we have the responsibility to develop and hone the skills associated with the gifts He gives. The temptation is to look at others and mimic their ministries. Just because certain things work for them does not mean they will work for you and me. God sees us as individuals—not groups. That, too, is comforting, because He does not compare us to each other. We rest in the assurance that whatever God asks us to do, He also enables us to see it to completion.

2. *A calling may be difficult to fulfill.* It's frustrating if your work is not in your calling. We want to change, but sometimes this means leaving our "comfort zone" and moving into new territory. It's risky. Rather than stepping out in faith, many become discouraged and give up, settling for less than what God intended. Following our calling without fear of failure or neglect of meaningful priorities can be a challenge. Acknowledging and releasing our fears and anxieties to the Lord is the first step to freedom in walking in our calling. We can draw strength from the words of the psalmist when he prayed, "When my heart is faint and overwhelmed, lead me to the mighty, towering Rock of safety. For you are my refuge" (Psalm 61:2-3 TLB). He is our refuge—our port of security during times of discouragement when we think, *This was a mistake! How can I fulfill my calling with so many obstacles?* Again, God's Word is our source: "With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith" (2 Thessalonians 1:11 NIV 1984).

3. *A calling disturbs the devil.* There is great joy in working in your calling, but there is also great

grief. Satan will hinder in every way possible, sometimes using good people to confuse and complicate. This is when most people abandon their calling, assuming that it wasn't really God who called them. Whatever barriers or strongholds are thrown in our paths, we can overcome with diligence, hard work, and faith in the One who called us. "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house" (Hebrews 3:1-2 NIV 1984).

4. *A calling develops into great joy!* A true calling reveals its presence with enjoyment and a renewed energy—a passion that comes with doing and being what God called us to be. Again, when God calls us, He also equips us. In the film, *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Little explains to his sister *why* he must run. "God made me fast," he says, "and when I run, I feel the pleasure of God." There is no greater joy than knowing the pleasure of God. We feel His pleasure when we fulfill His calling in our lives. We read in Psalm 147 that, "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love" (v. 11 NIV 1984).

The familiar story of two bricklayers points out the difference in a job and a calling. The first bricklayer was asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm laying bricks," he replied with a cynical attitude that said, "Can't you see what I'm doing?" When the second bricklayer was asked what he was doing, he replied, "I'm building a cathedral." That's a calling!

What are you doing—just laying bricks or building a cathedral? ■

Wanda Griffith is an author and inspirational speaker. wgriffith@bellsouth.net

CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

First Quarter 2013

Headlines taken from releases on Faith News between January 1 and April 15, 2013

Event Launches READ Initiative 2013

JANUARY 1 - The start of the READ Bible reading initiative launched today as more than 100,000 people around the globe have committed together to read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in 2013.

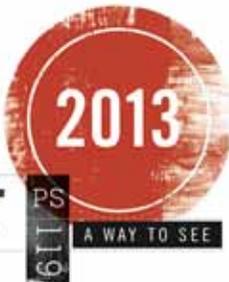
As a symbolic start to the initiative, Church of God General Overseer Dr. Mark Williams and his family kicked off a Bible reading marathon at the Church of God International Offices on January 1 at 6:00 am Eastern Standard Time (EST). Shifts will run consistently throughout this week and be broadcast via live stream on the Church of God website, www.churchofgod.org.

The READ program is free and daily scripture readings will be emailed to every participant. The daily readings are broken down into three separate scripture sections, including chronologically, the New Testament, and Psalms and Proverbs. When combined, the readings will take the reader through the Bible in 365 days.

As of January 2, 2013, 107,680 persons had signed up to participate. READ stands for Reflect, Engage, Apply and Disciple and serves as a four-word guideline for fully experiencing the scriptures.

JOURNEY THROUGH
THE BIBLE with a
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friends.

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6119 A WAY TO SEE



OURCOG Social Media Platform Launched

JANUARY 4 - A new social media platform built especially for the Church of God was officially unveiled this week. Under development for several months, www.ourcog.com is a cutting-edge platform that seeks to address the ever-growing popularity and diversity of social media. While the Church of God has had a presence on the most popular sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, this new platform goes beyond conventional social media.

The new site contains three primary areas: Explore, Learn, and Discuss. Explore is a condensed version of information that is contained more fully at the Church of God website, www.churchofgod.org. Learn invites anyone to post articles and blogs pertinent to ministry, while Discuss encourages the startup and continuation of conversations on virtually any topic.

Lee University Choir Performs at Inauguration

JANUARY 21 - The 200-voice Lee University Festival Choir performed before an international

audience at the inauguration of the President of the United States. The choir's performance came following an invitation from Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), who came to the Lee University campus four days prior to the November 6 election to invite the school to participate.

The choir left Lee University last Friday morning on five buses and arrived in Washington, D.C. thirteen hours later. Today the choir was featured in the pre-inaugural activities, where just after 9:30 EST, the choir took the spotlight. They sang a package of songs which included "Saints Bound for Heaven," "Hymn for America," and "Chattanooga Choo-Choo." Their performance took place from the upper portico of the Capitol, just above where the president delivered his address later that morning. Major networks and cable stations carried the Lee performance live, showing various shots of the 200-voice choir sporting matching peacoats and toboggans with "LEE" stitched on the rims.



Lee University students perform on the steps of the Capitol building.



Orlando Is Site of 2014 International General Assembly

MARCH 1 - The city of Orlando, Florida, will once again host delegates from around the globe for the biennial Church of God International General Assembly.

GA2014 will be held on July 29–August 1, 2014 at the Orange County Convention Center. This will be the third consecutive time the General Assembly has been held in Orlando and will be the 75th time the Church of God has gathered for a General Assembly.

Through the years the Church of God General Assembly has been hosted by some of the nation's largest cities, including Memphis, Dallas, Ft. Worth, San Antonio, Atlanta, Indianapolis, Kansas City and New Orleans.

Preliminary preparations are already underway for the 75th General Assembly. The Council of Eighteen will begin deliberations on a General Council agenda this fall and complete it in spring 2014 prior to a release to ordained bishops in April 2014. Announcements of special speakers and events will be announced on a website dedicated to the event to be unveiled in January 2014.

Patent Received on Second Church of God Logo

MARCH 6 – A secondary logo has been trademarked for the Church of God by the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

The official logo of the Church of God remains the recognizable cross and flame adopted in 1986, the year of the Centennial celebration of the denomination. The newly-registered logo is an alternative to the original and incorporates a “stylized globe” superimposed over the official logo.

“Ever since it was introduced about ten years ago, this secondary logo has been a widely accepted and popular version of the original,” stated General Overseer Mark Williams. “It is particularly relevant when we speak of the international reach of the Church of God and how we have a presence in nearly 180 countries around the world.”

The official registration of the logo allows local churches to incorporate the logo on anything that represents their congregation, including signs, publications and specialty items where the logo is not altered.



Fred Garmon, director of People for Care and Learning, addresses Cambodian officials, while General Overseer Mark Williams looks on.

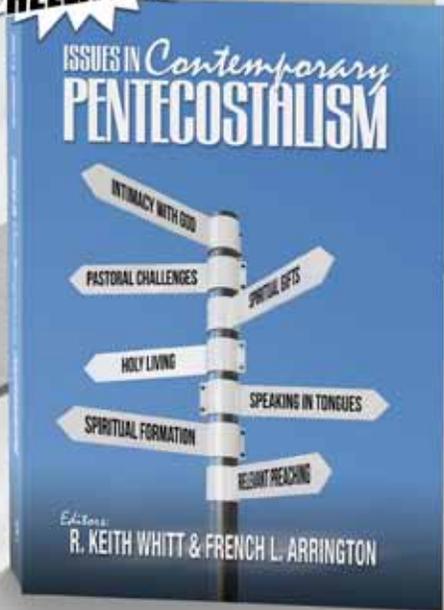
Church of God Officially Recognized in Cambodia

MARCH 16 – Church of God General Overseer Mark Williams and People for Care and Learning (PCL) Director Fred Garmon today joined the governor of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, His Excellency Kep Chuk Tema, to dedicate Phase I of the Build a City complex in a Phnom Penh suburb.

The dedication event caps a week of celebrations and history-making events during which the Cambodian government awarded the Church of God the right to be an officially recognized church in the nation. Previously, church activities were authorized under the umbrella of the Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia. Sixteen local congregations have been established recently; now that the church can own property and have additional rights, the number of churches is expected to increase.

Build A City, when completed in 2015, will provide housing for 1,500 families, as well as a school, medical clinic, marketplace, community center, park, and related facilities. The Phase I dedication marks the completion of the clinic, marketplace, installation of underground sewers and drainage, electric service, and the first seven homes.

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