

engage



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- How Big Is Your Table?
- PTSP: Post-Traumatic Stress Pastoring
- Book Review: *The Uniqueness and Danger of Ministry*

Engage Journal is published in the interest of providing contemporary aids and resources to pastors and pastoral staffs.

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General Overseer Gary Lewis and First Lady Lori Lewis help distribute Christmas gifts to children at the Church of God school in Aboud, Israel in December 2025.



From the Editor | Cameron Fisher

"Heaven Had a Good Week!"

This was a quote from Victoria Knight Eachus on January 12, 2026, at the celebration of life for her mother, Evelyn Knight. She was referring to two widows—Evelyn, and Mary Fisher—both of whom had passed away on back-to-back days the previous week. She followed up that statement stating that there were two men in Heaven rejoicing that week: Robert E. Fisher and Cecil B. Knight. Robert Fisher was my dad.

The Knight and Fisher families celebrated the lives of Evelyn and Mary, both of whom were in their 90s. Mary's funeral was January 10. These women were pillars in the Church of God and both dedicated their lives to their husbands' ministries.

What was revealed in their respective funerals was the similar ministerial and family experiences of the Knights and Fishers. Mary and Evelyn led in capacities and positions where their husbands were appointed or elected, and both were former members of the Women's Ministries Advisory Council, the prestigious group of women who lead while their husbands are members of the Executive Committee for the Church of God. Evelyn and Mary were personal friends, as were their husbands before both passed away leaving their wives with 15-plus years on their own.



L-R: Evelyn Knight, Mary Fisher

Noteworthy at both funerals were testimonials from the families and friends. The three children of Mary and four children of Evelyn all testified that perhaps their mothers' greatest legacies were their prayer lives. Both families acknowledged the void that would be felt from the loss of these prayer warriors and the realization that someone in the family would need to step into that gap.

To hear the tributes from friends and church leaders and the children praising their mothers for undying faith and love brought joy to my heart. While the Church of God knew our mothers as "Sister Knight" and "Sister Fisher," DeWayne, Delance, Vedonna, and Victoria, as well as Bob, Cameron, and Lorri have a rich legacy that will live on through Cecil and Evelyn Knight and Robert and Mary Fisher. So does the Church of God. ■

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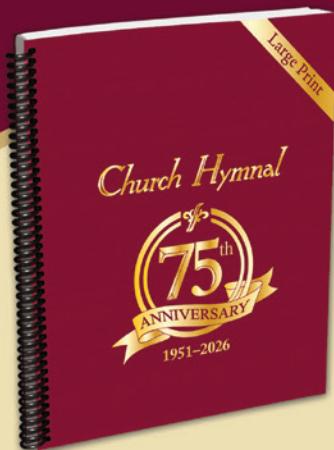


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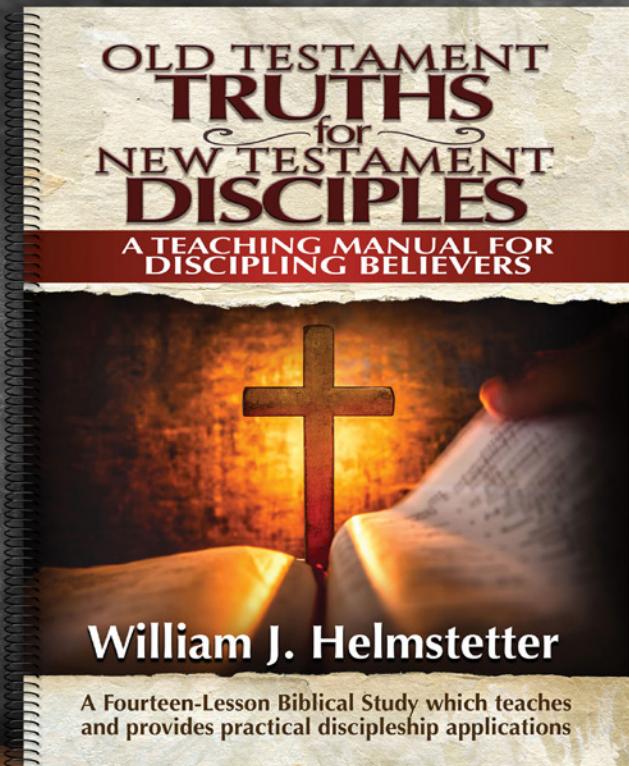
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AI and the Church: A Theology of Technology for Today's Leaders

By Gary Asuni Bobb



Creation: The First Act of Innovation

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. During this creation period, detailed in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we are blessed with a rare glimpse of God's active work. In the midst of a vast, empty void of space, God saw infinite potential; like a painter staring at a blank canvas, a potter shaping a lump of clay, or a writer contemplating a premonition with a pen in hand. This infinite potential did not stay in God's heart but instead spilled from His lips, like a battle-hardened marine deploying for

duty. Every word, every syllable, every tone and sound, was filled with creative power. "Let there be!" God spoke all that we see into existence: the unmoving, snow-capped mountains, the hills rolling like soft waves, the seas oscillating between calm and storm, the stars lighting up the night sky, and an endless sea of galaxies—all obeying God's call to be made manifest.

God's act of creation not only resulted in the vast and intricate structures mentioned earlier but also includes God's greatest creation—material creation. After creating everything, God declared, "It is good,"



but when He created mankind, He said, “It is very good.” If you’ve ever wondered what God thinks about you, He considers you very good. Go ahead and declare, “I’m God’s very good creation.” If you read further in the Bible, you’ll see that it gets even better. However, for the sake of this article, let’s move on to the second category of creation—God’s material creation. This includes sand, metals, quartz, stone, and more. These materials not only showcase God’s creativity and innovative genius but also serve as building blocks full of potential. This potential is what we now call technology.

What Is Technology?

Technology is defined as “the application of knowledge and skill to create tools, systems, and methods that extend human capacity.” This shows that technology is the answer to human limitations. To travel faster, we invented cars; to go farther, we invented planes; to communicate across long distances, we created telephones and the internet; and to escape into other worlds, we developed media like movies, video games, and books. Technology isn’t inherently evil; it’s just a tool, like a hammer. In the

hands of a reckless driver, it becomes a weapon and a projectile smashing into a windshield. In the hands of a carpenter like my father, it’s a tool that can create beauty.

The Foundation of Technology Is God

The foundation of technology is God! Let me explain. So far, we’ve explored the standard definition of technology. Let’s consider, for a moment, a biblical definition of *technology*: “Technology is the creation that results from God’s material creation being placed in the hands of His greatest creation.” When God put sand in man’s hands, man made glass. God gave us stone, and we made tools. He gave us quartz, and we made microchips and computers. God gave us metals, and we made weapons, boats, and buildings. God gave us the ability to speak, and we created language. God makes something out of nothing. We make technology out of God’s material creation. Therefore, the very foundation of technology is God. Without God first creating, not only would we not have material to create with, but we wouldn’t even have a point of reference to consider what could be possible.



The Church and Its Fear of Innovation

Technology isn't often discussed in our churches today, and when it is, it's usually surrounded by caution signs, blaring sirens, and flashing red lights. The church has a long history of demonizing things that we eventually accept. For example, in 1936, many believers were convinced that Social Security numbers were the mark of the beast. In 1980, many Christians believed credit cards were linked to the Antichrist. In 1995, many were certain cell phones were spiritually dangerous or even damnable. Just a few years ago, in 2020, similar fears were directed at the COVID vaccine. And now, once again, the church finds itself prejudging a technology that isn't new but has only recently become mainstream: AI technology.

What Exactly Is AI?

AI is short for Artificial Intelligence. It's defined as, "the development of computer systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as learning, problem-solving, and decision-making." We have been using AI technology long before it was demonized: voice assistants like Siri and Alexa;

algorithms embedded in platforms like Netflix, YouTube, and social media that recommend content we care about; our email spam filter; and our GPS maps are all examples of artificial intelligence technology we use daily. Toward the end of 2023, a new form of AI went viral and quickly gained worldwide attention. This AI technology is specifically called a Large Language Model (LLM). This type of AI led companies like OpenAI, Google, Meta, and Anthropic to release their own chatbots powered by cutting-edge AI technology.

The most popular chatbot you've probably heard of and even used is ChatGPT. This tool is like having your own private PhD-level assistant in your pocket, an expert in nearly any field. I agree it's unsettling. I agree we should be cautious. I also agree we shouldn't develop feelings for our AI chat assistants. However, we must recognize that, as advanced as AI is, it's still just technology. And as with any technology, its impact depends on who wields it. Some groups use AI harmfully as a weapon, while others advance the kingdom of God by using AI as a tool in ministry.



Ministry Tools of the Future

If you've spent any time using AI technology, you've probably noticed some benefits. AI saves time; tasks that usually take hours can be completed in minutes. It's excellent for organizing ideas after a brain dump. AI also excels at brainstorming, exploring different viewpoints on a topic, and summarizing. Instead of discarding such a powerful tool as we have done in the past and only accepting it when convenient, we should ask: How can I use AI in ministry with integrity?

Ministry is broad and can be approached in many ways. Let's focus on one main area: the sermon. A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to visit Lee University to guest lecture and participate in their annual Pentecostal Preaching Conference. During one session, I co-presented with Dr. Brian Maston, who introduced me to the "Sermon Preparation Parabola." It's a visual tool that guides preachers through the 12 stages of sermon preparation. Excited by the existence of such a tool, we asked a key question: which parts of the preaching parabola could be appropriate for AI use? We examined the chart carefully and identified five points on the parabola where AI use is acceptable. I

also want to add that when using AI for ministerial purposes, you must always exercise caution and depend primarily on the leading of the Holy Spirit as your master and guide.

Five Areas Where AI Can Assist Preachers

1. Scripture

The preacher must always pray and seek guidance from the Lord. There may be moments when the Lord provides the preacher with a sermon topic or a Bible story. AI could then be used to locate the relevant passage and cross-references.

2. Researching

AI can serve as a personal research assistant. When a preacher begins to research a specific topic, AI can help find sources that provide additional social, cultural, and even political context, further broadening the depth of our scriptural review. All information generated by AI must be verified and fact-checked using reputable sources, as is necessary when reading any online content.

3. Summarizing

This is one of the strengths of AI technology: its ability to synthesize information and even present



it in new styles that may be easier for the user to understand. For example, having AI explain the Atonement as if it were a baseball or football game. Or, in the traditional way, asking AI to explain biblical concepts as if the user were five years old.

4. Structuring

Some preachers know what God wants them to preach, but their challenge is organization. Their flow is inconsistent, and their points are scattered. AI can help develop a clear structure for the sermon. For example, the preacher could paste their version into a chatbot and have it suggest structural or flow improvements (not content changes).

5. Polishing

We've been using Microsoft Word's built-in spell check for years, and AI has elevated it further. Now, sermons can be checked for spelling and grammar mistakes within seconds. A polished sermon manuscript is now easier to use in the second main ministry area, post-sermon engagement.

A Call for Faithful Innovation

Historically, the church has lagged about a decade behind major technolo-

logical innovations and often instinctively dismisses new tech as "demons." We missed the printing press, radio, and internet. What if this time, instead of playing catch-up, we took the lead? What if, instead of being left behind, we became the pioneers again? The Creator resides in each of us. Just as God created from nothing, we can create from His material creation. AI isn't a boogeyman; it's a tool. Just as God asked Moses, "What do you have in your hand?" I believe God is asking us today, "What do you have in your hand?" God knew we would be born into such a time as this, and He has equipped us with the tools, resources, creativity, and anointing to stand firm and make a difference. Let the Lord God Almighty express every dimension of Himself through you.

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About the Author

Gary Asuni Bobb is the pastor of Kingdom Hill Church in Brooklyn, NY, an AI consultant for churches and nonprofits, and a mentor at the Paul L. Walker School of Pentecostal Preaching at Lee University. He teaches widely on

the link between faith, technology, and spiritual growth. Gary is also the founder of BibLit and Kairos AI Consulting, initiatives aimed at equipping pastors and ministry leaders for the digital age.

Resources by the Author

Asuni's Desk (YouTube)

Biblical teaching and practical insights on ministry and technology. <https://www.youtube.com/@asunibobb>

Books by Gary A. Bobb

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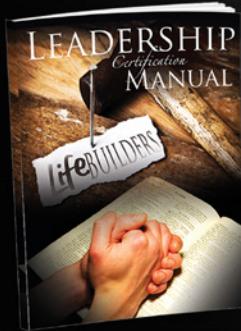
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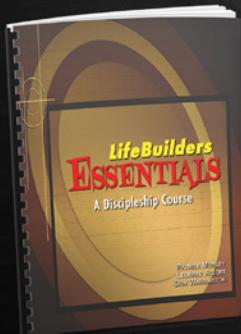
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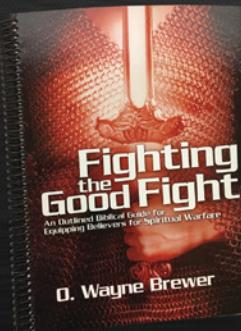
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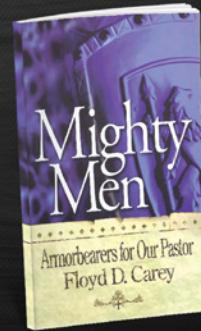
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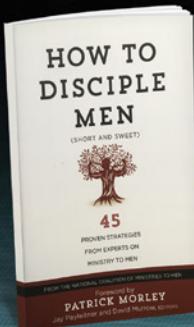


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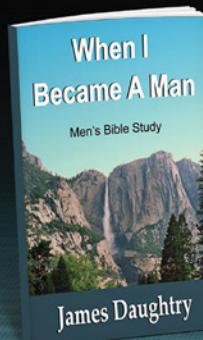
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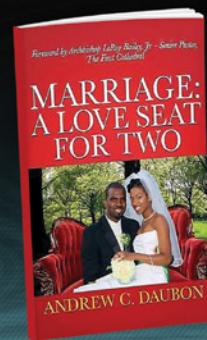
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How Big Is Your Table?

By Fijoy Johnson

"Have your breakfast all alone. Share lunch with your best friends.

Invite your enemy to dinner." — Nelson Mandela



In every culture, food is more than sustenance, it's a symbol of belonging, celebration, and connection. Whether it's a family gathering around a dinner table, a community feast, or a sacred ceremony, meals have the power to unite people across generations and backgrounds. In the life and ministry of Jesus, the table was not just a place to eat, it was a place to teach, heal, and welcome.

Jesus served his most nourishing lessons not from a pulpit, but from the table. It was around meals that he offered his richest food for the soul: grace, truth, and love. The table was his classroom, his pulpit, and his sanctuary. In fact, of the 24 parables recorded in the Gospel of Luke, more than 15—nearly 70%—feature food, meals, or hospitality as central themes.



Parables Featuring Food in Luke's Gospel

- The New Wine and Old Wine-skins (Luke 5:37–39)
- The Two Debtors (Luke 7:41–43)
- The Rich Fool (Luke 12:16–21)
- The Watchful Servants (Luke 12:35–40)
- The Faithful and Wise Manager (Luke 12:42–48)
- The Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6–9)
- The Mustard Seed (Luke 13:18–19)
- The Yeast (Luke 13:20–21)
- The Wedding Feast (Luke 14:7–14)
- The Great Banquet (Luke 14:16–24)
- The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3–7)
- The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)
- The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32)
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31)
- The Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–13)
- The Master and Servant (Luke 17:7–10)

Why the Table Matters

The table is where inclusion happens. It's where strangers become friends, and enemies become neighbors. It's where stories are shared, wounds are healed, and dignity is restored. In Luke 14, Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet, where the host invites the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—those society often overlooks. The message is clear: the Kingdom of God is a table with room for everyone.

Preparing for the New Year

As we step into the new year, a time of reflection, renewal, and fresh beginnings—let us be intentional about creating space at our table. This season offers a unique opportunity to extend grace, welcome someone who might otherwise feel isolated, and embody the radical hospitality of Jesus.

Consider the empty chair at your table. Could it be filled by someone who needs encouragement, companionship, or simply a warm meal? Could your table be a place where stories are exchanged, laughter is shared, and hope is rekindled?



Final Reflection

Creating space at the table is not just about physical food, it's about spiritual nourishment. It's about offering grace, listening deeply, and making room for transformation. When we open our tables, we open our hearts. And when we do that, we reflect the love and welcome of Christ.

Nelson Mandela's words offer a profound reflection on the power of the table to transform relationships. Breakfast alone symbolizes solitude and self-reflection—a time to center oneself. Lunch with friends represents comfort, trust, and shared joy. But dinner with an enemy? That's where the real work of reconciliation begins.

Inviting someone who has hurt or opposed us to share a meal is a radical act of grace. It breaks down walls, disarms hostility, and opens the door to understanding. Jesus modeled this kind of hospitality throughout his ministry, dining with tax collectors, sinners, and even those who would betray him. The table became a place not just of nourishment, but of healing and restoration.

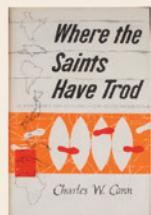
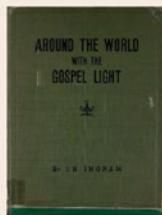
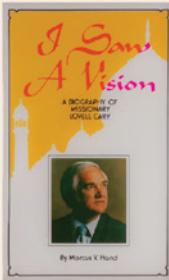
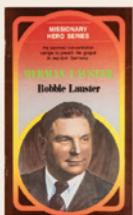
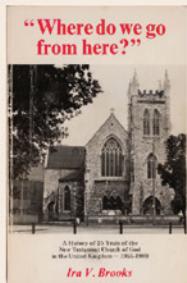
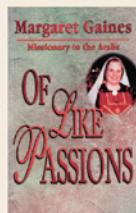
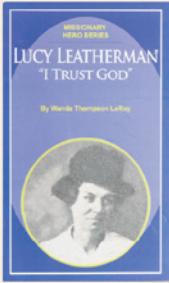
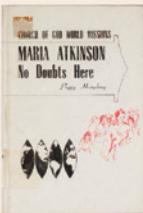
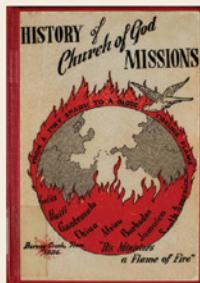
In a world fractured by division, the simple act of sharing a meal can be revolutionary. It says, "You matter. You are welcome. There is space for you here." As we begin a new year, let us commit to expanding our tables to include not only the lonely and the marginalized, but also those we struggle to love. Because when we do, we mirror the heart of God—a heart that always makes room for reconciliation.

So again, I ask: How big is your table? Is it big enough for the broken? For the seeker? For the stranger? In the new year, may our tables be places of healing, hope, and hospitality. Because the bigger our table, the closer we come to the heart of God. ■

Fijoy L. Johnson, D.Min., serves as Director of Church Relations at Lee University and Director of Intercultural Ministries for the Church of God International Offices.

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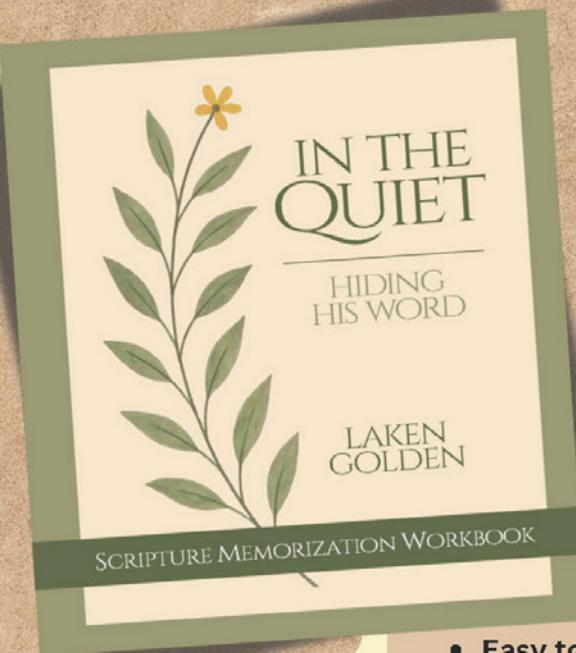


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WHAT DO WE DO? / ¿QUÉ HACEMOS?

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PTSP: Post-Traumatic Stress Pastoring

By Steve Hall



In your pastorate, have you ever experienced the shock and trauma of being blindsided by parishioners who were covertly undermining the very ministry they were overtly supporting? In other words, have you ever been stabbed in the back by the same person or people you've dedicated your life to serving? After discovering this betrayal and other similar events, did the cumulative traumatic experience(s) induce fear and helplessness? Did you begin to isolate yourself emotionally and avoid relational connections with church folks? Did you become emotionally numb and persistently hyper-vigilant to prevent recurrent negative feelings? Has your sleep, concentration, eating, or mood

been affected? Finally, upon hearing about this traumatic experience, did your spouse develop similar vicarious symptoms immediately or eventually?

I've experienced this firsthand and heard many pastors recount attacks from the very people they've sacrificed for and dedicated their lives to serve and bless—like Pastor Dan, who trusted a seemingly spiritual and supportive elder in the church. However, after several years of supporting the elder and personally opening himself to him, Pastor Dan discovered that the elder was secretly sowing dissension among the church leadership and building support for launching his own church.

What about Pastor Alex and his wife, befriended by a church leadership couple? Over time, Alex and his wife came to believe that this couple was more than just a typical parishioner; they were true friends whose relationship transcended the usual pastor/parishioner type. However, in a single moment during a church leadership



meeting, the couple turned on Alex, exposing privately confessed struggles and raising suspicions of financial malfeasance. In the ensuing months, the couple successfully split the church and took over half the congregation to their new worship place.

Suppose this describes some traumatic encounters you've experienced throughout your pastoral career. In that case, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders* indicates you satisfy the clinical diagnosis criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)¹. Surprised? I'm not. During thirty-eight years of ministry, I've experienced dozens of these traumatic encounters and listened to many pastoral colleagues describe similar traumas and the resulting symptoms. In a recent pastor's small group setting, I witnessed the accumulation of personal and collegial ministry trauma reach a critical mass. While the connection may seem extreme, as a psychotherapist and pastor, it dawned on me that ministry, like guerrilla warfare in actual war, can result in something similar to clinical PTSD, i.e., Post-Traumatic Stress Pastoring (PTSP).² As in guerrilla

warfare, you can't protect yourself if you can't discern the enemy. The invisible but increasing stress and personal toll of ministry often lead to deep discouragement, diminishing vocational satisfaction, and moral failure.³

These all-too-familiar traumatic experiences, resulting in the buildup of toxic stress over time, debilitate ministers with symptoms similar to clinical PTSD, yet it's better termed PTSP. Many pastors and ministry spouses reported to me suffering symptoms from PTSP, such as losing sleep by reliving the traumatic encounters in dreams or waking up panicked in the middle of the night with a genuine sense that it will happen again. By the same self-report, pastors believe they could suffer a ministry mugging on any Sunday, threatening their career and fiscal security. "Walking on eggshells," "gun-shy," and "hyper-vigilant" are how many pastors commonly characterize their ministry.

I am not suggesting that churches are filled with psychopathic Christians bent on destroying the pastor's health and wellbeing. I am suggesting,

¹ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders 4TR, 424.

² Alloy, Acocella, Bootzin, Richard, *Abnormal Psychology*, 159.

³ Muse, Love, Christensen. *Intensive Out-Patient Therapy for Clergy Burnout*. 55: 147-158.



however, that churches are full of what Marshall Shelley calls “well-intentioned dragons,” who consistently cause a unique type of vocational trauma.”⁴ Furthermore, Sam Chand, in his excellent book, *Leadership Pain*, makes this statement: “I know one thing about your church. I may have never set foot on your campus, but this one thing I know: at least 10 percent of your congregation are devils.”⁵ To which all ministers respond, “Duh!”

Compounding this unique ministry trauma is the reality that pastors are frequently first responders regarding emotionally jolting events in the lives of their parishioners, even those who are devils. These events include death, emergency room visits, phone calls from hysterical spouses after discovering an affair, stillbirths, miscarriages, house fires, arrests, domestic abuse, etc. Every frantic phone call is personal to the pastor. No wonder pastors eventually exhibit symptoms of clinical PTSD, as in cued panic when the phone rings at unusual times or when they see a teary-eyed parishioner approaching quickly from across the sanctuary. Mental health clinicians

call these events internal and external cues of trauma response. Could the unusual call or the fast-approaching parishioner mean another death, injury, or tragedy in one of the pastor’s beloved flock, which they shepherd?

There is no psychological or emotional distance for the pastor from those they respond to; it’s always personal, unlike the community-service first responders. For example, when called to the scene of a suicide, what police officer expects to find a person to whom they’re relationally connected? And then have to comfort the family? And then help the family plan for the funeral? And then officiate the funeral? And then follow up months later with prayer and counsel and help sort through the after-death details? And do this for multiple families at a time without end, year after year. No classic first responder, like a police officer or firefighter, experiences the depth of sustained personal loss and responsibility that a pastor does.

A career-long accumulation of what some psychologists term secondary or vicarious stress depletes a pastor’s

⁴ Shelley, *Well-Intentioned Dragons*, 12.

⁵ Chand, *Leadership Pain*, 33.



resilience and makes him more susceptible to PTSD-like symptoms.⁶ Moreover, pastors have little or no training in mitigating the effects of secondary stress as counselors, police, and firefighters do, exacerbating the problem and often resulting in compassion fatigue.⁷ For example, I've never talked to a pastor who said they took a seminary course in self-care related to first-responder trauma, let alone the trauma experienced at the hands of devilish parishioners while engaged in ministry. In contrast, first responders like police or firefighters naturally develop psychological and emotional distance because the people they respond to are personally unrelated. But again, for the pastor, it's all personal, a perpetual trauma intrinsic to professional ministry. Imagine an electric piano sustain pedal stuck, blaring a single, sustained, traumatic note of collective pain. This illustration may seem dramatic, but my counseling of ministers and professional research provide the evidence and experience that this characterization is all too common.

If any of this resonates with you as a professional minister, you're doing nothing wrong. The uniqueness

and danger of ministry are inherent to the profession. The potential for suffering from PTSP cannot be eliminated. The chronic stress of ministry cannot be eradicated. However, it can be managed effectively.

For a comprehensive look at the risks related to professional ministry, check out my upcoming book, *The Uniqueness and Danger of Ministry: A Survival Guide for the Minister and Their Family*, from Wipf & Stock Publishers, this winter or spring 2026. In the meantime, visit www.ministryoasis.com for a wide variety of free resources on ministerial soul health. ■

Dr. Steve Hall is Associate Professor of Pastoral Ministry at Lee University and Executive Director of Ministry Oasis.



www.ministryoasis.com

⁶ Benuto, Secondary traumatic stress among victim advocates. Vol 15(5), Sep 2018. pp. 494-509.

⁷ Gerander. Compassion Fatigue: A Problem for Pastors. 30 no 4, 19-26.

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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 in 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.
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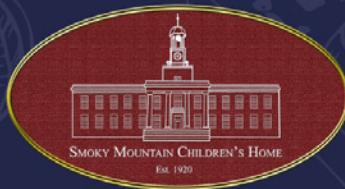
in la inspiración verbal de la Biblia.
en un Dios que existe eternamente en tres personas, a saber:
el Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo.
Jesucristo es el ungimiento del Padre, concebido del
Espíritu Santo y nacido de la virgen María. Que fue
nacido, sepultado y resucitado de entre los muertos. Que fue
ascendido al cielo y está hoy a la diestra del Padre como
uestro Intercessor.
nos todos han pecado y han sido destinados de la gloria de
Dios, y que el arrepentimiento es ordenado por Dios para
nos y necesario para el perdón de los pecados.
que la justificación, la regeneración y el nuevo nacimiento
se efectúan por fe en la sangre de Jesucristo.
en la santificación, siguiente al nacimiento, por fe en
la sangre de Jesucristo, por medio de la Palabra y por el
espíritu Santo.
la santidad es la norma de vida
y el bautismo con el Espíritu Santo
limpia el corazón
y habla en otras lenguas, como
el ruso, lo cual es la evidencia
del Espíritu Santo.
el bautismo en agua por el
arrepentimiento deben ser bautizados
el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo.
la santidad divina es probada
en la cena del Señor y el Espíritu Santo.
la segunda venida de
nuestro Señor y el Espíritu Santo
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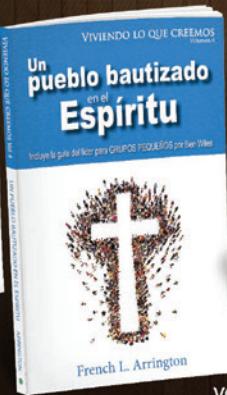
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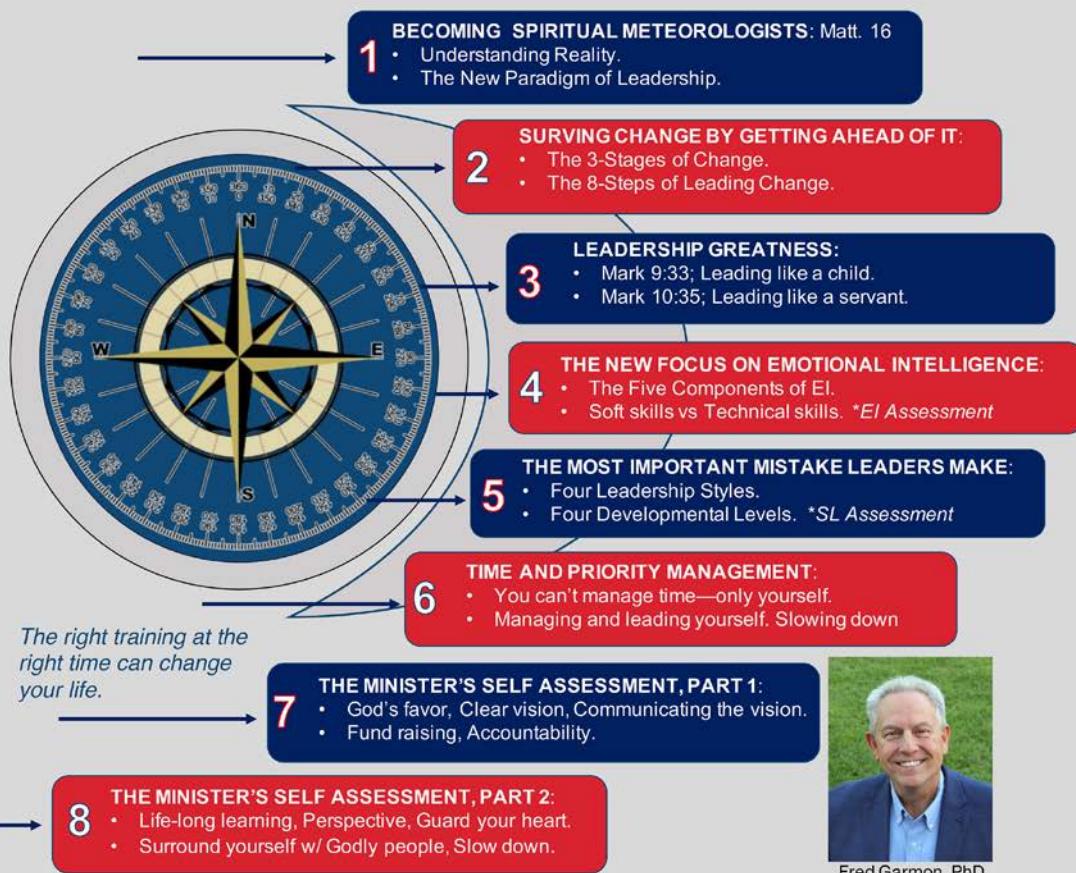
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FORGOTTEN?

By Rev. Jerry L. Rogers Ph.D.



The pain and sadness I heard in her voice, the tears I saw gently falling from her eyes, and the firm grasp of her hands on mine told me a story that needed no words to be understood. A forgotten soul, yet not, but certainly a sister in Christ headed toward becoming a stranger in her own church after being an active member and lay minister in her congregation for many years.

This story is not new. But it is playing out more often as “Baby-Boomers” continue to age, changing not only society in general, but the church specifically. As this group of approximately 77 million people gets older, with about 10,000 reaching age 65 each day, and every day for the next 19 years, the demographics of society and churches can do nothing

but change. If you are a minister or lay leader within the church and do not see what is occurring within your own congregation, I challenge you to stop and take an inventory of people that you have not seen or heard much about during the past year or two and then begin a follow-up to find them. I believe you may find that as sad as it may be, many people who are *missing* have become a victim of falling through the cracks. Oddly, the very people who are now finding themselves in need of support from the church are those who used to be in the church as lay leaders or ministers who would have given that support. However, they have quietly faded from view and not thought of at a level that causes someone concern. There is a saying I have heard all my life that



goes, “Out of sight, out of mind,” but unfortunately for many former dedicated laity and ministers, they now find themselves, out of sight and out of mind within their own church.

How Is this Happening?

Maybe it is because of the assumption that the person would *always be there*, since they were usually working behind the scenes, out of the *limelight*, where NOT being seen is *normal*. Maybe it is that ageism has played a role in becoming forgotten. Maybe the person has become less in the forefront of the congregation because of becoming older and not being as active in many roles as when they were younger, and they have simply *blended into the surroundings*. I can only begin to surmise the varied and valid reasons that could cause a person to become one of the *forgotten*. However, it is happening. The real concern is what does the body of Christ, and more specifically, local congregations, do to catch these who are falling through the cracks? How do we rescue those who have already fallen through?

Some Thoughts and Suggestions

- 1) Review with current staff the names of people who they have not seen for a while.

- 2) Look back at various outreach-es, ministries, or classes that used to be a regular part of your congregation but are no longer being done or taught, and find out if it is because the person or persons doing them are no longer regulars, or have left due to the little and infrequently talk-ed about, “ministry burnout?”
- 3) If it is burnout, realize that the person admitting they have simply had enough for a while is difficult, and that actually telling others could make the person feel as if others will find them weak in their faith, and maybe unable to even do as they have taught others to do—making them feel like a hypocrite. Consider offering pastoral or professional coun-seling from any workers that may be a part of the staff to help bring restoration of purpose, and if need be—the soul.
- 4) Don’t depend on the visitation team of the local congregation to be aware of the missing. The visitation teams at most congregations have enough work to do visiting the sick and shut-ins as well as the newcomers to



the congregation to take on the added responsibility of keeping track of the various lay ministries and their workers.

5) Realize that many of the missing probably have not contacted anyone in the local congregation for help because of embarrassment. To someone who is used to giving of themselves and their calling or ministry, admitting to having needs, even needs that fellow congregants would or could meet, is not an easy thing to do. The person has been so used to giving, receiving is not an easy thing to do, and can become humiliating to the level of the person choosing to walk away from the congregation and go elsewhere, before asking for help from those they have served.

6) Don't rely on looking at tithe or records alone to find the missing. Those who have been dedicated to the church and its service for many years are probably still very supportive in tithe and offerings to the local church thereby making their name active in the minds of many but have not been at a service for months, or perhaps years.

7) Have regular staff meetings where all who are involved in ministry of the local church can meet with the pastor and other leaders where ideas, dreams, goals, and problems can be discussed and resolved by those who may be struggling in their place of service to the church.

8) If you become aware of someone who is *missing*, reach out to them as well as notify the appropriate church staff to let them know.

There is usually not one simple fix for the problem of dedicated people suddenly disappearing from a congregation where they have served for a long time. The suggestions made above are only intended to help us as the body of Christ to begin the process of identifying and bringing restoration and support to them. Perhaps taking up the torch they carried that brought light to our path is an alternative so that the path can remain lit for others who will be following behind us on their walk with Christ. ■

Dr. Jerry L. Rogers is Care and Counseling Minister at the Stratford Heights Church of God in Middletown, Ohio.

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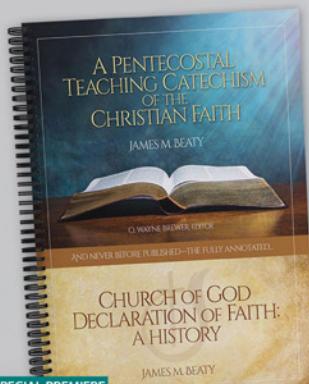
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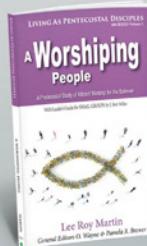
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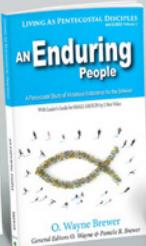
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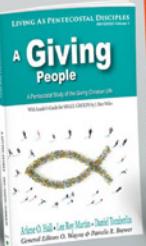
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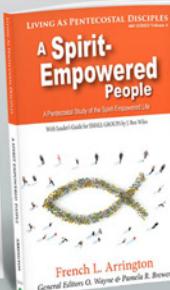
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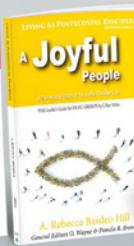
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The Role of the Federal Reserve



Over the years, many have questioned the role and the responsibilities of the Federal Reserve. That role is particularly questioned when it comes to the overall economy of the United States. The Federal Reserve, (often called the Fed), is the central bank of our country. It plays a major role in the monetary policy of the US, as well as in our country's financial stability.

If you ask the average person on the street what the role of the Federal Reserve is in our economy, they will most likely state that it is to set interest rates. That response is partially true in that the Federal Reserve sets short-term borrowing rates through what is called the Federal Open Market Committee. However, long-term interest rates, such as home mortgage rates, are not set by the Federal Reserve,

but rather those long-term rates are based upon market conditions tied to 10-year Treasury notes.

Established in 1913, the Federal Reserve is not simply one bank, but it is a series of banks located geographically in 12 different regions (or districts) of the country. The board of the Federal Reserve consists of seven governors who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. In addition, each of the presidents of the different districts are a part of the leadership system of the Federal Reserve. On the board of governors, there is an appointed chairman and vice chairman.

In their day-to-day responsibilities, the Federal Reserve banking system serves as the oversight entity to local banks within its region, basically becoming the



“banker’s bank.” The Reserve Banks store currency and coins, process checks and electronic payments and supervise the commercial banks in their region. The Reserve Banks also do extensive economic research in their region, and that research plays a major role in decisions made by the Federal Open Market Committee about raising or lowering interest rates.

The Federal Open Market Committee, the entity that sets short-term interest rates, is made up of the seven members from the board of governors, along with five other presidents from the regional Federal Reserve Banks who serve on a rotating basis. The Federal Open Market Committee, or FOMC, meets typically eight times a year to consider monetary policy and modifications to short-term interest rates.

In very simplified terms, inflation occurs when too many dollars are chasing too few goods. For example, if borrowing costs are low and the economy is full of money, suppliers of goods have a free range at raising prices because the buyers of those goods are willing to pay more to get the items that they want, whether it is an automobile, groceries, or items of clothing.

During times of high inflation, as we experienced following the pandemic in 2020, the Federal Reserve used their authority to raise interest rates to take liquidity out of the money supply in the hopes of bringing inflation down.

During that time, the monthly inflation rate exceeded 9%.

Over a two-year period following the pandemic, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates almost a dozen times. Four of those increases were by three-quarters of a point (.75%). Only five times in the history of the Federal Reserve have rates been increased by three-quarters of a point - and four of those came during that cycle following the pandemic.

Generally, following such a massive increase, or conversely following a huge decrease in rates, the economy struggles to stay out of a recession. However, the extensive economic and financial data collected by the Federal Reserve system hopefully is helpful to the Fed in fending off a recession or a severe economic downturn.

So, while there are often many questions about the actions, policies, and even the secrecy of the Federal Reserve, it simply is the banker’s bank, given authority by Congress to help set, change, and police the monetary policies of our country. ■

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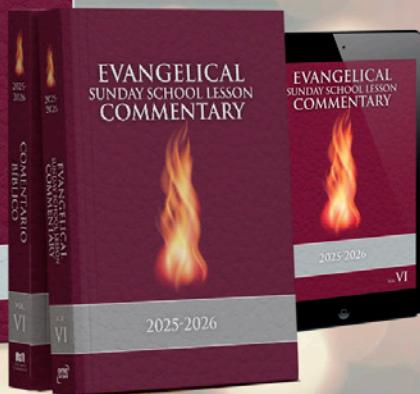
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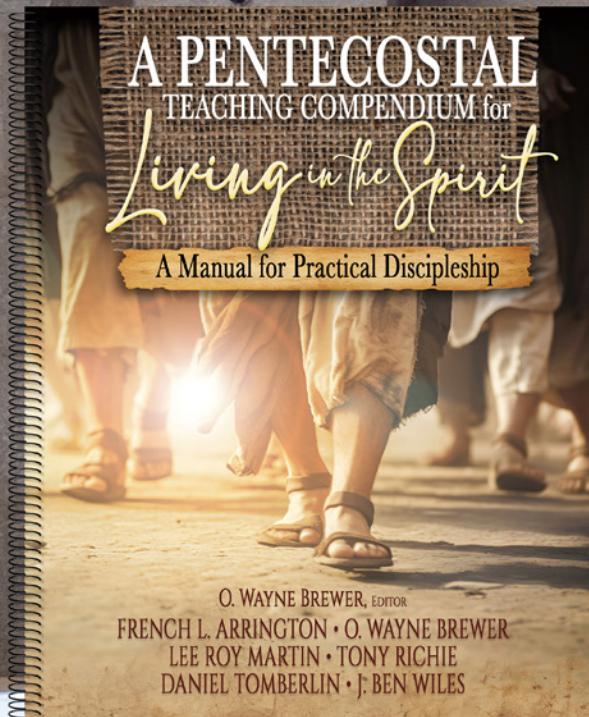


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DENNIS WATKINS

Church Safety/Security —A Revisit

I have written about the topic of church safety/security in past articles, but unfortunately, we have now entered into a new phase regarding this topic. Prior to the pandemic years, there was much activity involving this subject. Since that time, however, I believe that we are in a new era of safety/security threats. I have observed new challenges found in these potential threats. Further, it seems that the types of persons carrying out safety/security threats against churches have evolved into more radicalized individuals. This recent increase in active shooter situations at churches and schools requires a renewed look at this topic.

TWO ARTICLES

Upon reexamining this topic, I have secured articles from two experts who deal with church safety/security daily. Please note that the intended recipients of the material in these articles are church pastors and administrators. Also note that these materials



are as important to smaller churches as to larger churches.

The first article I am offering to you is from Mr. Timothy Miller, a well-known author and trainer in this field. Mr. Miller is a 30-year veteran of law enforcement and the military, and a former Special Agent for the Secret Service. Through his consulting company, Lion Heart International Services Group, Mr. Miller provides security and protection consultation to businesses and churches nationwide. He carries a special burden to serve churches and ministries in this field and has led many training seminars on this topic across the country.

In his training, Mr. Miller is very keen on seeing church safety/security



approached from the standpoint of ministry. For that reason, he emphasizes finding the right persons who can lead the safety/security team from this vantage point. Also, Mr. Miller focuses on the concept that fear cannot be the basis of our approach to this subject. Proper preparedness and execution of a strategic plan for each church is a highlighted portion of his training. He constantly emphasizes the importance of team, training, and technology. You will find his article to be extremely practical and problem-solving.

The next article I am offering to you is a threat-assessment article by Mr. Ed Monk, with Last Resort Training and Consulting. Mr. Monk is a graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point and is a retired Army officer. He has also worked in law enforcement and has focused on training for the prevention of active shooter threats for over 16 years.

Mr. Monk approaches this topic through a factual and blunt assessment of the need for on-site preparedness at every church, regardless of its size. He utilizes statistics to demonstrate the necessity of immediately thwarting a shooter's plan.

CONCLUSION

My purpose in providing these materials is to offer two different viewpoints on church safety/security. Another purpose in providing these materials is hopefully to equip churches of any size with adequate safety/security material. I have found that many of our larger churches have the means and resources to hire and maintain relatively large safety/security personnel teams. Smaller churches or churches that are not in larger metropolitan areas might not have similar resources. I would hope that every church would have at least some form of properly-trained persons, with the best available technology, who can serve their church from the standpoint of ministry. I hope that these articles will assist you in this regard.

The articles referenced above are on the pages following this article. ■

Dennis Watkins is the legal counsel for 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. Special thanks go out to Lauren Conant, Caroline Johnson, and Tatum Price for their collaboration on this article.



ARTICLE I



Faith-Based Security Leadership: Best Practices for Safer Churches

A Church of God Practical Guide for Security Preparedness for Small Congregations

Purpose

This guide is written to help Church of God pastors and leaders strengthen the safety and resilience of their congregations without allowing fear to lead. By focusing on balanced, biblically grounded preparation, even small churches can protect their members and maintain peace during emergencies.

1. Wisdom Over Fear: A Balanced Approach to Church Safety

In recent years, a growing number of organizations within the church security industry have used the fear of an active shooter attack as the driving force behind their programs. While such incidents are tragic and deserve attention, this fear-based model of preparation stands in stark contrast to Scripture and to sound, spirit-led leadership.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that *“God is not the author of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.”* Fear may motivate people briefly, but it does not produce wisdom, discernment, or sustainable readiness. True preparedness is born out of stewardship, compassion, and a desire to serve and protect others — not panic or paranoia.

Statistically, a church is more likely to be struck by lightning than to experience an active violent event. Yet churches face far more common risks every week: medical emergencies, fires, mental health crises, domestic disputes, and weather-related incidents. A church’s safety plan must therefore be holistic — not centered on fear of rare events, but on developing trained, balanced, and spiritually grounded teams equipped to handle any crisis with calm confidence.

The goal for every Church of God congregation should be to build a comprehensive, ministry-based security program — one that protects life, preserves peace, and upholds the biblical mandate to shepherd the flock with wisdom, courage, and love.

When preparation flows from faith rather than fear, it strengthens the witness of the church and reinforces the truth that God’s people can be both faithful and prepared.

The purpose of training is not to make the church a fortress, but to make it faithful.

Preparedness that flows from peace and purpose will always outlast preparation driven by panic.

2. A Rising Tide of Violence

According to the *Family Research Council’s 2024 Hostility Against Churches Report*, there were 415 reported incidents in 2024 — down slightly from 485 in 2023, yet more than double the number



seen before 2022. These attacks affected 43 states, with the greatest number occurring in California, Pennsylvania, Florida, New York, Texas, Tennessee, and Ohio.

The breakdown of incidents underscores a broad and troubling trend:

- Vandalism: 284 cases (most common)
- Arson: 55
- Gun-related attacks: 28 — double the number from the previous year
- Bomb threats: 14, primarily hoaxes
- Aggressive assaults and property crimes: 47

Even as national church attendance has dropped from 42% to 30% over two decades, the threat landscape has intensified. *The conclusion is clear: smaller congregations must prepare as diligently as larger ones.*

3. The Moral Imperative: Pray, Prepare, and Protect

Church of God congregations have long been known for open doors and welcoming hearts. Yet “open” must no longer mean “unguarded.” The goal is ministry with mindfulness — maintaining warmth and accessibility while protecting the flock God has entrusted to you.

Twenty-first-century churches must be equipped to deal with twenty-first-century problems. Churches are legally and morally accountable for providing a reasonably safe environment. Beyond physical harm, one violent incident can devastate a congregation’s unity, finances, and community trust. Legal claims following a tragedy often exceed insurance coverage, and emotional scars can endure for years.

Wisdom and preparation are therefore not a lack of faith — it is an act of stewardship. Faith is the foundation, but preparation and structure are the safeguards. A written, reviewed plan turns conviction into capability. It allows you to bring the future into the present so that you can do something about it.

4. Building “Rings of Protection” (Enhanced for Volunteer Understanding)

Think of your church like three protective circles, each one surrounding and supporting the other. These “rings” form the foundation of a layered security plan—a simple, easy-to-understand system that helps every volunteer know where they fit and what they can do to keep the congregation safe.

Each ring represents a zone of awareness and action:

- 1. Outer Ring – The Parking Lot and Property Perimeter**
- 2. Middle Ring – The Building Interior**
- 3. Inner Ring – The Sanctuary and Congregation**

When all three rings work together, the church creates an environment that is both welcoming and watchful, protecting people long before danger ever enters the building.

Outer Ring: The Parking Lot and Property

Purpose: To observe and identify unusual behavior early and help people safely enter the building.

Who Serves Here: Parking lot attendants, greeters at outdoor entrances, maintenance staff, or any volunteer working near the exterior doors.



Your Role:

- Be Visible and Friendly: Greet everyone with a smile. Visibility deters wrongdoing and projects a spirit of hospitality.
- Observe Behavior: Watch for vehicles circling the lot, people sitting in cars for long periods, or anyone appearing agitated or out of place.
- Communicate Clearly: If you notice something suspicious, calmly radio or notify the safety team leader or usher inside the building.
- Control Access: Keep unused exterior doors locked and direct all visitors through a main entry point.
- Lighting Check: Ensure parking areas and exterior pathways are well-lit, especially after dark.

Remember: Most problems can be prevented before they reach the door when volunteers stay alert, approachable, and aware.

Middle Ring: The Building Interior

Purpose: To maintain situational awareness inside the church, identify medical or behavioral concerns early, and coordinate communication between volunteers and the safety team.

Who Serves Here: Ushers, greeters, children's ministry volunteers, office staff, and members of the designated safety team.

Your Role:

- Welcome and Watch: Greet people warmly, but also notice behaviors such as extreme agitation, hiding hands, large, concealed bags, or emotional distress.
- Engage with Care: Most problems can be de-escalated by a calm greeting and personal attention. If something feels wrong, trust your instincts and quietly alert a team member.
- Medical and Safety Readiness: Know where trauma kits, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits are located.
- Team Communication: Use discreet signals, radios, or code words if your church uses them. Keep your communication brief and calm.
- Children's and Youth Areas: Verify check-in and check-out procedures. Never allow unverified adults to enter secured children's areas.

This ring depends on communication and calmness. You are the eyes and ears of the ministry once people step inside the building.

Inner Ring: The Sanctuary and Congregation

Purpose: To respond immediately to emergencies—medical, safety, or violence-related—while maintaining order and comfort for those inside.

Who Serves Here: Designated safety team members, medical volunteers, and lead ushers. Your Role:

- Know Your Response Plan: Each church should have simple, practiced steps for responding to medical emergencies, fires, weather events, or violent acts.
- Active Violence Preparedness: Learn and periodically practice “Run, Hide, Fight” principles adapted for your sanctuary. Remember, this training builds confidence—not fear.
- Protect and Direct: During emergencies, calmly guide people toward safe exits or shelter areas. Use short, clear instructions.



- Medical Incidents: If someone collapses or has a medical issue, notify the medical team immediately and create space for responders.
- After an Incident: Support your pastor or leader in restoring calm and reassuring the congregation that the church is responding in love and order.

You are the guardians of peace during worship. Preparation, teamwork, and calm voices make all the difference when seconds matter.

How the Rings Work Together

Each ring supports the next—Prevention (Outer), Awareness (Middle), and Response (Inner).

The church's goal is to detect and de-escalate situations as far out from the sanctuary as possible, keeping the worship environment peaceful and uninterrupted.

Even small churches can implement this layered approach effectively:

- Start simple. Begin with basic communication (radios or cell phones).
- Train regularly. A short monthly meeting or scenario discussion can keep volunteers sharp.
- Review and improve. Walk the property together and discuss what's working or needs adjustment.

When each volunteer understands their ring, their role, and how to communicate, your church becomes a living model of what it means to “watch and pray.”

Think of your church like concentric circles of care — the parking lot, the sanctuary, and the people. Each “ring” represents an opportunity to see, deter, and respond before harm reaches the heart of your ministry.

LionHeart recommends a layered approach that any congregation, no matter how small, can adopt:

Outer Ring: Awareness and Access Control

- Visible presence: Assign parking lot monitors and door greeters trained to observe behavior, not just shake hands.
- Controlled entry: Lock unused doors during services; funnel entry through one monitored access point.
- Lighting and cameras: For night services always illuminate parking areas and install inexpensive Wi-Fi cameras for deterrence and evidence.

Middle Ring: Interior Readiness

- Usher/Greeters trained to observe, greet, and assess.

Safety team: Select 3–6 dependable members for a designated safety ministry team. When armed protection is part of the plan, ensure members are properly trained, licensed, and emotionally suited for this responsibility. Their purpose is not aggression but defense and preservation of life.

- Medical readiness: Keep trauma kits (e.g., tourniquets, clotting gauze, AEDs) accessible.
- Communication plan: Establish discreet signals or radio channels for emergencies and practice how the team would communicate in a crisis.



Inner Ring: Immediate Response

- Crisis response training: Partner with local law enforcement or certified trainers to run scenario-based drills. This includes active violence training but extends way beyond that.
- Congregational instruction: Teach members simple actions — Run, Hide, Fight principles adapted for sanctuaries and designed to train skills, not fear.
- Safe zones: Identify rooms that can be locked from inside and used for protection.

5. Collaboration and Legal Considerations

Engage law enforcement: Invite local police and fire representatives to tour your facility, provide free recommendations, and familiarize themselves with your layout. Offer them opportunities to use the facility for training.

*Insurance coordination: Verify your liability and active-threat coverage annually.

*Documentation: Keep a written emergency plan reviewed quarterly by church leadership.

*Training logs: Record all safety trainings; this documentation can be vital in the event of litigation.

*Mental health partnerships: Develop relationships with local counselors, chaplains, and crisis response professionals who can assist after traumatic incidents.

Remember that faith and preparedness are not opposites — they are partners in stewardship. When congregations act responsibly, they model discernment and care for the broader community.

6. Encouragement and Call to Action

The pathway forward is simple: Pray. Prepare. Protect.

Church of God congregations are pillars of faith across the country. By adopting simple, consistent measures, even the smallest church can dramatically increase its level of protection and confidence. Evil thrives in passivity, but proactive faith defeats fear.

7. Action Steps for Building a Dynamic Church Security Ministry

Developing a truly effective Church Security Ministry requires purpose, people, and preparation. The following action steps outline the foundational elements of a thriving and sustainable safety program.

1. Build the Right Team, Provide Solid Training, and Use the Right Technology

A dynamic Church Security Ministry begins with a team of wisdom, humility, courage, and skill. These individuals serve not as guards, but as stewards of safety—protecting God’s people while maintaining the welcoming spirit of the church. It MUST be a ministry first!

- Team Composition: Select men and women who demonstrate calmness under pressure, have spiritual discernment and a servant’s heart.
- Training: Invest in quality, ongoing instruction that teaches medical response, mental health awareness, observation skills, conflict de-escalation and tactical response to violence.
- Technology: Use tools that match your church’s size and setting. Common technologies include video surveillance, access control systems, radios, and alarm systems. The sophistication may vary, but the principle remains the same—combine trained people, clear procedures, and supportive technology.



2. Focus on Prevention, Not Just Response

Good security begins long before an emergency. Many churches focus solely on how to respond after an attack, but effective security emphasizes proactive prevention—identifying and stopping potential threats early.

- Training must equip teams to observe behaviors, detect warning signs, and take early, measured action.
- Conduct regular threat recognition drills that emphasize communication and situational awareness, not just physical defense.
- Prevention reduces the need for confrontation and creates a culture of calm vigilance rather than reactive fear.

3. Make Security Everyone's Responsibility

Safety is not only the duty of a designated team—it is a shared ministry responsibility. Empower every staff member and volunteer to see themselves as an extension of the security effort.

- Hold short, quarterly discussions on what “suspicious behavior” looks like and how to respond appropriately.
- Encourage the mindset that “if you see something, say something” is an act of care, not fear.
- Partner with local law enforcement professionals who can share real-world insight on observing, reporting, and responding effectively.

When the entire congregation embraces a protective mindset, the church becomes truly resilient.

4. Remember: Security Starts in the Parking Lot

Church security begins before the first song and before the first handshake. The parking lot is often the first place a potential threat can be identified—and the first opportunity to prevent harm.

- Train parking volunteers to be alert, welcoming, and observant.
- Teach them how to recognize suspicious vehicles or behavior and how to quickly communicate with the safety team.
- Extend this same mindset to greeters, ushers, children’s ministry staff, and hospitality volunteers—each has a role to play.

A potential disaster can be stopped in the parking lot if the right people are watching with the right awareness. When each member of the body understands their role, from the parking lot to the pulpit, the church becomes a living example of faith in action—prepared, peaceful, and protected.

Final Word

The goal of church security is not to create fear, but to create confidence in God’s provision and wisdom in preparation. When your church combines a committed team, thoughtful training, and sound technology within a culture of awareness and compassion, you create not only a safer church—but a stronger ministry.

Prepared by: Tim Miller; LionHeart International Services Group (LHISG)
Specialists in Faith-Based Security, Training, and Emergency Preparedness
Contact us at www.LHISG.com



ARTICLE II



Ed Monk
Last Resort Training & Consulting
October 20, 2025

What is most likely?

The church active shooter is most likely to be one male. He will attack a church where he does not expect anyone to fight back until law enforcement arrives. He will have 2 – 4 guns and most likely start his attack shooting a long gun (rifle or shotgun). He will have over 100 rounds of ammunition, most likely pre-loaded into magazines. He has no escape plan. He plans to end his attack dead or in custody. He is likely to start his attack by shooting at victims or the church building while in the parking lot, before attempting to enter the building.

Once he begins shooting victims, he will shoot a new victim every few seconds until the attack ends. He will stop shooting innocent victims as soon as he is confronted by one or more people threatening him with deadly violence. Once stopped, he will not return to shooting victims unless whoever confronted him with deadly violence breaks contact with him.

How can a church best prepare to respond to an Active Shooter attack, resulting in minimal victims?

TIME is the most important planning factor. The longer a church allows an attacker to shoot victims, the more victims they will have. Or, the quicker they stop the attack, the fewer victims they will have.

The average Active Shooter will shoot a new victim

- Every 3-5 seconds in the first minute of the attack
- Every 6-8 seconds in the second minute of the attack
- Every 10-12 seconds in the third minute of the attack

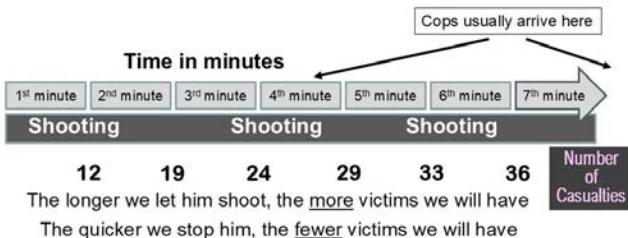
The rate at which he shoots new victims will generally decline as the attack continues due to victims taking evasive measures, so becoming harder to find and engage. The attacker will likely shoot each victim multiple times.

The chart on the following page shows how many victims to expect on the timeline of the attack.

The earliest we can expect responding law enforcement to arrive and confront the Active Shooter is during the 4th minute of the attack. This delay is due to the time it takes for the 911 call to be made, police travel, and police action upon arrival. Depending on responding police to stop an attack offers a high probability of a high victim count.



TIME & MATH Planning Tool



To begin planning for an active shooter attack, church leaders must make the hard determination of *what is the maximum acceptable number of victims to have when the attack is over*. We all pray, hope, and want zero victims. But our plan cannot be for zero victims. Our plan must go beyond zero and hope. The only reason to have an active shooter response plan is that hope has failed. My recommendation for the plan's goal is 0-9 victims. To have a high mathematical chance of causing this, the active shooter must **be stopped** within the **first 30 seconds** of the first shot of his attack. This means he must be stopped by one or more people who are present at the attack site when the attack starts,

To accomplish this, members of the security team must be intelligently spread across the church property with the intent of – no matter where the attack begins, at least one (preferably two for redundancy) of the security team members can see or hear the first shot and be able to move to and stop it within 30 seconds. Guns are not the only tool one can use to stop an Active Shooter. But guns are by far the most efficient tool for that task. Using a gun to stop the Active Shooter gives the security team member the greatest chance for success and will allow the team member to stop the attack more quickly due to ability to engage and stop at a distance. Having an armed volunteer security team at a church during an Active Shooter attack has worked 100% of the times (3/3) it has been challenged.

All individuals at the church should be trained that they will have three bad options during an active shooter attack. Those options are FIGHT, Flee, and barricade. Anyone who is mentally and physically capable and willing to attack the Active Shooter with deadly force should do so as soon as possible to cause the lowest victim count. Anyone not capable or willing should flee away from the attacker as fast as possible. Barricading should only be done if fleeing is impossible.

90% of the time, money, and effort a church spends on Active Shooter response should be spent on training, gear, and planning an immediate deadly counterattack that stops the attacker within 30 seconds of his first shot. The remaining 10% should be spent on training, gear and planning to treat and evacuate the few victims you allowed him to shoot before you attacked and stopped him.

Point of Contact for the above information is Ed Monk. He can be reached at edmonk@aol.com or (c) 870-273-1113. He is the author of the book, *First 30 Seconds* (www.first30-seconds.com)



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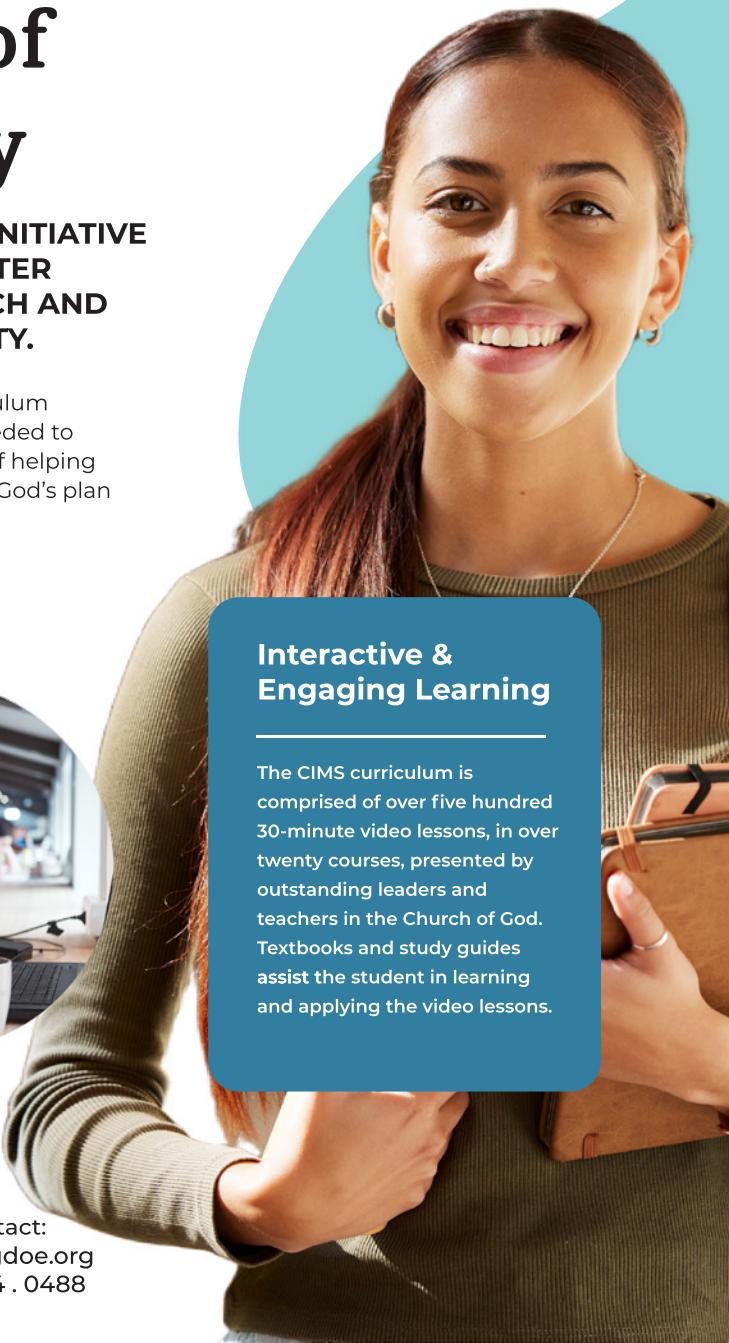


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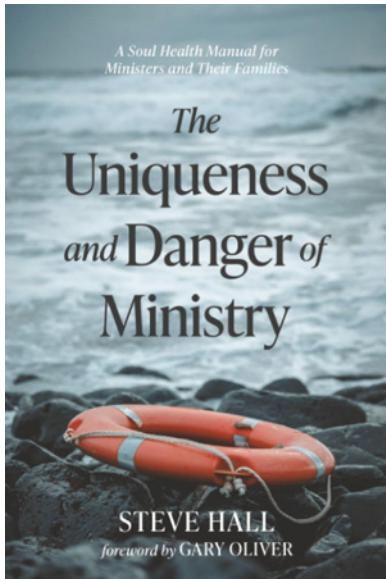
The Uniqueness and Danger of Ministry

by Dr. Steve Hall

Reviewed by John Kie Vining, D.Min.

The intuitive reader has the ability to discern between an author who studies and reports and the one who articulates from conscious engagement. The former can be somewhat pedantic; the other is didactical. One is observational; the other is experiential. One is heady and descriptive; the other is substantially subjective. This new book on professional ministry, *The Uniqueness and Danger of Ministry*, is authored by a consummate minister with over thirty years of experience in the ministerial trenches of pastoring.

There is no cotton candy here. Dr. Steve Hall, with assistance from his pastor wife, LaDon, supplant the milky mush of churchy pabulum with a hearty diet of scripturally, nourishing soul food. *Soul health* is the maturational goal of effective clergy for the pastor and the pastor's spouse, according to Hall.



Between the covers of their raw and unashamed, multilayered subjective ministry experiences, they undress the masking of Sunday morning gatherings and nudge the professional minister to a willingness of undress as well. The invitation for a redressing is enticing because it encompasses sensations, captures perceptions, processes emotions, and prescribes a soul development regimen. He provides the *soul rigging* for daily, weekly, monthly,



quarterly, and annual soul health observance. Professional ministry needs a scriptural replacement for the worldly evaluation of performance-based metrics that reflects the Holy Spirit's soul work in us. It may not be for the faint of heart but it's good for what ails an anemic, underdeveloped soul.

Pastor Hall has written in a vulnerable style in which every minister will relate. *The Uniqueness and Danger of Ministry* has the underpinnings of orthodox theology, church history, and theo-psychological research. He draws his thesis of soul health from the *anatomy of the soul* with personal spiritual disciplines that enflesh the spiritual formation that he practices. His creation aims at replenishing dead, dry clergy bones and enlivening a lukewarm church. Soul-sick? This is a description and prescription for *PTSP Post-Traumatic Stress Pastoring*.

He leads us from soul sickness to soul health as he spells out *the miracle of compounding Christlikeness*. Integral to the journey are *the five Ss of Sabbath*. He reveals the impediments of the *double-souled life*. He cautions against *the disintegration* [which] is the *pathogen of original sin* and pleads for the integration of the soul man in all

life zones. He asserts that soul health which begets *spiritual formation is the process of awakening to find ourselves immersed in this cultural current, then slowly and strategically turning our souls around to swim against the kingdom of the world current*.

The unique chapter portraying the experiences of pastor spouses is dramatic and much needed. Talk about aloneness and undefined expectations? LaDon introduces us to the world of the pastorless, often friendless, and most of the time used up spouse. It should be mandated that every minister and church leadership board read this *soul health manual for ministers and their families*.

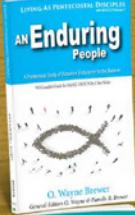
If all that is too much, here's the bottom line. According to Dr. Hall, *Leaders lead to where they live...Changing churches won't change your soul...So engage with the process to explore the Gospel-entered, orthodox, morally convictional, holistic, slow, intentional, disciplined life of sanctifying spiritual formation.* ■

John Kie Vining,
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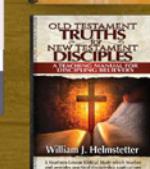
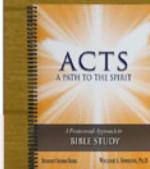
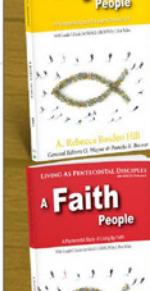
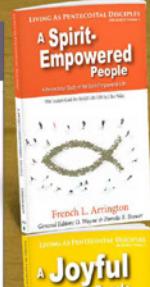
2025-2026 Church Discipleship Plan

September	October	November	December
4 Weeks "A Worshiping People" (Understanding Vibrant Worship) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 1	4 Weeks "An Enduring People" (Victoriously Enduring in Christ) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 2	4 Weeks "A Giving People" (The Giving Christian Life) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 3	First 2 Weeks "Overcoming Spiritual Abortion Attempts" (Chapter 10 from "Fighting The Good Fight")
January 4 Weeks "Understanding and Breaking Strongholds" (Chapter 8 & 9 from "Fighting The Good Fight")	February 4 Weeks "A Spirit-Empowered People" (Living a Spirit-Empowered Life) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 4	March 4 Weeks "A Joyful People" (Living the Joyful Christian Life) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 5	April 4 Weeks "A Faith People" (A Study of Living by Faith) LIVING PENTECOSTALS 400 SERIES VOL 6
May 4 Weeks "Spiritual Gifts and How They Work" (Chapter 12 & 13 from "Fighting The Good Fight")	June 4 Weeks "Called By God! - Different Callings for Believers" (13 wks) "Acts A Path To The Spirit" (12 wks) "Old Testament Truths for New Testament Disciples" (14 wks)	July 5 Weeks	August 4 Weeks

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Church of God HIGHLIGHTS

Abbreviated items of interest to the Church of God published on Faith News Network between October 1, 2025, and January 1, 2026. To read the articles in their entirety and others, please visit faithnews.cc.

Intercultural Ministries Hosts 'Seat at the Table' Conference

October 13, 2025—Farmers Branch, Texas—Church of God Intercultural Ministries hosted its first, “Seat at the Table” conference, held at the Metro Church of God in Farmer’s Branch, Texas.

The October 9-10, 2025, event welcomed several nationalities and represented countries to the conference seeking, “to foster a space where voices from diverse cultural backgrounds are not only heard but valued and empowered,” according to Director of Intercultural Ministries Dr. Fijoy Johnson. “The title reflected the heart of our vision for the conference.”

The showcase of culture was showcased through the hosting of the event and featured praise and worship teams from Hispanic and Indian congregations. Special music on Friday featured the world-renowned Voices of Lee from Lee University.

Delegates included church leaders, pastors, and lay leaders. Emphasizing the theme further were keynote speakers, Dr. Dale Bronner and Dr. Mark Williams.



Mark Williams prays over delegates at the 'Seat at the Table' Conference

“The phrase, ‘Seat at the Table’ symbolizes inclusion, dignity, and shared leadership,” Johnson continued. “It’s about making sure that everyone regardless of ethnicity, language, or heritage has a place in shaping the future of our church and community. This conference was a call to action: to move beyond tokenism and toward genuine collaboration, where intercultural engagement becomes central to our mission, not peripheral.”

Johnson spoke of the future of the conference by stating, “I envision Seat at the Table not just as a one-time event, but as the beginning of a movement—one that expands into regional conferences across the country. Creating a space for everyone at the table is essential because it reflects the Kingdom of God: diverse, inclusive, and united. It’s about ensuring that every voice is welcomed, every culture is honored, and every leader is empowered to contribute to the mission.”

Creating a space for everyone at the table is essential because it reflects the Kingdom of God

called the Lone Soldier Program, looks forward to the day when they can welcome Rom Braslavski, a recipient of the program and one of hundreds taken hostage and held over two years following the Hamas terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, during a music festival near the Israeli-Gaza border.



Rom as he appeared the day of his release

Ministry to Israel ‘Lone Soldier Program’ Looks to Welcome One of the Hostages

October 14, 2025—Jerusalem, Israel—Michael Utterback, Director of Ministry to Israel (MTI) for the Church of God, shared a testimony of answered prayer concerning one of the 20 Israeli hostages released from captivity on Monday, October 13.

MTI, which funds and operates a support program for Israeli military

Utterback lives part-time in Jerusalem and along with several staff operates Support Centers in several Israeli cities. The centers assist Israelis seeking to return to their homeland, as well as other humanitarian and assistance programs. The Lone Soldier Program has been in place for many years to provide services to Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers who are far away from family or loved ones and seek support while serving in the IDF.



“Rom was one of our newest Lone Soldiers, having only come to us two times,” Utterback stated. “On his last visit to the Jerusalem Support Center, for some reason, he left his dog tags. Raya, one of our staff, called

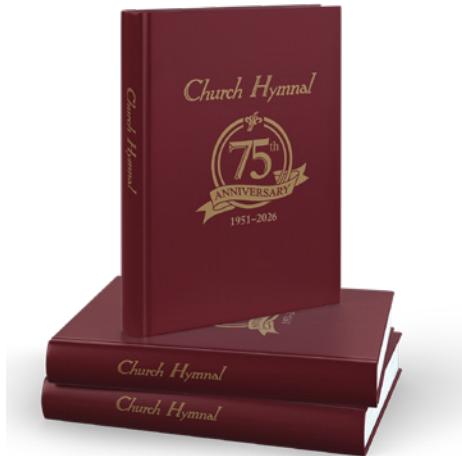
Twelve-hundred people were killed, many at the Nova festival.

him and Rom said he would come back the next week to get them. He never came back.” Utterback stated that Rom was serving with security for the Nova Festival when at 6:30 on the morning of October 7, 2023, thousands of terrorists invaded the small villages along the Gaza border. Twelve-hundred people were killed, many at the Nova festival. According to eyewitnesses, Rom saved many lives and fought the terrorists until the afternoon when was taken captive.

In reporting on Rom’s condition, Utterback stated, “these precious people held captive were starved, brutally beaten, and endured unbelievable, psychological trauma. As of October 13, 2025, thank God, they are free and with their families. Rom’s dog tags have been on our wall and reminded us to pray for him throughout this ordeal. We look forward to

the day that we can hand them to him personally.”

Church of God Publications Releases 75th Anniversary Edition “Red Back Hymnal”



November 19, 2025—Cleveland, TN—Church of God Publications and Pathway Press are proud to announce the release of the 75th Anniversary Edition of the Church Hymnal—affectionately known around the world as the “Red Back Hymnal.”

The 75th Anniversary Edition honors the rich legacy with a special historical insert written by Church of God Historian Dr. David G. Roe-buck, chronicling the story of how



the hymnal came to be and its lasting impact across the decades.

David Gosnell, director of Church of God Publications and Pathway

... an enduring symbol of worship and heritage

Press said, "Since its first printing in 1951, this cherished collection has united congregations in song for generations, becoming an enduring symbol of worship and heritage spanning across denominations."

The 75th edition is available in traditional hardback and spiral-bound large print editions—with a commemorative cover.

True to its heritage, the "Red Back Hymnal" preserves the distinctive shaped-note musical notation that has helped generations of singers learn harmony by sight—continuing a tradition that connects the modern church to its historic roots in community singing.

Accompanying the release is a commemorative two-disc CD set, arranged and produced by Jim Milligan and recorded and mixed at the Danny Murray Studios in Cleveland, Tennessee. Featuring fifteen beloved songs,

the collection includes both a listening CD and a split/soundtrack, allowing musicians, worship leaders, and choirs to enjoy and perform these treasured hymns with renewed inspiration.

More than a decade ago, The Museum and Cultural Center at 5ive Points, located at 200 Inman Street in Cleveland, Tennessee, opened a permanent, interactive "Red Back Hymnal" exhibit. Visitors are invited to view the display during regular business hours.

For more information or to place an order, visit pathwaybookstore.com. ■

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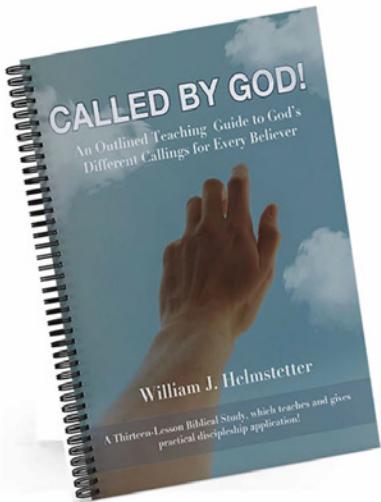
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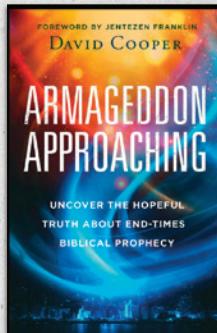
— Sean O'Neal



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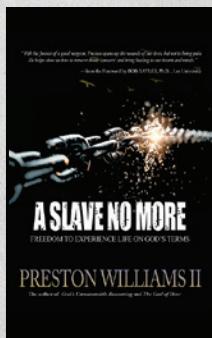
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*The destiny of our world
is not termination
but transformation.*

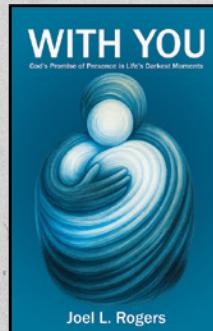


*“The Ten Commandments
are not restrictions—
they are revelations of
God’s priorities.”*



*You were made
for more than survival—
you were made
for freedom.*

*“The greatest promise
isn’t rescue—it’s presence.”*



*Mentorship begins with
a turn of the heart—
and changes generations.*





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