

SPRING/  
SUMMER  
2018



# engage

A Journal for  
Church of God  
MINISTRIES

## IN THIS ISSUE

What Is Biblical Preaching?

Cultivating a Heart  
for Holiness

Sorting Through the  
Church's Silence

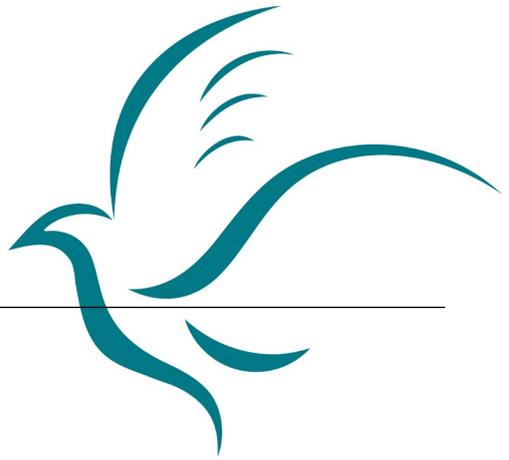
Breaking the Hold of  
Spiritual Bondage

Why Church?

SPRING/SUMMER 2018  
VOL. 14, NO. 2

# engage

---



## CONTENTS

- 3 From the Editor
- 48 PENTECOSTAL MINISTER FLASHBACK:  
Facing Conflict in the Church *French L. Arrington*
- 66 Church of God Highlights

## ARTICLES

---

- 4 What Is Biblical Preaching? *Randall Eubanks*
- 8 The Preaching Calendar *Jeff Stanford*
- 12 Let's Talk About It . . . Systems *Tim Hill*
- 16 One of the Greatest Challenges  
Christian Leaders Face With New Employees *Tim Cameron*
- 20 Tips to Make Your Church Playground Safer *Rhianna Miller*
- 23 Sorting Through the Church's Silence *Beth Moore*
- 28 Mental Illness Within the Church *Amy Simpson*
- 32 Cultivating a Heart for Holiness *Cheryl Bridges Johns*
- 38 Breaking the Hold of Spiritual Bondage *Bill Jenkins*
- 41 Why Church? *Terry Cross*

## RESOURCES

---

- 56 LEGAL NOTES *Dennis Watkins*
- 58 MONEY MATTERS *Art Rhodes*
- 62 POINTS FROM THE PASTORAL STAFF *Christopher Wayne Brewer*
- 64 RESOURCES—Book Reviews *Tom George*

## Final Slide Toward GA18

**A**T THIS SAME TIME every two years here at the International Offices, it is full speed ahead toward the International General Assembly. The theme and logo have been released by the Executive Committee. The Executive Council has met and signed off on the agenda. The GA Cabinet meets more frequently, both in person and via Skype. Orlando hotels are nearing capacity. Test runs of the electronic voting system have taken place. The website GA18 has been launched and is being continually updated. Exhibitors for the Exhibit Hall are almost fully secured. Speakers and musical guests are confirmed. Special events for departments, states, regions, schools, and people groups are being finalized. The logistics of the venue in Orlando are being fine-tuned. And the registrations continue to flow in.

Yes, the International General Assembly is a big deal. It has been so since the first meeting in 1906. This is the 77<sup>th</sup> time we will be coming together for fellowship, prayer, and official business. No matter what is on the agenda for the General Council to consider, the most important part of the International General Assembly is the convening of the saints. It is the ultimate Church of God gathering place.

If you have attended the Assembly in the past, you are likely already registered. If you are still on the fence about whether or not to attend, now is the time to decide. Special hotel

rates secured for Assembly delegates are getting tight. The final day to register online for the Assembly is July 11.

This year's theme is FINISH In the Spirit and Power of Pentecost. Learn more about it at the website [www.ga18.org](http://www.ga18.org).

See you in Orlando, July 30–August 3!! ■

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

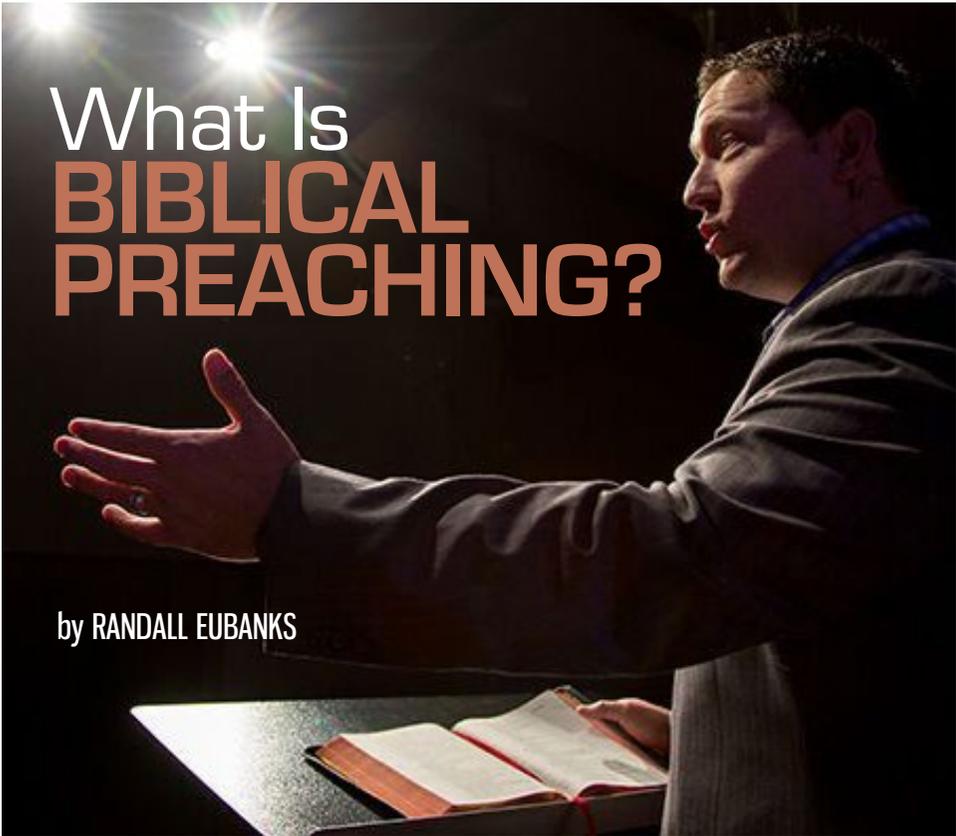
### **Church of God Executive Committee**

Tim Hill, *general overseer*  
Raymond Culpepper, *first assistant*  
J. David Stephens, *second assistant*  
David Ramirez, *third assistant*  
John Childers, *secretary general*

### **ENGAGE Journal**

Tim Hill, *executive editor*  
Cameron Fisher, *editor*  
Bob Fisher, *graphic designer*  
Nellie Keasling, *copy editor*

*Engage* invites feedback from readers on the content of the journal and suggestions for future issues. Please email comments to [cfisher@churchofgod.org](mailto:cfisher@churchofgod.org) or mail to *Engage*, P.O. Box 2430, Cleveland, TN 37320-2430. For information on purchasing ad space, please email [cfisher@churchofgod.org](mailto:cfisher@churchofgod.org) or call (423) 478-7894.

A man in a dark suit is shown in profile, speaking at a podium. He has his right hand raised in a gesture. On the podium in front of him is an open Bible. The background is dark with a bright light source creating a lens flare effect.

# What Is BIBLICAL PREACHING?

by RANDALL EUBANKS

**W**E WOULD ALL like to think of ourselves as biblical preachers. But we need to be honest with ourselves and ask, “Am I a biblical preacher?” Before we can answer that question, we need to examine biblical preaching, what it is and what it is not.

Let us first examine what biblical preaching is not. To begin with, biblical preaching is not the use of a scriptural passage as a text which is never addressed or mentioned

again. I call that the “national anthem” sermon. Much like the national anthem being played at a ball game, it is never mentioned again and has no reference to what is done on the field. Even so, the “national anthem” sermon does not go back to the scripture read at the beginning and is never referenced in what is said in the sermon.

Second, one cannot be called a biblical preacher when he or she does not let the scripture speak to the congregation. To be a

biblical preacher one must be truth-driven and text-driven. A biblical preacher lets the scriptures speak rather than his or her convictions. To do otherwise is imposition, not exposition. The authority of the text sets the agenda for the sermon. Golfers play the ball where it lies, so biblical preachers preach what the text means by what it says.

Third, just because a scripture is referenced at each point of the sermon does not make one a biblical preacher.

Fourth, drawing observations from a text does not make one a biblical preacher.

Fifth, giving commentary on a particular section of scripture does not make for biblical preaching.

Sixth, a review of the text is not biblical preaching.

Finally, biblical preaching does not matter about the number of points or subpoints.

Then what is biblical preaching? Biblical preaching is speaking truths from the biblical text without one putting his or her own shape in the truth. The biblical sermon will give biblical instruction. It will be based on a biblical hermeneutic. In other words, the sermon will come from the clear meaning of the scripture. One will not have to twist the text nor the meaning of the text to some contorted form to say what the scripture says. A biblical sermon's structure comes from the text rather than a form that is placed on the text.

And, a genuine biblical sermon will always call for application. The biblical preacher will be called upon to do as Charles

Spurgeon observed, "the pastor's primary task in preaching is to translate." As preachers do their exegetical studies, they fashion it so that people can understand biblical truth for themselves and then recognize how it applies to their lives. "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2 NKJV). Because God gave the Scriptures to mature and equip believers, to call to repentance, to be responsive and to obey, so the preacher preaches for the same purposes. It is the purpose of the biblical preacher to bridge the ancient context to the contemporary life. Pentecostal preaching (i.e. biblical preaching) has always called for response and application.

Biblical preaching will always be doctrinal preaching. If doctrine does not arise from the Scriptures it is heresy. We have always believed in rightly dividing the Word of truth. Biblical preaching will bring that to bear. If ministers preach Scripture, they will eventually preach the doctrines of the church without effort, because every doctrine is found in text and context; but ministers must preach the whole of the Word rather than a few pet verses. Haddon Robinson says that one must be true to the purposes of the Bible as well as preach the Bible. His example states the purpose of Scripture is to reveal God, so biblical preaching will be the revelation of God in His character, His personhood, and in His manifestation. But when the Bible reveals God to us, it will cut into our lives today.

The importance of doctrine in biblical preaching cannot be overly stated. Sound doctrine is accurate scriptural teaching as it applies to theological truth that leads to the spiritual health and transformed life of the individual and the church. Sound doctrine should be the content of every sermon, Bible study, song, and book we read at church. And it should be loved. Here are a few reasons why:

1. Sound doctrine is the greatest authority to speak into the lives of people. Jesus appealed to the Scriptures Himself as authority for His actions and doctrine.

2. We should love sound doctrine, because God loves sound doctrine.

3. We should love sound doctrine, because it matures individuals and the church.

4. We should love sound doctrine, because it flows from the gospel. First Timothy 1:11 says, “in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God” (ESV).

5. We should love sound doctrine because it leads us to holiness. Correct doctrine is tied with correct living.

6. We should love sound doctrine, because it keeps us from false doctrine.

7. We should love sound doctrine, because it leads to action. Scripture prepares men and women for every good work (see 2 Timothy 3:17).

8. We should love sound doctrine, because loving it is a love for Jesus himself.

Nothing makes me cringe like hearing Christians say, “I don’t need doctrine, and I just want to love Jesus!” These people misunderstand that doctrine is what tells us about Jesus.

9. We should love sound doctrine, because it leads to sound faith and a sure salvation.

10. We should love sound doctrine, because it leads to worship. Worship is not just the result of doctrine, it is also the reason it exists

The last aspect of biblical preaching is biblical preachers. Leonard Ravenhill said, “If Jesus came back He would not clean the temple, He would clean the pulpit.” What is needed today is a preacher who will preach God’s Word with God’s heart. Having had the privilege of teaching preachers for years, my instructions have been rather simple, “read yourself full (the Word of God, commentaries, word studies, etc.), pray yourself hot (it takes the same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Scriptures to preach the Scriptures), and then preach the Word of God as a dying man to other dying men.” ■

*After pastoring for more than 45 years, **Randall Eubanks** is continuing to serve God and the church as a missionary/evangelist, teaching in Africa and other areas. He also continues to instruct preachers through the MIP program in his home state of Alabama.*

# Let's Talk

## MISSIONS AT GA-2018 in Orlando

### Booth 531

- Meet your missionaries!
- Create personal relationships with World Missions personnel!
- Ask questions about projects!
- Learn about project Urgent Care!

### Booth 431

- Receive information about partnership in the Send Light to the Cities project!
- Put more "GO" in your FINISH Commitment!
- Learn how to get your church excited about a global vision of ministry.

Booths located in the Exhibit Area next to the Worship Area of the West Concourse of the Orange County Convention Center.



**P** 1.800.345.7492    **f** /COGWM    **t** @COGWM  
**E** INFO@COGWM.ORG    **o** /COGWM    **i** /COGWM

**COGWM.ORG** CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOOK!



DAVID M. GRIFFIS

Director

**@DMGriffis**



M. THOMAS PROPES

Assistant Director

**@MTPropes**



# THE PREACHING CALENDAR

by JEFF STANFORD

Advance your preaching, by preaching in advance.

*Disclaimer: Nothing you read in this article is original content. The things you read here have been handed to me from the many men and women of God who have invested themselves in the ministry of Jesus Christ and have invested in my life as well. Thank you to everyone in the Church who has mentored me, encouraged me, helped me, given me opportunities, and blessed me in every way.*

**WAS BROUGHT UP** in a Church of God pastor's home and served as a full-time Church of God evangelist for 12 years. Even though I had preached hundreds of sermons, none of that prepared me for the preaching ministry that comes with pastoring a church, where fresh sermons and new sermon content and material are essential every week.

Early into pastoral ministry, I began to experience the pressure that comes with preparing weekly messages for the local

church community. It can be an incredible and overwhelming responsibility. Sunday is coming and it's Friday or Saturday and you still need something to say on Sunday.

Somewhere along the way, I began preaching a sermon that would take several weeks to complete. In these times, I realized how less stressful my life was, because I had something prepared in advance, at least for a couple of weeks or so.

Without realizing what was taking place, I began preparing sermons in advance. I also realized that the sermons themselves were better prepared, the content was better, and it seemed even that the anointing of the Holy Spirit was greater as I presented the message to the people. Overall the preaching part of the pastoral ministry seemed to be more effective and more enjoyable for me, and I hope for the people as well.

So, I began to plan my sermons three months in advance. I realized that the Holy

Spirit could speak to me about what He wanted me to say months in advance, and this gave me more time to study, pray, and prepare for what God had in mind for our local church.

As time went on, I began planning my preaching calendar twelve months in advance. I have seen the hand of God leading the way. I have experienced God leading me and our church family on an amazing and rewarding journey together each year. It has been very encouraging to watch people grow stronger and healthier together as a church family. It has been amazing to watch God meet needs and deal with issues and all the matters that come with people, without targeting anyone or anything along the way. It is incredible to know that God is already out ahead of us, and if we give Him the opportunity, He will have everything ready for us before we need it, if we prepare ourselves in advance.

A preaching calendar can serve as a guide and a guard. It serves as a guide, giving the pastor the opportunity to plan sermons that help disciple the saints as well as win the lost. It serves as a guard to keep the pastor and the church on track and moving

forward, while not getting distracted along the way. A preaching calendar helps everyone stay focused on where they are going and what is still ahead.

Set aside some time to look at a full twelve-month calendar. Mark the important dates. Holidays, Church of God state and international events, Vacation Bible School, vacation time, etc. As you mark these important dates, your mind will begin to prepare in advance for all the things that are coming your way. Fresh and creative ideas for important Sundays will begin to come to your mind. Look at all the open Sundays that you will have available, pray about the things that your church will need to hear from God's Word to keep them healthy and strong (Faith, Family, Finances, Books of the Bible, etc.). Determine where you can preach a sermon series, determine where you can invite a guest to share the platform with you, determine where you can preach a stand-alone sermon, etc.

Planning has many advantages for you and your church. You can plan preaching themes, plan for times of rest and refreshing, you can do better research and collect stories, illustrations, props, articles, and videos that will make your preaching easier for people to remember.

The Holy Spirit can give you a message on Saturday night, just before you preach on Sunday, and you can preach like a man on fire from another world. The Holy Spirit can also give you a message several months in advance and allow all the special ingredients

A preaching calendar  
can serve as a **GUIDE**  
and a **GUARD**.

to come together over the course of much time and use you in an even greater and more precise way.

Lay that twelve-month calendar out in front of you and began to pray, plan, and prepare and give God the opportunity to get way out ahead of you and lead the way. By the way, you can change things all along the way, you do not have to stick strictly to your calendar. God can still change our minds and move spontaneously in our lives. But God powerfully blesses preparation. There are very few resources that can be more helpful than a well-prayed-over, organized yearly sermon calendar.

You can find many resources about a preaching calendar on the Internet. As I said

in my disclaimer, nothing in this article is original. However, I would like to recommend that you check out the materials and information available by one of our very own Church of God pastors, Jason Isaacs, at [excellentpastor.com](http://excellentpastor.com).

Today is your very best opportunity to be better than you were yesterday. ■

*Jeff Stanford is an ordained bishop with the Church of God and has been pastoring Free Life Worship in Boaz, Alabama, for the past 16 years. He also continues to serve the Church as an international evangelist. For more information about the ministries of Free Life Worship and Jeff Stanford, check out [flwc.org](http://flwc.org) and [jeffstanford.org](http://jeffstanford.org).*



*Making a difference for those  
who make a difference.*

Join the Ministers' Retirement Plan today!

[www.benefitsboard.com](http://www.benefitsboard.com)



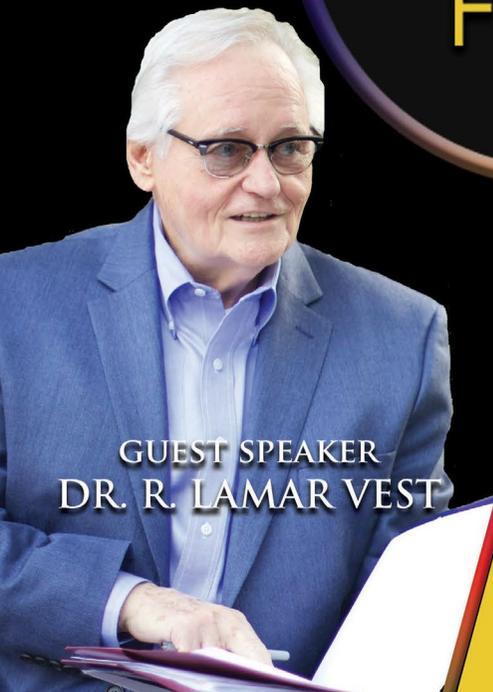


# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS LUNCHEON

*Distinguished Educator Awards will be presented.*



**\$40**  
PER PERSON



GUEST SPEAKER  
**DR. R. LAMAR VEST**

ORANGE COUNTY  
CONVENTION CENTER  
WEST CONCOURSE, W209

**AUGUST 1, 2018**  
11:45 A.M. – 1:15 P.M.

Click below to register.  
**[COGDOE.ORG](http://COGDOE.ORG)**

Let's Talk About It . . .

# SYSTEMS

by TIM HILL, General Overseer



*(Editor's Note: This article is the third in a series titled, "Let's Talk About It," by General Overseer Tim Hill.)*

## A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED DENOMINATION

The Church of God is a Spirit-empowered denomination rich in history and heritage. From its humble birth in 1886 to becoming a movement of global influence, the Church has nurtured many spiritual sons and daughters. I am one of those sons.

When I was 17 years old, the Church of God embraced me as a minister of the gospel and provided a platform that launched a thousand dreams that have been fulfilled again and again. The Church of God brought the gospel to my father, who in turn taught me to honor its biblical doctrines and adhere to its foundational principles for living. I have found friendship with many wonderful and admired church denominations and fellowships around the world, but when I think of home, my heart returns to the Church of God—its songs and sermons; its

camp meetings and conventions; its altar calls and prayer lines; its fiery evangelists and statesmen-like pastors; its seemingly "bigger than life" leaders. But the values I consider most important are its core values, including prayer and the proclamation of God's Word in the spirit and power of Pentecost.

Make no mistake . . . we have always walked hand-in-hand, but we haven't always seen eye to eye. The church has honored me during my life's journey and, at times, solemnly corrected my course. The church has been generous with praise and affirmation, but just as generous with caution and warning. I have rejoiced in the church's triumphs and wept in the church's frailties. The church is neither exempt from struggle nor absolved from criticism, but it has been preserved for what should be its finest hour, reaching more than 7 million constituents and adherents in 184 nations.

The church found me as a child, nourished me through my youth, and accompanied me into my maturity. For all of this, I am thankful.

## SYSTEMATIC DIAGNOSIS

But hear my heart: I will most readily admit that while the organism called the church is alive, sometimes the organization of the church can become ill. It's not hard to know when it happens, because vision becomes blurred and budgets become bloated. Hearing gets dull and the harvest is hindered. Outreach is withered and revival flatlines as slow, continual bleeding saps the church of her strength and ability to be effective. When this happens, prayer surrenders to manipulation, commitment yields to compromise, and what was fervent evangelism erodes to the low-grade fever of half-hearted and listless programs. Soon, as with the church of Laodicea written about in Revelation 3, Jesus stands outside the door of the church knocking and longing to be allowed in. We think we have need of nothing and do not realize that we are wretched, miserable, poor, and blind. In a word, the church in general, and as many know it, is ill and in decline in much of America.

When visiting a physician, regardless of the reason, two things are typically submitted for analysis and diagnosis. Those two things are System and Structure. Everything that may be wrong or right will be classified under one of those categories. Structure has to do with the frame around which systems function. Though not always, a person's structure (skeletal frame) can be fundamentally sound while their system can

be contaminated with sickness. Interestingly enough, an ill or weakened system can be allowed to deteriorate within a structure designed to uphold and carry around a healthy being.

Systems often become ill when outside elements are introduced into a structure designed for health and mobility. Bad diets, alcohol, smoking, drug use, promiscuous living, and a host of other things are contaminants or even poison to someone's system. As a result, existence is miserable and life can be shortened. A skeletal structure is just as subject to pain, aches, and breaks, making adjustments and even replacement often necessary. But more often than not, a person's health problems stem from physically systemic malfunctions brought on by outside interference and even intrusion.

Sometimes, an ill system is due to another individual's cough or sneeze somewhere nearby, and you "caught" what was being hurled into the air by a careless expulsion. Sometimes, an ill system is due to an availing of oneself to elements not necessarily meant to harm, but because of overuse or overexposure to them, it brings on sickness. We all need sun, rain, cold, and heat in their season, but good elements mixed with bad timing seldom bring great results. Antibiotics were made to fend off and even kill infection, but there is a reason we take them according to a "timed" prescription from a doctor. Possibly the most difficult

and even tragic diagnosis comes when it is discovered that a system is ill due to defects from within, forcing major treatment and the possible excising of the affected area. While systems of the human body can be specifically defined and monitored, it is not always that simple with what we call the “system” of an organization.

## THE REALITY OF SYSTEMS

As it relates to the church, ever since my entry into ministry at 17, I’ve heard the word “system.” I don’t honestly know that any of us know what that thing is. I was told once that I couldn’t be a state youth director of a particular region because I wasn’t in the “system.” A State Overseer once told me I couldn’t go to a certain church because I wasn’t in that “bracket.” Except for the stated authority of an overseer, there wasn’t a law or anything in the Minutes of the General Assembly that dictated that I couldn’t do those things, but there was a “System.” Even as a pastor of a strong church and later as a State and Regional leader, I would be met with what everyone just knew to be—and to call—the “System.”

Now that I’m the general overseer of the Church of God, for the life of me, I can’t find any real tangible thing huddled in some corner anywhere in Cleveland, Tennessee, that I can touch and say “Aha, there it is ...the System.” There is no notebook anywhere around here called “System.” It doesn’t have a parking space, desk, or secretary. But

I would be a fool to say to you that a system doesn’t exist. Sure it does. It’s invisible ... yet present. It has no hands ... but it can have a grip. It has no feet ... but believe me, it gets around.

But know this also, whatever this thing called “System” is, it’s not denominationally exclusive or loyal. There’s been a system in every TV network I’ve ever appeared on. Those gospel music venues and conventions I’ve hung around for years—yes, there’s a “system.” And trust me, all of those interdenominational and non-denominational meetings I go to and often speak at ... you got it, there’s a “system”.... a system that is often well meaning, but just as often, faulty, inadequate and partial to those who helped create it. “Systems” are everywhere because people are everywhere.

In John 17:15 there was a “system” that Jesus even acknowledged and prayed that the Father would somehow help the disciples find a way, that while working “in” it they would not be “of” it. And that’s the posture that I think we all must have. God is not surprised, shaken, or diminished by the fact that systems, wherever and whatever they are, exist. I suppose there are good systems and bad systems and one’s view of them is affected by their experience with them.

Sometimes systems just happen. Intentionally or otherwise, they exist. I acknowledge it but choose not to focus all of my time dwelling on it. I would rather give my time to working with and working

on viable, functioning, and honorable structures that hold systems in check and call them, real or imagined, into accountability.

## A SOUND STRUCTURE

The Church of God has a sound structure. Is it perfect? Of course not. The fact that we have an International General Assembly every two years is proof that none of us believe it's perfect. However, we must be willing to continually address and adjust structural challenges and even structural deficiencies in order for us to be part of finishing the Great Commission. We have to be willing to admit our needs and then we must be willing to be at and stay at the table dealing with them and adjusting them regularly as needed. We must respect one another. We must make room at the table for the voices of men and women of past, present, and next generations. While we spend time asking "What's wrong with the church," we must also celebrate "what's right" with the church and allow the "right" with it to impact the culture we find ourselves in today. Most of all, and above all, we must not lose our Pentecostal distinctive in the process. I am convinced that our "systemic" challenges, visible and invisible, can be remedied but only if our structure is sound and remains strong. Our structure must be strong enough to:

- Guard against "judging ourselves, by ourselves," 2 Corinthians 10:12;
- Observe trends but resist fads and then

chart a clear and God-honoring course that leads to Kingdom expansion;

- Honor heritage and preserve scriptural distinctive while measuring traditions against God's Word to determine what stands or falls;
- And much, much more ...

## CLOSING

Keep your eyes on Jesus and not a system. Guard your integrity, cherish your friendships, and pray without ceasing.

There's too much in my heart today, but for now, I'll end with this: I'll never forget the time when as a child while playing "Superman," I jumped off a high porch and broke my right arm. I really messed up a much needed part of my structure. I've always appreciated the fact that my parents got me to a doctor who with great insight made a decision that to this day I am grateful for. He chose to repair the break rather than amputate the arm. He saw that an adjusted and repaired arm still had a huge role to play for my body. Neither my father nor my mother made me the subject of neighborhood ridicule because of my leap into the wind. Rather, they sought help and addressed the need—they helped get my structure repaired. To this day, I still use that arm.

I choose to use it today to embrace and not resist. I look forward to locking that arm with yours as we race toward the FINISH line together. ■



# One of the GREATEST CHALLENGES Christian Leaders Face With NEW EMPLOYEES

by TIM CAMERON

**B**EFORE I ANSWER the question that is so eye-catching and thought provoking, let's take a few guesses at the answer to that question:

- How the no-overtime policy applies to overtime.
- Explaining employee parking? Simply put, all parking privileges are revoked if you are caught near the administrator's reserved space. NO GRACE here.
- The employee dress code: what's with this new underwear worn as outerwear? Repeat, what's with this new underwear ...?

For decades, I gave my new employees a copy of the Gene Edwards classic, *A Tale*

*of Three Kings*. Gene told me it is his most popular book. And there is good reason why; read on. I put the book in their hands during orientation as their required reading, following the employee handbook of course. Does that still exist? Next, we would embark on a series of challenging dialogues about the major points of the book.

One of the major points of this classic is the gripping story of how David navigated serving a king who was insane. But in this case, it was even worse; the king was possessed with a demonic spirit. The story speaks directly to the dilemma faced when you are serving someone who is a little (or

more than a little) crazy. I would always get a quick laugh from my new employees with that line; however, the lightness quickly turned heavy when I assured them a time was coming when they were going to be disappointed in my decision-making as leader of this stalwart, Christian organization and might question my sanity.

Quickly (very quickly), I would transition to my real intention of this exercise: to help the new employee come face to face with practical considerations they may encounter in the Christian workplace. For instance: How do I work next to this person who is appallingly negative? What do I do when someone else takes credit for my work? Or how do I deal with a supervisor who plays favorites?

There is a key truth that screams, at some juncture, to almost every new employee in a Christian organization—a truth that few Christian leaders prepare their new employees to face. The truth? This company isn't heaven. Sorry, no Utopia here. People at this workplace don't always behave like Christians.

Most people who seek employment at a Christian workplace are drawn by two primary motivations. They want to use their talents to build the kingdom of God, and they are looking for a work environment that contrasts with what they had in the secular workplace. Too many secular workplaces are rife with extreme competition, backbiting, lack of concern for fellow workers and a management philosophy

that workers are consumables. It is not unusual to find personnel departments in the secular workplace with titles that dehumanize the employees of the enterprise, such as Human Resources or Employee Capital Management. My favorite is the one recently used by one of the largest school districts in my home state, Human Asset Management. What were these people thinking?

Here's the question of the day: How does a leader help the new employee face the disappointment that will come upon realizing this Christian workplace isn't perfect, maybe not even close? The first thing that has to happen is for all of us to understand the impact of disappointment.

I am convinced that apart from sin, disappointment is the most serious problem we face as Christians. Through afflictions, hardships at work, personal failures, accidents, betrayal, unmet expectations, and many other apparent negative experiences, we can lose sight of God's purposes and plan.

When we don't see how the Lord weaves all of our experiences into His purpose in our lives, we respond in disappointment. Disappointment leads to self-pity, disillusionment, depression, and ultimately, withdrawal. This has dramatic ramifications for the new employee coming into a Christian workplace with some of these expectations: Fellow employees will be humming all through the day, "This is the day the Lord has made." The direct supervisor will greet her each morning with, "How can I make

this day more spiritually alive for you?" And the Christian leader who is the final authority at work will regularly check in with her to make sure the workplace is spiritually transforming. All jesting aside, it is very challenging for a new employee in a Christian workplace to have realistic expectations of the ethos of the place.

Here is where leadership must be practical and preemptive. It's the leader's job to define realistic expectations for the new employee in regard to Christian culture. It's the leader's job to create channels of communication to address those nagging issues that eat away at peace, unity, and ultimately productivity. The leader must be positive,

encouraging, and engaged in the culture of the workplace. More than anyone else in the workplace, the leader sets the tone for culture. And it is the direct responsibility of the leader to be concerned with the new employee's professional growth, success in the position, and spiritual transformation. Leaders in Christian organizations miss the mark if they are concerned with only production and no complaints.

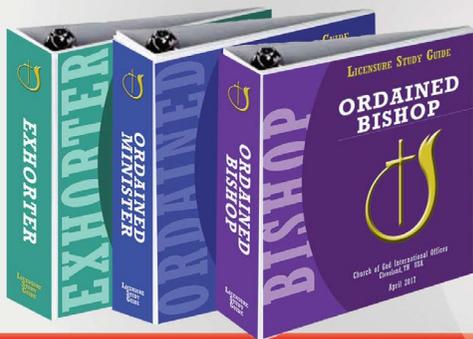
Come on, now, you leaders out there. Set new employees up for success. ■

*Tim Cameron is a passionate follower of Jesus, a father of five, with six grandchildren and two goddaughters. (Source: ministrytoday.com)*



## Are you ready to advance to the next ministerial level?

Contact your state office for a ministerial application.



Purchase your  
Licensure Study Guide today!

**\$89.00** plus shipping

Also available in pdf.

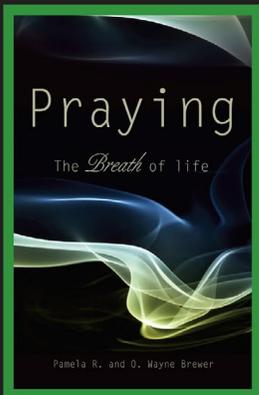
Order today and save shipping cost.

CLICK THE WEB ADDRESS BELOW.

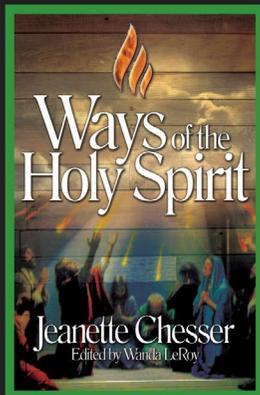
**cogdoe.org**

Church of God Division of Education

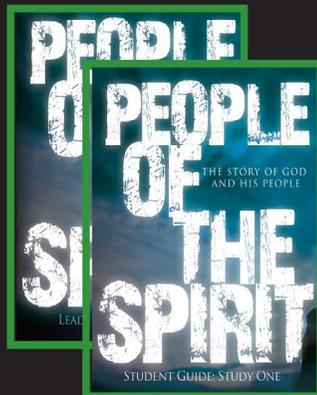
# WE ARE ALL ABOUT HELPING YOU MAKE DISCIPLES . . . WITH A DISTINCTLY PENTECOSTAL EMPHASIS



**\$15.95** or *Quantity Discounts*



**\$10.00** or *Quantity Discounts*



**L: \$12.99 S: \$16.99** or *Quantity Discounts*

- Available in ESPAÑOL (Orar el Aliento de Vida)
- For teaching & small group discipleship
- Small group discussion questions
- Eight week study / men or women's groups
- Biblical character examples of each "prayer type"
- Extensive scripture listing
- Helpful appendix

- For mid-level discipling / Holy Spirit
- Well organized for teaching / group study
- Excellent for believers new to Pentecost
- How the Holy Spirit functions in our lives
- Clear, practical applications
- For women or men / 13 sessions

- Available in ESPAÑOL (Pueblo Del Espiritu)
- An excellent introduction to small group study
- Leaders Guide and Student Guides available
- Leaders Guide includes "Keys to Leading a Small Group"
- Seven weeks of discipleship group encounter
- Made to be transformative / spans the Bible

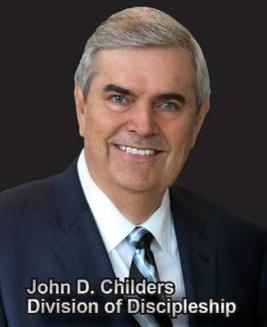
## ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

KNOWING • BEING • DOING

For resources and information  
or to schedule a clinic or conference  
Call or visit us online

**888.766.9009**

**[adulddiscipleshipcog.com](http://adulddiscipleshipcog.com)**



John D. Childers  
Division of Discipleship



O. Wayne & Pamela R. Brewer  
Adult Discipleship Directors

# TIPS TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH PLAYGROUND SAFER

## (But Still Just as Fun!)

by RHIANNA MILLER

**K**IDS OF ALL AGES are prone to falling and hurting themselves, sometimes taking unnecessary risks when they play, which could put them or others in danger. As parents, we want to give them some measure of freedom while still

doing what we can to prevent injury, or worse. That's just common sense.

### HAVE RULES, BUT VARY THEM BASED ON LOCATION AND AGE

The rules you might want to impose on your kids in your own backyard, where you



can keep an eye on their play activities, might be different from what you expect of them in the local schoolyard or playground.

Similarly, a 10-year-old doesn't necessarily need the same rules as a 5-year-old while playing at the park. But there should be rules and everyone should be clear on what they are before they go out.

As kids become more independent, you will need to remind them of your rules. Some examples:

- Keep their hands to themselves (no pushing, shoving, roughhousing, or fighting)
- Do not jump off any structure at a height
- Be careful when using rackets or balls so as not to whack anyone accidentally
- Be aware of smaller children in the area so they don't get hit or run over by a bigger kid

## PROTECT KIDS FROM THE SUN

This might seem like an obvious tip, but the number of children who come away from a few hours of play with a sunburn in a year is astronomical. Children's skin is more sensitive to the harsh rays, particularly between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and it only takes a few sunburns during childhood to increase the risk of developing skin cancer later on. Get the kids into the habit of putting on broadbase UVA/UVB sunscreen SPF 30 or higher *before* they go play and to wear a ball cap or hat when playing in full sun.

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Even if her favorite outfit ("She's going to cry if she can't wear it") is her flowing princess dress and mini-heels, this isn't playground appropriate clothing. It *is* an invitation to injury. Make sure your kids have and wear play-appropriate clothes. Add a hat and sunglasses in the spring, summer and fall, and don't forget warm clothes throughout the winter. It doesn't take long to cool off when it's freezing out.

## KEEP EVERYONE HYDRATED

Little bodies get dehydrated pretty quickly on a hot summer day, so make sure that your kids have refillable water bottles with them when they're going to the park or the playground. It's important to avoid sun or heat stroke, which can have serious consequences. Even while playing sports in cooler weather, kids should have access to water.

## REMEMBER PROTECTIVE GEAR

Kids who have grown up and are used to putting on protective gear to play sports or engage in higher-risk activities like cycling, skateboarding, scootering, or rollerblading likely won't think twice about donning a helmet and pads.

That said, it's a good idea to check in and make sure that they remember to do it *every time*. Before sending your kids off to play, you should also make sure that the equipment is in good working order, is appropriate for what your kids are using it for, and that it fits properly.

## MAKE SURE EQUIPMENT IS AGE-APPROPRIATE AND IN GOOD CONDITION

Whether at home in your backyard or if you're going to the park, check over the equipment to make sure it's not broken or rusted. Look for playgrounds that have shock absorbing surfaces below the play structures and, if you're building your own, consider a base like Rubber Mulch to ensure that if your kids fall—and they *will* fall, if only by tripping—they're safe from a hard landing.

## LEARN THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION

Even a fun game of soccer with friends at the local field can result in a concussion. The danger is less with the first concussion a child might get than if they were to get a second one soon after, so recognizing the signs of concussion is very important for parents, caregivers, and coaches alike.

At a high level, you're looking for . . .

- Headache or a feeling of pressure in the head.
- Loss of consciousness, even if only for a moment.
- Confusion or dizziness.
- Ringing in the ears.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.

Keeping kids safe isn't about bubble wrapping them and preventing them from playing, but it is about taking some basic steps such as these. It just makes sense to

avoid preventable and foreseeable injury and make sure that everyone has a good time playing outdoors! ■

*Rhianna Miller is the playground design and safety expert at [rubbermulch.com](http://rubbermulch.com), the original and environmentally responsible mulch made from 100 percent recycled rubber used in gardens, playgrounds, and sustainable landscaping. (This article appeared in the April 10, 2018 online edition of *Ministry Today*.)*



# SORTING THROUGH THE CHURCH'S SILENCE

by BETH MOORE



**T**HE CHOIRS OF outcries from Hollywood over the Harvey Weinstein scandal concerning crimes against women and those echoing globe-wide over the atrocities of USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar against children drop a question of epic proportions into the lap of the church:

Why are we who preach and teach “the truth will set you free” largely bound by silence regarding sexual assault and abuse?

Rachael Denhollander’s cogent courtroom testimony, masterfully articulating both the grace and justice of Jesus Christ, made her identification as a Christian beautifully clear. We were immensely proud to be her sisters and brothers and to stand with her in the public square. Then came the irony of discovering that her advocacy for sexual assault victims had cost Rachael her church. What’s more, most of us suspect her congregation wouldn’t have been the only

one. What are we to do with this disparity? Why would followers of Jesus be among the least vocal and the slowest to respond when Christ, whom we are called to imitate, was a relentless defender of the powerless, misused, victimized, and abused? In specific regard to children, why do we—activists in numerous other streams of concern—choose reserve about wrongs for which Jesus reserved a titanic threat?

If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! (Matt. 18:6-7 NIV).

A few of the most obvious reasons have been discussed and cussed in recent

months. Protecting powerful people (which can include ourselves), institutions and systems from shame, accusation, desertion and defunding are a few major contributors. Throw alongside those a nobler rationalization: the preservation of the “greater good.” This, of course, is an absurdity since hiding abuse will ultimately and absolutely be the institution’s (and the person’s) undoing. God just really doesn’t let us get away with that kind of thing forever. He’s too faithful. Christ’s own theology of secrecy can be summed up in two simple words: *secrets manifest*. Thankfully, the assurance is true in regard to good secrets as well as bad. (Matt.6; Mark 4) The faster we uncover the toxic ones before God (Psalm 32:5) and before proper authorities, the better. Lastly, what we’ve proved willing to overlook for political gain has rendered us mute lest our hypocrisy know no bounds and, although that matters to me, that’s not the fish I care to fry today. My purpose in this article is to throw another possible explanation on the table for consideration.

I wonder if much of our silence, our squirming and palpable discomfort, regarding the exposure of sexual abuses is wrapped up in our guilt, shame, or brokenness over our own sexual sins. After all, who among us hasn’t committed sexual sin whether in imagination or action? I will leave room for perhaps three of you out there somewhere who are now officially excused from this discussion. Please go reward yourselves with

a half-gallon of Ben and Jerry’s which we ask you to consume in one sitting just to make the rest of us feel some level of comfort over your gluttony or go covet your coworker’s car or at the very least be visibly proud of your purity over all aforementioned transgressions so we can be consoled by your sinful pride. Maybe the rest of us could sit around here for a second and give this theory some mild consideration. Even if our sexual sins belong to our pasts and our lives bear fruit of true repentance, we may still have an enormous reluctance to bring sexual misconduct to light.

And for good reason. Take John 8, for instance, and the woman caught in the act of adultery dragged into the Temple courts and Christ’s response to whether or not she should be stoned. “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” Every accuser fell silent to the thuds of rocks dropping at their feet. Which of us has the right to throw a stone? None, of course. That’s the way of Jesus. That’s the way of grace.

The thought that it could be our own sins shamefully exposed is so horrifying that we’ve ripped off a piece of duct tape and slapped it across our mouths. Most of us have not only committed some form of sexual sin. We’ve also grappled at one point or another with some level of sexual dysfunction, however well we hid it or quickly moved through it. The statistics on pornography alone testify to our skewed sexuality.

We understandably feel guilty about pointing out such weaknesses in others and our sensitivity to hypocrisy is appropriate. We see the faces of the accused all over the media and imagine our own mugs between their crimson ears and the sordid reports of our own sinfulness in print instead of theirs.

But here are a few questions I'd like to pose: Do all sexual sins call for the same response? Are we meant by God to respond to the sexually abusive the same way we respond to the sexually immoral? To be sure, all stones of condemnation drop to the dirt in the presence and perfection of Jesus, crucified for our sins and raised from the dead so we can walk in newness of life. His grace extends to all. His forgiveness is earned by none. All sexual sins have negative repercussions, but all sexual sins don't cause the *same level* of repercussions. Likewise, all predators are immoral, but not all immorality is predatory. Do we walk away from an unrepentant rapist because we've all sinned sexually in one way or another, or do we apprehend him? Do we ignore a church leader's sexual harassment because we slept with people in college? Forgive me for being so direct, but these things need sorting out.

If we are going to move to a place of healthy community in the church where there is thriving instead of conniving, where the sheep are protected instead of the wolves, where the abused find shelter instead of the abusers, we're going to have

to sort out our convoluted thinking about sexual misconduct.

*It is imperative that we learn to differentiate between sexual immorality and sexual criminality.*

- Both are sin.
- Both call for repentance.
- Both require grace.
- Both can be forgiven, slates wiped clean by our merciful God though the cross of Christ.

Where church and ministry leaders are concerned, both also call for proper action. But one calls for a different proper action. It calls for the *police*. While all sexual sin is immoral, not all sexual sin is criminal. There is sexual sin in general. And there is sexual assault in particular. There must be a distinction drawn between the two.

Here's the bottom line. The problem is enormous, but it doesn't have to stay that way. We've helped blow it up to its current size with our breathy silence. We won't be able to eradicate sexual crimes—only the coming of Christ's kingdom will accomplish that—but, by His grace, power, wisdom, and courage, we can lessen it in our own midst by a landslide. We have victims of sexual assault, molestation, and abuse all over the church—one in four females and one in six males—just as we do in virtually any community. We also likely have some predators and abusers in our congregations. So, do we quit going to church? No, unless we want to quit going to work, too, and to malls and social gatherings

and sports events and concerts. Anywhere you have a crowd of people, you are among those who have abused and been abused.

So, what can we do? We address it head-on. We start making it well known—wisely and without witch-hunting histrionics—that the church is henceforth an unsafe hiding place for predators. It’s a great place for them to go forward and repent and turn themselves in, casting themselves on the grace of God with the rest of us, but it must cease to be a safe harbor where they can hide and perpetuate their crimes. We need pastors and teachers who are willing to address these realities often enough to alter the silence culture.

I think numerous Christians genuinely just need to know it is God’s will to expose such things. After all, love covers a multitude of sins. And, thank God, it does, but love does not perpetuate victimization by covering for a victimizer. Love that uncovers one in order to cover another is by no means loving. We’re smarter than this. We can discern better than this. We know in our gut that covering up grievous wrongdoing because the individual is a fellow believer can’t be what 1 Peter 4:8 means.

Ephesians 5:11 says “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness but instead *expose them.*”

Ephesians 5:14 follows it up with these words: “But when anything is exposed *by the light* it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.”

We don’t expose darkness darkly, with condemnation, hatred, and vengeance. We expose darkness by the light of Jesus. Anything—absolutely anything—the light reveals, the light can also heal.

God alone knows the impact Rick and Kay Warren will have on churches all over the world, because they were audacious enough last Sunday to address the topic of sexual abuse and assault from the platform in all their services. Kay courageously, shamelessly told her story, shared ramifications of the abuse and the road to healing and Rick preached on the themes from Scripture. I will long remember Rick’s address to his congregation. After nearly weeping with compassion over the hurt many had suffered and saying the simple but fitting words “I’m so sorry that happened to you,” he said this: “God has made me shepherd over this flock. I will do everything I can to make Saddleback Church a safe place for the sheep, but it will not be a safe place for wolves. If you are a predator and you prey on my flock, I will hunt you down and I will turn you in.” He also invited abusers to the cross of Christ, to repentance and forgiveness, and prayed for them. It was not the abused that left church frightened that day. It was the unrepentant abusers and make no mistake. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov.9:10).

We need more than a handful of people to activate. We need church and ministry transformation. We need brothers

and sisters who are brave enough to sort through their own sexual messiness, to repent where it's called for, to be infused by the Holy Spirit to discern wisely and to distinguish accurately, to love healthily, comfort and protect valiantly and to help create an atmosphere where people thrive and healing really can take place. We need us all. We need all of Jesus.

I'll end with this. A few days ago my morning Scripture reading included the first two chapters of Ruth. I was halted by Naomi's statement of affirmation regarding the field of Boaz as a safe place for Ruth to work, even with many men close by (see Ruth 2:21). In Ruth 2:22, Naomi used these words: "It is good...lest in another field you

be assaulted." What the chapter conveyed about both Naomi and Boaz as alert, aware, and proactive protectors was profound. Women, let's be like Naomi, informed, smart, discerning, and like Ruth, willing to listen to sound counsel – not fear-mongering but *sound counsel*—about safe versus dangerous places. Men, take up the mantle of Boaz and see to it valiantly, wisely, and shrewdly, that in your field, whatever and wherever it may be, no one gets assaulted. And, should anyone be harmed despite your watchfulness, you know what to do.

Do what is right. ■

(This article appeared in the Beth Moore *Living Proof Ministries* blog January 31, 2018)

 **leaderLABS** in partnership with LEE UNIVERSITY  
presents

**THE DARK SIDE OF LEADERSHIP**  
**OCT 1-2, 2018**  
**LEE UNIVERSITY**



#### **SPEAKERS / TOPICS**

Dr. Tim Hill - The Dark Night of the Soul

Dr. Paul Conn - The Failed Leader; Learning from Mistakes

Dr. Mark Walker - The Wounded Leader

Dr. Julie Martinez - Lessons from the Field, Don't Play the Victim

Dr. Fred Garmon - D.A.R.T.H. V.A.D.E.R. Leadership

Panel Discussion - Dealing with Moral Failure

**\$79 : INCLUDES LUNCH/REFRESHMENTS/CONCERT : REGISTER NOW AT [LEADERLABS.COM](http://LEADERLABS.COM)**

# MENTAL ILLNESS WITHIN THE CHURCH

**I**MAGINE THIS. You are a soldier, a veteran of war. The experiences that have made you stronger have also left your body marked by scars. The battles you have survived have helped you discover previously unknown parts of yourself that both make you proud and terrify you. Your training shows in the way you walk, the way you talk, and the lines on your face.

You appreciate when people recognize you as a veteran and thank you for your service. But what you really need is to be

with people who understand, who have been where you have been and who don't require you to explain your stories or hide your struggles.

So you look online and find an ad for a veterans group, and you make plans to attend. A little nervous, you make your way to the meeting location. Once there, you open the door and walk in, looking forward to being with people who will understand

by AMY SIMPSON



you. You look around the room, and suddenly you know this was a huge mistake. Smiling faces greet you, perfect faces with glowing white teeth. Beautiful people are dressed in formal clothes, showing off their sculpted bodies and unlined faces. Not a scar in sight. And on the wall is a banner proclaiming, “Welcome to the Society of Veterans Healed by Plastic Surgery.”

You’re in the wrong place.

For many people, walking into a church on Sunday morning can feel like bringing a scarred face and a vulnerable heart into a group that has made every effort to look perfect on the outside and mask their own wounds. People with mental illness need to connect with others who will understand their daily struggle and love them through it. Instead, they walk into a room full of people who aren’t even willing to admit they’ve ever had a really bad day.

Historically, when people have sought help for dealing with a mental health problem, the number-one place they have gone is to a member of the clergy. What do they encounter when they walk through the doors of our churches? Many find acceptance, the love of Christ, and real help; many more find misunderstanding, fear, and even open hostility. Many encounter the subtle message that they’d better hide not only their illness, but every problem in their lives. One of the most heartbreaking things they find is a community of people who lack the ability to welcome them because they’re so out of touch with their

own brokenness and they have forgotten how generously Jesus has welcomed them.

If you’re like me, you can do a pretty good job of hiding your flaws and struggles for at least an hour. For people who live with mental illness, especially serious and chronic disorders, symptoms are hard to hide. Some people can’t hide their struggles for five minutes. How can they enter into community with people who pretend nothing is wrong and there is nothing in them that doesn’t work as it should?

I spend a lot of time writing and speaking to people in the church, educating them, and advocating for a more Christlike response to people with mental illness and their loved ones. I ask Christians to live up to their calling as representatives of Jesus, extending love and practical kindness to people who live with mental illness, just as we do to others. And when I stand up in front of a group of Christians with this message, I ask them to start by acknowledging their own brokenness.

Why is this so important? Because the church is a place for veterans—people who have been through battle and who bear scars to prove it. The church is a place for people who have come to recognize their own spiritual barrenness, their own inadequacy to rescue themselves from sin, their own tendency to repeat their folly “as a dog returns to its vomit” (Proverbs 26:11). We are a community of people who are supposed to be familiar and comfortable with the idea that the world is broken and we are

**“We’re all BROKEN and IMPERFECT. We’re all flawed and scarred. And the only people who are truly effective in ministering to others are the ones who are aware of this in themselves.”**

---

ultimately hopeless without Jesus. We need to be rescued, and this world is not a comfortable final destination.

When, instead, we reject our brokenness and make ourselves out to be polished products of spiritual plastic surgery, we make our communities unsafe for people who are past the point of pretending to have it all together.

You are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), but you have not yet been made new (Romans 8:22-25). If you belong to Christ, you are forgiven (1 John 1:9), but you are still engaged in a very real and daily battle with sin (Romans 7:21-25). You walk in God’s gifts of grace and faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), yet you wrestle with arrogance and doubt, struggling to believe that God even cares (Psalm 73).

Maybe you struggle with your own mental health, maybe not. Maybe you live with a bad heart or an aching back or a case of diabetes or high cholesterol or you walk

with a limp, because there is some part of your body that does not work as you wish it would work.

We’re all broken and imperfect. We’re all flawed and scarred. And the only people who are truly effective in ministering to others are the ones who are aware of this in themselves.

Acknowledging your own brokenness will make your church a safer place to suffer. It will turn your congregation “from a museum for saints to a hospital for sinners.” After all, Jesus himself told the Pharisees, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:17). Those who recognize their need for God are the only ones in the right position to receive Him. Christians who realize they still need grace are the only ones who authentically offer it to others.

There is no better way to make our churches relevant to the world around us. There is no better way to proclaim the gospel than to live it and love the people who come to us. And we can start by being honest about ourselves. ■

*Amy Simpson is a leadership coach, speaker, and author of Blessed Are the Unsatisfied: Finding Spiritual Freedom in an Imperfect World; Anxious: Choosing Faith in a World of Worry; and Troubled Minds: Mental Illness and the Church’s Mission (all InterVarsity Press). You can find her at [AmySimpson.com](http://AmySimpson.com) and on Twitter @aresimpson.*

# Operation Compassion is...



- there for the hungry
- there for the victims of disasters
- Hope for someone in need

Will you help us bring hope to a hurting world?

**Operation**  
**COMPASSION**  
A MINISTRY OF BLESSING

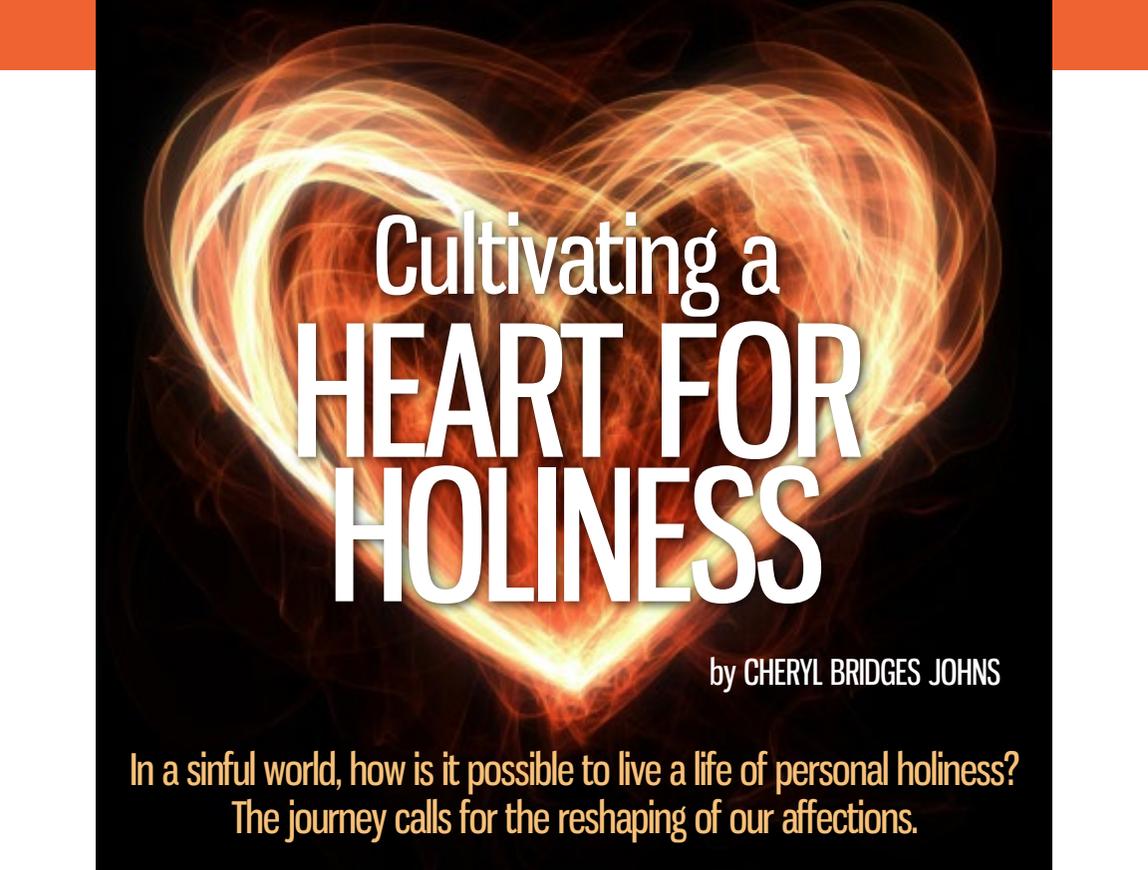
Operation Compassion is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt charitable organization.

**GIVE TODAY!**

[operationcompassion.org](http://operationcompassion.org)



**Operation Compassion**  
114 Stuart Road NE • PMB 370  
Cleveland, TN 37312  
Phone: (423) 728-3932



# Cultivating a HEART FOR HOLINESS

by CHERYL BRIDGES JOHNS

In a sinful world, how is it possible to live a life of personal holiness?  
The journey calls for the reshaping of our affections.

**A** HOLY PERSON is beautiful. Such a person seems to have an inner light that radiates through her countenance. She has a power of attraction, drawing others into the presence of God and magnifying the beauty of holiness.

At the same time, holy people reflect an otherness that can be somewhat disconcerting. By their nature, they expose the profane as a contrast to the holy. Their light reveals the ugliness of the darkness that permeates a sinful world.

I know such people. They come from a variety of callings and traditions: a mis-

sionary to the Arabs in the Middle East, a Franciscan monk, prayer warriors in my church, my mother-in-law known for her healing prayers. We do not reserve this type of enchanted life, however, for a few saints or superhero Christians. Scripture is clear that holiness is normative for all Christians, for without holiness “no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14 NKJV).

In spite of the biblical admonitions toward holiness, much of Protestant theology, with its overemphasis upon forensic justification and imputed righteousness, has created a Christian culture of sinful people. This arises from failure to see the full gospel—

one that brings about actual transformation. Such failure causes many Christians—even Spirit-filled ones—to believe that holiness is not necessary. They are content to remain sinners saved by grace, but not transformed by that grace. The popular bumper sticker: “Christians are not perfect; just forgiven,” sums up this concept.

Because of this truncated understanding of salvation, too many believers do not see a life of holiness as necessary for their Christian journey. They are content to live in the shadowlands of a profane culture, making excuses for besetting sins. As a consequence, their witness is weak and a lack of power marks their journey.

Profane Christians are not beautiful. Their bumper stickers do not attract others to the light of God. Rather, they hinder the message that Jesus came to save, heal, and deliver all creation from its bondage to sin.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus made it possible for humankind to be rejoined in fellowship with the Creator. Moreover, by His grace, God is at work reclaiming all creation. This work of reclamation is not merely glossing over sin, but it involves transformation to the extent that there is deliverance and healing. Jesus came to deliver us from evil, not merely to give us a “get out of hell card.” In other words, salvation is the healing of a broken creation. That which sin marred can once again flourish. Lives broken by addictions can become beautiful vessels of holy presence. Such is the power of the gospel.

But, in a sinful world, how is it possible to live a life of personal holiness? How do we cultivate such a life? Be fair warned: the journey into holiness is not easy. It calls for the reshaping of our affections. This reshaping involves a continual dialectic of crisis and development that takes us from grace into ever-deepening grace. There is great joy in holiness. There is wonder and beauty.

### **THE CORE OF HOLINESS: THE AFFECTIONS**

Affections are the core of who we are. They express the disposition of the heart, which, in the words of Steven Land “order all the powers of emotion, perception, will, and understanding.”<sup>1</sup> The affections thus involve our mind as well as our emotions. They are deep and abiding dispositions that determine the direction of our lives. Through our affections, we express our desires. Through our affections, we show who and what we love. Our affections reveal the nature of our heart.

The journey into holiness is thus a journey of our affections. It is our journey into desiring God. Through this journey, we learn to love as God loves and to desire what is holy. The more we abide in and with a holy God the more we are transformed into the likeness of God. Bottom line: holiness is a love relationship. It is about having a heart on fire with godly love.

### **CULTIVATING HOLINESS: CRISIS**

The heart is not easily set on fire with godly love because the affections of our

heart are deceitful. Indeed, sin has wounded the core of our being. As a consequence, we often desire those things that are contrary to the kingdom of God. These things wound our affections, distorting them toward the profane. Our wounded desire must be healed and restored toward godly love and this restoration requires costly grace. It requires a death.

Jesus, in His discipleship of the Twelve, made it clear that life in the Kingdom involved death, not only His death, but also the death of His followers. The journey into personal holiness begins with death of self. It involves purging our claims to self-gratification, self-glory, and self-direction. Crisis, then, is the necessary starting point for cultivating a life of holiness. It involves what John Wesley called the “circumcision of the heart,” cutting away those affections that are not godly. Crisis both begins the journey into holiness and is an ongoing part of the journey.

People do not easily receive this message, for everywhere we turn we hear that it is all about us. Our culture of narcissism tells us we are the center of our lives and we deserve only the best life has to offer. Even Christians have bought this message, thinking that the beautiful life offered by the world is the same as the wondrous beauty of a sanctified life.

One clear message of the Azusa Street Revival was that the power of the Holy Spirit came only to those who were willing to die to self. In the course of seeking the baptism

in the Holy Spirit, many came into the fires of sanctification. Consider the testimony of Adolph Rosa, an evangelist from the Cape Verde Islands who came to Azusa Street: “The power of God came upon me until I dropped to the floor. I was under the power of God for about an hour and a half, and it was there that all pride, and self, and conceit disappeared, and I was really dead to the world, for I had Christ within in His fullness (sic).”<sup>2</sup>

The type of crisis experience described above is not the end point of holiness. Rather, it is the beginning of a journey characterized by both crisis and development. Crisis breaks things open so the Holy Spirit can show us our true selves, the world, and God in a new way. By the power of God’s in-breaking grace, we are able to receive both the judging and healing aspects of grace. We can say then that crisis is necessary and good for us.

## **CULTIVATING HOLINESS: DEVELOPMENT**

While crisis is necessary to move us toward sanctification, there is the need to weave crisis experiences into a patterned and disciplined life. The development of holiness takes shape by abiding in Scripture, living in Christian community, and practicing Christian disciplines. Each component: Scripture, community, and the disciplines serve to create holiness in us.

**Abiding in Scripture:** One important component toward cultivating a heart for

holiness is Bible study. The reason some Christians neglect this practice today is that they have not placed the Bible at the center of their affections. Eugene Peterson observes that “text” of the “sovereign self” is the one most read by Americans. This “text” is ruled by what he calls a “new trinity” of “needs, wants, and feelings,” and it competes with the biblical text for authorial power in the lives of Christians. This new trinity produces the fruit of consumption and acquisition.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, we might safely say that this new text eschews the idea of holiness. More and more Christians live by this text, and as a consequence, cheap substitutes replace holiness.

But the Bible takes us into another realm. It reveals the life of a Triune God who makes known His presence through His Word. When this Word becomes the center of our affections, it transforms us into the nature of the divine life. We cannot separate God’s Word from God’s presence for the most basic metaphysical reality of the Bible is that of Spirit-Word. God’s Spirit is present in God’s Word and is active, alive, and powerful.

To read the Bible is to enter into sacred space where God speaks with authority. In this space, it convicts, comforts, and transforms. Here we are to abide. Abiding in the Word means we live in the Word, taking it unto ourselves, making it our food for daily living. As we eat this Word, it transforms us. We begin to radiate its message, not merely apply its message.

**Christian Community:** Holiness is not a solitary experience. It is forged within the grace of community. Many only attend a worship service once a week. A weekly worship service does not provide enough visible expressions of grace necessary for our ongoing transformation. We need to form connections with believers who will love us, hold us accountable, pray for us, and journey with us into deeper holiness.

John Wesley understood the need for discipleship that helped transformed lives move into their journey of grace. Because of his concern that many of his converts “grew cold, and gave way to the sins which had long easily beset them,” he created class meetings, bands, and other forms of discipleship.<sup>4</sup> These groups enabled believers to bear one another’s burdens, exhort one another, and hold each other accountable. They were means wherein the grace of God would flow in and through the church. The more we are together, the stronger we become, both individually and communally.

**Practicing the Disciplines:** The disciplines are structured means whereby we pattern transformation into our daily lives. They make real the profession of our faith. The disciplines in themselves do not make us holy. But, as Richard Foster observes, the disciplines put us where God can “work within us and transform us. ... They are means of God’s grace.”<sup>5</sup> Foster describes several disciplined means of grace: meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship,

guidance, and celebration. Each discipline serves as a unique avenue for ongoing transformation.

Pentecostals have found that prayer, fasting, service, and worship are especially efficacious in cultivating a heart of holiness. Prayer takes believers into the presence of God. It is the means of developing intimate communion with Him. Holy people are people of prayer. Foster observes that prayer “is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives.”<sup>6</sup>

Forms of prayer include: adoration, intercession, thanksgiving, healing, and confession, to name a few. Whatever form, prayer shapes the affections toward godly love. Each form of prayer uniquely transforms our affections. Confessional prayer keeps believers in a posture of ongoing repentance and submission. To live a life of penitent prayer is to live with the door of our affections always open to hearing and responding to the Word of God.

Fasting is a powerful discipline. Fasting exposes the inner desires of our heart. These desires are often hidden, but through fasting we are able to see more clearly. We can see how much we crave food, things, pleasures of this world, and how little we hunger for those things that are eternal.

While fasting from food is the most common practice there are other types of fasts. During Lent (the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter) I try, as much as

possible, to fast from media. This journey into Lenten silence calls me to give up TV, radio, Facebook, etc. I try to go deeper into the stillness of God’s presence. I am addicted to the sights and sounds of technology. But, as the days go by, I find delight in free space created by unplugging. There is rest from the tyranny of technology and here I find rest in the presence of God.

Service is a necessary discipline toward a life of holiness. We cannot be holy and not serve others. Foster contrasts what he calls “self-righteous service” with “true service.” He notes that true service is a lifestyle that does not seek self-glory. It is fueled by the grace of humility. As we live in the grace of humility “deep change occurs in our spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Serving others transforms inordinate desires and affections. Becoming a true servant means we learn to put aside our desires and agendas for the good of others. William Law, whose life and writings greatly impacted eighteenth-century England, wrote in his book, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, a beautiful description of true service: “con- descend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.”<sup>8</sup>

Self-righteous service, on the other hand, promotes pride. In this type of service there

is a focus on honor and external rewards. Ministers are especially prone to the temptation toward self-righteous service. Frequently, people praise their good works. If they are not diligent, they begin to believe the reports of others. Egos become inflated and the good works that are done become counter productive toward a heart of holiness. Cultivating a life of holiness means that laity and ministers alike serve out of hearts aflame with godly love. Holy affections produce a missional heart.

The discipline of worship has been central to Pentecostal spirituality. It has shaped our affections with passion for the Kingdom. Land observes that in Spirit-filled worship, “praise and proclamation, the presence of Jesus and the Spirit, and the affections in Christ and the power of the Spirit are all fused in a call to Christian character and vocation.”<sup>9</sup> This unique fusion transcends time and space, bringing worshipers into the presence of God. True worship exalts the beauty of holiness. It images the nature of the coming Kingdom. As believers participate in this sacred space, they taste the wonder and beauty of the age to come. They are transformed more into the likeness of this glory. They are filled with passion for the Kingdom.

### **CONCLUSION: A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE**

The postmodern world is hungry for the authentic and real. People long to see a profoundly beautiful life that images the genuine over against the fake. Such lives are

possible if we are willing to pay the price. We pay that price in the fires of death to self. We cultivate it through the practices of abiding in Scripture and living faithfully in community. We further shape it through the disciplines of prayer, fasting, worship, and service. This is the life that is to come when the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth. We are now in the ready room for that time. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to dress us as the beautiful bride so when our Lord appears, we will not be found wanting. ■

*Cheryl Bridges Johns, Ph.D., is professor of Christian formation and discipleship at Church of God Theological Seminary, Cleveland, Tennessee.*

### **NOTES**

1. Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 133.
2. Cecil M. Roebeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2006), 178.
3. Eugene Peterson, *Eat This Book* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 32.
4. See Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1980).
5. Richard Foster, *The Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 6.
6. *Ibid.*, 30.
7. *Ibid.*, 113.
8. William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Nashville: The Upper Room Press, 1952), 26. Quoted in Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 114.
9. Land, 129.

# BREAKING THE HOLD OF SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

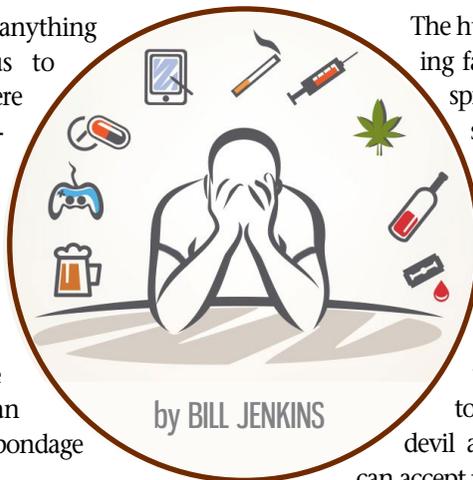
**B**ONDAGE is anything that binds us to the point where we become involuntary slaves. Bondage makes us feel like we have lost our ability to make a reasonable and godly choice. There is nothing greater the Enemy desires than to build a fence of bondage around God's people.

The apostle Paul, writing to the Christians at Rome, addressed the problem of spiritual bondage:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Romans 8:14-16).\*

Three spirits are mentioned in this Scripture reference:

1. The Spirit of Bondage
2. The Spirit of Adoption
3. The Human Spirit



The human spirit is the deciding factor as to whether the spirit of bondage or the spirit of adoption will dominate our lives. Two forces are at work: the driving of the flesh and the leading of the Spirit. They are at war for your soul. You choose to be in bondage to the devil and your flesh, or you can accept the fact that Jesus wants

to adopt you. When a person is adopted, he or she loses all rights and privileges of the old family and gain all the rights and privileges of the new family.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A SPIRIT OF BONDAGE

- Abusive behavior
- Addiction to alcohol
- Addiction to caffeine
- Addiction to cigarettes
- Addiction to drugs
- Addiction to food
- Addiction to music
- Addiction to sexual immorality
- Addiction to television

- Addiction to video games
- Bondage to your past
- Debt
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Family curses
- Pornography
- Religious motions
- Selfish ambition
- Swearing and cursing
- Unreasonable fear

It is important to remember that whatever we don't change and allow God to transform in our lives, won't just get better by osmosis. It won't improve by ignoring it and hoping for the best. Unhealthy habits, negative mind-sets, evil spirits, and secret sins will only grow stronger. They will lead to greater bondage when we don't allow the Lord to take full possession of our hearts.

Bondage has six levels of progression:

### **FIRST STEP: REGRESSION**

Regression is where the downward spiral begins. Regression is not just going backwards in our walk with the Lord, but it is the act of reasoning that causes us to conclude it is okay to retreat, and not advance in our relationship with God. Maybe we got offended, or think God didn't act like He should, by responding faster. Then we gave ourselves an excuse not to be in full pursuit

of God and His Word. Satan wants regression; God wants progression.

### **SECOND STEP: SUPPRESSION**

Suppression is denying the existence of the obvious. Suppression is walking in agreement with the Enemy concerning a specific situation in our lives. Suppression causes us to accept the unacceptable.

### **THIRD STEP: OPPRESSION**

Oppression is a cruel and unjust treatment. Oppression causes us to feel overwhelmed and hopeless.

### **FOURTH STEP: OBSESSION**

Obsession is when we are constantly preoccupied with unwanted feelings, thoughts, and emotions. It creates an elevated level of fear and anxiety that paralyzes us in our lives.

### **FIFTH STEP: DEPRESSION**

Depression is not just a medical condition; it is a spiritual condition that causes us to question life, and our place in the world.

### **FINAL STEP: POSSESSION**

Possession is when the devil gains complete control of our lives, because he owns our personalities and dictates our decisions.

Demonic possession does not occur often, but the point is, bondage is progressive, and does not get better on its own. But, with God, there is hope.

There are many reasons why people get in and stay in bondage:

- Childhood trauma
- Victim of a crime
- Recipient of a hurtful act of offense
- Bad relationships
- Habitual sin
- A devil

Some bondage we bring upon ourselves, while other bondage is imposed upon us. However, all bondage can be broken. The focus cannot be that we are in bondage, but that God can break the power of all bondage, whether self-inflicted or imposed by others.

The following Scriptures show the power of God to break the hold of all spiritual bondage:

- “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).
- “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).
- “And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts” (Psalm 119:45).
- “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,

to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isaiah 61:1).

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 54:17).

Whatever has bound you, enslaved you, held you back, or kept you from achieving the greatness of God, must break its grip and lose its hold over your life. God’s Word proclaims: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing” (Isaiah 10:27).

Now is the time to use the godly resources of prayer, the Bible, godly fellowship, total obedience, praise and worship, and the power of your own tongue, to rid yourself of the bondage that has controlled you for years. Don’t make excuses or settle for less than God’s best. Confront the flesh and go to war against the Enemy in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His anointing. ■

*Bill Jenkins is a pastor, award-winning author and conference speaker. [pastorbilljenkins.org](http://pastorbilljenkins.org).*

\*All scriptures are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

# Why?

by TERRY CROSS



**T**HE CHRISTIAN CHURCH has experienced some significant challenges in recent years—challenges from culture, from bad caricature in some press, and yes, even from some Christians' behavior. Recent statistical research confirms what many pastors and leaders have already sensed: people are not coming to church like they used to (in the United States, at least). Even parishioners, who might have been committed to a local church in the past, have changed their custom by showing up only occasionally. A reliable Pew Research Center survey in 2014 revealed that in the seven-year period since the previous survey (2007), overall church

attendance in the United States experienced a 3.7 percent decline in weekly attendance, even though the population in this country grew by 16 million during the same period.<sup>1</sup> Only about 27 percent of millennials attend church on a weekly basis.<sup>2</sup> Once considered a necessary part of any local community, the church now struggles to find relevance and have its voice heard.

So why church? Notice that the question does not ask, "Why *go to* church?" The latter question assumes that church is primarily a location; the former question assumes that church is the people of God, not merely a building or location. So why should the church be important for any believer today?

Why should Christians continue to gather together as the body of Christ? It is this question that we shall attempt to answer in the next pages.

## WHAT THE CHURCH IS NOT

Before considering the meaning of the church, it will be beneficial to consider what the church *is not*. All of us may hold some false expectations of what the church is or should be.

- **First, the church is not a collection of perfect people**, but a gathering of followers of Christ who are journeying toward a goal.

- **Second, the church is not a social club where people of like interests gather.** Instead of engaging with people who are like us and activities that are our preference, the people of God gather in God's presence and from there bring Christ to the world through the power of the Spirit.

- **Third, the church is not a grocery store where I “shop” to get what I want.**<sup>3</sup> The *reason* for gathering is not *us*, but God's glory. Engaging in the life of a Christian community means *primarily* focusing on God together and *secondarily* on others (Matthew 22:37-40).

- **Fourth, the church is not primarily a hospital**, but a training center for Christians to live and serve in the world. While churches have “emergency rooms” for critical care of the emotionally and spiritually injured, the community of faith

cannot exist primarily as a ward of dying patients every Sunday instead of a column of healthy Christian soldiers headed for battle with the Enemy. Care for wounds is vital in the church, but if we become a community where the only purpose is to repair wounds, then such an expectation harms the cause of Christ and His kingdom.

## WHAT THE CHURCH IS

Let's turn now to examine the authentic nature of the church. Such an answer to the question, “Why Church?” arises out of an understanding of what God intended the Church to be.

### **1. The Church is the body of Christ.**

From this metaphor of the Church as Christ's body, the imagery from Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12 comes to mind: you all are the body of Christ—when one member of the body hurts, all the body hurts; every member of the body has equal honor; each member is connected to the other. As the body of Christ, we are fully aware that Jesus Christ himself is our Head. He alone is worthy of such a title because He alone was God who came to earth, inhabited human flesh, lived as a human being, was crucified and resurrected *for* this Church—this people of God. “You are not your own; you were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a NIV). This is Christ's own body, which means that one purpose of our existence *as a group of people* is to extend Christ's presence into the world today.

Not only is the intimacy of God's people expressed through this metaphor of the body of Christ, but also their origin as a gathering of those who are "called out." Jesus himself said, "I will build my church [ekklesia]" (Matthew 16:18). This shows us that the church *belongs* to Jesus Christ ("my church") and that it is His responsibility to build it. There remains an intimate *personal* connection between Jesus Christ and every believing Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit, yet there also remains an intimate *corporate* connection between Jesus Christ and all believing Christians—local and global. As Christians, we belong to God *and* to each other. We are part of Christ's great cosmic construction project of gathering and building a people to Himself for His purposes (Heb. 12:23).

Against the growing tide of individualism in Western society, Scripture reminds us that God intended us to live, learn, and work together as a community of faith. The Church is not simply a collection of individuals that meet every now and then, but a family of brothers and sisters in Christ, drawn together by the Spirit to grow up in Christ and thereby impact the world for Christ. "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16 NIV). Just as the human body needs exercise and movement of the muscles in order to grow physically, so too the spiri-

tual body of Christ demands movement—exercise in love—**as each part does its work**. Without others, the potential for spiritual growth is highly diminished. We need others to guide, warn, and call us up short when we are engaged in activities that demean Christ before others; we need others to 'bump into us' while they are exercising their gifts so that we may learn the graciousness of making room for others in our circle of life. This is what it means to grow up into the 'size' or 'measure' of Christ, who is the head. The leaders in God's family are to equip everyone in the body to do works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until every person in the church becomes mature, even to the point of reaching the full measurement of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13). Working together we can experience God's Spirit working in us to do works of service for others and thereby experience the joy of corporate spiritual growth.

**Why Church? We need each other to grow to our fullest potential in Jesus Christ.**

## **2. The Church is the people of God.**

God desired to have a people of His own possession—ones with whom He could communicate and engage in fellowship. While that role was filled by the people of Israel in the prior covenant, now because of the cross of Christ it extends to all people—who-soever will. Just before the delivery of the

Ten Commandments, God told Moses to remind the children of Israel that God “carried you out on eagles’ wings” from Egypt and “brought you to myself” (Exodus 19:4 NIV). If they obeyed and kept the covenant, then they would be “my treasured possession,” and a “kingdom of priests,” and a “holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6 NIV). This very same language is rehearsed for us in the New Testament: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession...” (1 Peter 2:9a NIV). God’s intention was that humans should live together in community with other members of his family.

**Why Church? God desires to have a people to live together on earth and to live with him eternally.**

**3. The Church is a community of fellowship in the Spirit.** If we are truly the people of God, then we should reflect something of God’s transformative presence in our midst. In other words, the people of God should reflect the nature of their God. Who is this God? God is Triune, that is, God lives (and always has lived) in rich fellowship as Father, Son, and Spirit. Although God is One, God is never lonely or solitary; God is always full of the richness of give-and-take relations between Father, Son, and Spirit, creating a divine society that is characterized by self-surrender to the other. Father, Son, and Spirit “make room” for the other. It is this

self-giving nature that the people of God are called to reflect in their church lives. This type of fellowship is more than meeting together for food or fun; it is more than meeting together once a week—or once in a while. True fellowship that reflects the fellowship of our God is one of *mutual respect and reciprocity*. Since the Triune God is ‘social’ at the core of His being, Christians have the privilege of reflecting that divine sociality within our fellowship with others. By learning to enjoy the company of other believers (first) and then by extending that love outward to those who do not know our God, we come to imitate the nature of our own God’s society of love where reaching outward to others is essential to His very nature. We first learn to love within the context of God’s people with whom we are committed to live and work together to grow up into Christ; then we learn to love others—even the radically other, that is, those most unlike us—by walking out our vertical relationship with God into the horizontal relationships with other human beings. To do this requires being in each other’s lives during the week, not just at a Sunday gathering where we wave “hello” from across the sanctuary (see Acts 2:42).

**Why Church? God desires his people to live on this earth in joyous fellowship with him and each other.**

**4. The Church is a gathering of the people of God for worship in God’s**

***presence, for listening to God's voice, and for hearing the Scriptures read and proclaimed, where the gifts and fruit of the Spirit are openly shared.***

Perhaps it is here that we come closest to responding to the question, "Why go to Church?" The Scripture provides us the example of Jesus himself with respect to attending synagogue: "[Jesus] went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom" (Luke 4:16 NIV). There is something important about the people of God making it a habit to gather together regularly in imitation of Jesus' own custom. Habits have a way of molding our character—either for good or bad. Regularly gathering with God's people for the purpose of worshiping, hearing the Word, and working with and for others is one of the most important ways to become more like Christ. The writer to the Hebrews warned his hearers (who were facing persecution) not to give up "meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25 NIV).

When believers gather in a local fellowship, they anticipate the presence of God by his Spirit in their midst. It is the Spirit of God who causes unity among believers and who creates sacred space in our gatherings for God's presence to dwell among us. When the Spirit is in the midst of God's

people, gifts flow from one to another for the benefit of all. Yet the foundation for such manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit in full evidence. The character of Christ, our Head, is rooted in us by the Spirit so that we, too, share love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22 ESV). Upon the basis of this loving fellowship, the Spirit prompts whomever he chooses (Hebrews 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:11) within the congregation to share a word of knowledge or wisdom, a manifestation of healing or miracles, prophecy and distinguishing between spirits, as well as tongues and interpretation (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). This distribution of gifts throughout the body of Christ that is gathered for worship is solely the responsibility of the Spirit, yet it requires openness in the congregation to receive and to share what God is providing for the building up of the whole body.

**Why Church? God intends his people to gather regularly for offering worship, hearing the Word, sharing and receiving gifts of the Spirit, and spurring "one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24 NIV).**

**5. The Church is a people on a mission—the mission of God.** From rich fellowship of gathering together in worship of our God, we leave together to reach out to

people in the world. It is the love of Christ that constrains us to offer the ministry of reconciliation (first) and then actions of service (a “cup of water in [Jesus] name,” Mark 9:41). How could this be done as effectively if done separately and by ourselves?<sup>4</sup> Think of what benefit God has for the world by binding us together in action! We are a people “on a mission” because God is a “missionary God,” that is, God is so full of rich love and inner fellowship that this explodes into outreach. God’s mission to others—indeed, to those radically other, who were still in their sins when Christ loved them—is the Church’s own mission today (Romans 5:5-7). We have the privilege of being ambassadors of Christ to the world, proclaiming a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:12-21). Our mission is a continuation of God’s own mission to reach out to those unlike him.<sup>5</sup>

**Why Church? God has a purpose for the Church today, namely, to fulfill his own mission in the world through the people of God.**

## CONCLUSION

Local churches can become silos in our communities—standing tall with steeples and crosses, but never really engaging the society around them. In such cases, the building becomes more important than the people. Why Church? It is really quite simple: God wants to have a *people* and intends that people to live in community together,

growing in Christian discipleship so that his mission of loving outreach begun by Christ may be continued in the world today through them. That is both the privilege and the challenge of being the Church—the people of God. ■

*Terry L. Cross, PhD, has pastored churches in Ohio, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Currently he serves as Dean of the School of Religion at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee.*



## NOTES

1. Pew Research Center, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” 12 May 2015. It may be accessed at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)

2. Ibid.

3. The description of the church as a grocery store comes from Clay Sterrett, “Unrealistic Expectations of the Body of Christ,” *Decision Magazine* (April 1993). An expanded booklet of this article is also available at <http://cfcliterature.com/unrealistic-expectations.htm>. (Accessed April 2017).

4. In “The Finish Commitment” of the Church of God, the third goal is to “network with others to reach everyone.” This is precisely what we are emphasizing in this section: we can do so much more together than apart.

5. This aspect of the church continuing Christ’s mission on earth today is surely the impetus beyond the Great Commission and the recent Church of God initiative—“The Finish Commitment.”

## FOR FURTHER READING

Cross, Terry L. *The Church: A People of God's Presence and Power*. (Forthcoming from Baker Academic, fall 2018).

Durnbaugh, Donald L. *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985; orig. ed. 1968.

Hodges, Melvin L. *Theology of the Church and Its Mission*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977.

Minear, Paul. *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. In *New Testament Library*.

Edited by Leander Keck. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004; orig. ed. 1960.

*Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader*. Edited by Chris E. W. Green. Leiden/Boston: E. J. Brill, 2016.

*Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel*. Edited by John Christopher Thomas. Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010.

Volf, Miroslav. *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.



Quickly becoming the leadership development experience for visionary and transformational leaders.

**THE 10 ESSENTIAL SKILLS**  
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM - 8 DAY CLASSES  
NO TESTS - NO PAPERS  
3 HOURS CREDIT FROM LEE UNIVERSITY  
OR 6 HOURS CREDIT FROM PTS

### RECOMMENDATION BY DR. TIM HILL GENERAL OVERSEER

*LeaderLABS is catching FIRE! What I keep hearing over and over again is, "Where has this information been?" LeaderLABS is meeting a need. The Executive Committee has a vision to identify young leaders to help them emerge into what God has called them to be. We want to empower them and engage them by sponsoring the Jeremiah 29 Generation Cohort! Don't miss this grand opportunity!*



Bishop Tim Hill

### JEREMIAH 29 GENERATION COHORT

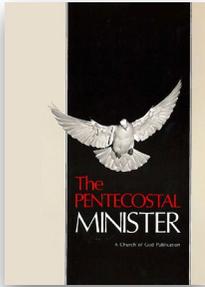
**DATES:** Sep 28-29 Oct 19-20  
Nov 12-13 Dec 7-8

**PLACE:** COG INTERNATIONAL OFFICES  
Leadership & Communications Room

**COST:** \$3,000 / But only \$1350 with Scholarship  
(First 40 Receive \$1650 Scholarship)  
Cost includes 6 hours credit at PTS  
or 3 hours credit at Lee University.

**REGISTER:** LeaderLabs.com/Register  
\$200 Deposit Required to hold your spot.

**EMAIL:** info@LeaderLabs.com



*The Pentecostal Minister Flashback will reprint articles from the forerunner of Engage. The articles will be presented as they were originally written, so dates and cultural references will reflect the period. However, most of the advice and research is still applicable to ministry today.*

# Pentecostal Minister

# FLASHBACK

## FACING CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

By French L. Arrington • Winter 1988

**T**HE MEETING recorded in Acts 15 has been called the Jerusalem Council. It was the first meeting that convened to settle a theological question—the Gentiles’ relationship to the law of Moses (Acts 15:1-5). At the meeting were representatives from the two local churches in Antioch and Jerusalem.

Certain Jewish Christians were displeased with Paul’s accepting Gentiles into the church without the right of circumcision. These people, the Judaizers, created divergence of opinion among the Christians of Antioch and Jerusalem.

Apparently the Judaizers from Jerusalem claimed to be emissaries of the apostles and elders. They came to Antioch and insisted that only by circumcision and observance of the law of Moses could a person enter the kingdom of God. The effort of the Judaizers created a sharp dispute at Antioch.

The Greek word rendered *dispute* means “uprising, faction and discord”; whereas, the Greek term rendered *debate*, means “quarrel and strife.” Together the two suggest a conflict-ridden situation provoked by strife and disunity. Had this situation persisted, the church could have been rent asunder. Because of the danger of schism and the need to clarify the missionary message,



Paul, Barnabas, and others were sent by the church to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders about the problem.

When the delegates arrived in Jerusalem, the church and its leaders welcomed them. At the first public meeting, which seems to have been less formal (vv. 4, 5), Paul and Barnabas reported God's blessings on their recent preaching. They made clear that the great success of their preaching mission was attested by both miracles and the conversion of large numbers of Gentiles.

As they spoke, converted Pharisees interrupted them. Upon hearing the strict adherents to the Law, the apostles and elders took charge of the situation. They adjourned the meeting for a more formal consideration of the matter.

At the heart of the controversy was a fundamental theological question: What is required for salvation—the works of the Law, such as circumcision and other Old Testament legal prescriptions, or faith alone? A number of speeches were given on both sides of the issue, but Luke included only a brief summary of what four of the spokesmen said.

When the dispute and conflict had reached their peak, Peter addressed the assembly. He emphasized the divine initiative (vv. 7, 14). At the beginning of the Gentile mission, God had chosen Peter to preach the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, and his friends and

to assure them of their acceptance into the church.

Furthermore, Peter appealed to the Gentiles' experience of the baptism in the Spirit as a witness of God's acceptance of them. He insisted that God gave them the Holy Spirit "just as he did to us" at Pentecost (v. 8). As at Pentecost, the household of Cornelius spoke in tongues as the sign that they had been filled with the Spirit (10:45, 46). Their experience had equipped them to be witnesses as did the outpouring of the Spirit on the disciples in Jerusalem.

God made no distinction, Peter noted, between "us" [Jews] and "them" [Gentiles] (v. 9). Salvation for the Jews and Gentiles came through faith. The hearts of Cornelius and his friends had been purified from heathen defilement—not, however, by circumcision and obedience to the Law. God himself was responsible: He had granted to them inward purity by the act of faith and had baptized them in the Holy Spirit.

Peter warned against modifying God's plan by introducing new requirements. God did not require circumcision. Demanding it would have tested God and indicated resentment of God's acceptance of the Gentiles by faith alone. How could the assembly put an added yoke on the necks of the disciples [Gentiles]? The reasoning of Peter was twofold: (1) Israel had never been very successful in its observance of the Law; and



(2) salvation is not achieved by the keeping of the Law, but “through the grace of the Lord Jesus” (vv. 10, 11).

What Peter said put an end to the dispute. Silence fell on the entire congregation. This gave Barnabas and Paul, the apostles to the Gentiles, an opportunity to speak. Luke does not record what they said. The speeches by Barnabas and Paul are based on “the signs and miracles” of their missionary journey.

Miracles such as the incident of the blinding of the Cyprus magician (13:8-11), the healing of the crippled man at Lystra (14:8-10), and the recovery of Paul from stoning (14:19, 20) attested to God’s guidance of the Gentile mission. However, it is not likely that the presentations of Paul and Barnabas were limited to miracles, but included what God had done through them to bring the Gentiles to accept Christ as their Savior (13:12, 14, 48).

James, the brother of the Lord, gave the third speech. The theme of his discourse is stated in verse 14 where, in agreeing with Peter, he says that God had made provision to call from among the Gentiles a people for Himself. The task of James was twofold: (1) to show from Scripture that God had always intended the salvation of the Gentiles, and (2) to present proposals or possible solutions to the problems raised by the Judaizers.

For scriptural proof, James cited Amos 9:11, 12 (LXX), which shows that the Old Testament agreed with the gospel message.

By Amos God had promised that he would rebuild “the fallen house of David” (Amos 9:11 NLT; see also Acts 15:16). This promise was fulfilled in the resurrection of the crucified Son of David. Through Him, God created a new people for Himself that included Gentiles (v. 14). A new era of salvation dawned with the rebuilding of the house of David through the triumph of Christ over death.

The restored house (tabernacle) of David would include Gentiles, as well as Jews. God restored the house of David through Jesus Christ, making it possible for Gentiles to seek the Lord and bear His name. “From eternity” God had purposed to call all men to salvation. The prophets knew God’s purpose and plan for redemption. Amos was confident that the Lord would carry out what He said (v. 17).

On the basis of Amos 9:11, 12, James offered two proposals as solutions to the controversy. The first was that no one interfere with God’s plan of accepting the Gentiles. Through the rebuilding of the house of David, God was forming a people among the Gentiles to bear His name.

Through the preaching of the gospel, Gentiles had been saved and baptized in the Spirit without observing the law of Moses. Agreeing with Peter, James recognized that imposing the Law on the Gentiles would be an annoyance to them and would make their turning to God difficult. He introduced in the Council the motion that the Gentiles



should not be subjected to the demands of the Law for salvation.

The second proposal of James reveals a deeper understanding of the Law than that of the believing Pharisees. The Law itself provided the solution—the regulations for strangers among Israelites (Leviticus 17, 18).

He did not recommend that the Gentiles submit to circumcision or to the countless legal prescriptions; according to Leviticus 17, 18, he urged that the Gentile believers avoid certain pagan practices:

(1) **Abstain from food contaminated by idols.** Many Gentiles ate flesh that had been offered to heathen gods. As Christians they must abstain from eating sacrificial meat (cf. 21:25). The scruples of the Jews were to be taken into consideration.

(2) **Abstain from sexual immorality.** Promiscuous sexuality was bound up with pagan worship and religious feasts. Of course, that made it worse. Many Gentiles did not view sexual laxity in a serious light. Illicit sexual relations are a moral offense, but the other requirements proposed by James are neither good nor bad in themselves.

(3) **Abstain from the flesh of animals not properly slaughtered, and from blood.**

Since the last two requirements are closely related, they can be treated together. Due to certain laws in Leviticus (17:10-15; cf. Deuteronomy 12:16, 23), the Jews avoided

eating any animal whose blood had not been drained. The term *strangled* means “to choke to death.”

Among the Gentiles, animals used in pagan worship were strangled to death (NIDNTT, I, 226). Animals killed in that fashion would still have their blood in them and were not to be eaten. Because of the Jewish Christians’ sensitivity, the Gentiles were to abstain from meat that retained blood.

God had accepted both Jews and Gentiles. Recognizing that, James recommended that each should make concessions and accept one another. He did not abolish the Law, but he interpreted it more correctly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (15:28). These restrictions would not be seen by the Gentile believers as arbitrary and burdensome. From the beginning of the dispersion of the Jews (“from the earliest of times”), the practice was to preach the Law in the synagogues every Sabbath (v. 21).

Therefore, the Gentile Christians ought to have known the Law as a standard of conduct and the requirements demanded of them. The attempt was not to revive the ritual and ceremonial law, but the immediate concern was the relationships between Jews and Gentiles in the church and the integrity of the gospel.

The proposals by James prevailed. An official letter was sent announcing the decision of the Council. The believers stood united on the procedure of handling the whole matter and decided unanimously



to send others to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Among them were Judas and Silas. In addition to carrying the letter, these two men were sent with strict orders to relate by word of mouth the contents of the letter. The letter was brief and needed some explanation.

The letter that went forth had the endorsement of the Holy Spirit and the church: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us” (v. 28). These words strongly suggest that the early believers lived in the power of Pentecost and that they reasoned and spoke under the guidance of the Spirit who had directed the entire mission to the Gentiles.

As we might expect, the decision at Jerusalem had been approved by the Holy Spirit and the church. This fact echoes Acts 5:32: “We are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit” (NKJV). The words “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” link together supernatural authority and ministerial authority. Jesus had promised that the Spirit would lead the disciples in their decisions (John 16:13). That is what the Spirit did in leading the Council at Jerusalem not to place on Gentile believers additional burdens.

The Gentiles were asked to abstain from certain pagan practices: things sacrificed to idols, blood, things strangled, and sexual immorality. The observance of these nominal requirements was conducive to good relationships between Jewish and Gentile Christians and to moral purity. At the

same time, the integrity of the gospel was maintained.

The letter from Jerusalem was well received by the Gentile church at Antioch. When the delegates arrived in Antioch, the believers came together in a congregational meeting, and the letter was delivered to them. When they read it, they burst forth in exultant joy. The letter gave them great encouragement. They had received an authoritative word on a point that had troubled the church so much that its existence could have been threatened.

Circumcision was declared unnecessary; the spiritual significance of the Mosaic Law had been confirmed. The Gentile believers were spiritually strengthened, being assured that they were received fully into the body of Christ, and stood as one with the Jewish Christians.

An appeal can be made to Acts 15 when seeking a model for building theology or for ways of thinking about God and His will for us. A number of guidelines for developing theology can be drawn from the account of the Jerusalem Council.

First, the account of the Jerusalem Council assumes that the leaders of the church at Jerusalem had the right to make decisions for the whole church. The delegates from Antioch went to Jerusalem for the purpose of getting the approval of the gospel as Paul preached it. However, the congregations, as well as the leadership, had a voice in the decision of the Council



(cf. 15:12, 22f); and as Acts 16:4 reveals, that decision had much wider application than just to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia (15:23).

Second, the whole proceeding gave the Christians present an opportunity to state their judgment upon the important question of liberty from the Law in Christ Jesus. The free and frank debate of the matter continued for some duration (v. 7). No laws and rules were applied to inhibit the deliberations.

Third, the Council saw the issue of circumcision as, first and foremost, theological. That is, the basis of salvation is faith in God's grace revealed in Christ, not faith in the works of men and women. This truth set the gospel free from Jewish religious culture and declared that a Gentile need not become a Jewish proselyte to become a Christian.

Besides raising a fundamental theological question, the Judaizers' insistence that Gentiles must become Jews (that is, be circumcised) to be saved had a sociological dimension. Should the Judaizers' opinion prevail, salvation would have involved the destruction of cultural differences among believers.

Because salvation is based on divine grace, not on the works of the Law, people of all nations can receive salvation as a gift of God without denying their cultural identity. The call of the gospel is from one kingdom to another kingdom, not from one

culture to another culture. Jews remained Jews, and Gentiles remained Gentiles; and all were one in Christ.

Fourth, the Council reached its decision according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The believers at the meeting were convinced of the guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit in their corporate decision at Jerusalem. The speech of James may be an example of a word of wisdom. Acts 15:13-21 is often interpreted to mean that James gave the final word because he presided at the meeting, but the words "It seems good to the Holy Spirit and us" may imply that he was used by the Holy Spirit to bring a word of wisdom.

The activity of the Spirit at the Jerusalem Council, as well as other examples of the Spirit's guidance in the New Testament, provides the basis for our understanding that the Holy Spirit is continually guiding the church and enabling Christians in each generation to face problems as they arise.

Finally, the decision of the Council involved Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. James declared himself to be in agreement with Peter and maintained that Scripture fully concurred with Peter's argument. In fact, all the prophets agreed with that position. Among them was the prophet Amos whom James cited to show that it had been God's eternal purpose to include Gentiles in His family.

Furthermore, appeals were made to experience. Paul and Barnabas told of their



missionary experience in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. They had had success in evangelizing the Gentiles, and God had blessed their work with signs and wonders. At the beginning of his speech, Peter reminded the Council of his personal call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

A decisive point in Peter's address was his appeal to the experience of the Gentile Cornelius and his friends. God had cleansed the hearts of those Gentiles by faith in the gospel and had baptized them with the Holy Spirit exactly as He had the 120 Jewish believers at Pentecost. The experiences of the Gentiles made manifest God's will to accept them into the church apart from circumcision and other legal prescriptions.

Still another factor—namely, tradition rooted in Scripture—was appealed to by James as ground for asking the Gentiles to observe the four prohibitions. The justification for the Christian Gentiles' keeping part of the Law is given in verse 21: "For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues" (ESV). The requirements for Gentiles who lived among Jews (Leviticus 17:8, 10-12; 13:18:6-23) were laid upon the Gentile Christians.

The Gentile believers were expected to keep that part of the Law that applied to non-Christian Gentiles who resided among the Jews, but a Gentile who became a Christian did not need to become a Jew and

receive the corresponding mark of circumcision. What was laid on the Gentile believers was thoroughly traditional.

The decision at Jerusalem took a conservative and traditional direction, but it is well to bear in mind that the observance of those traditional requirements had not been understood by the Jews to lead to salvation. Though part of the Law was retained for the Gentile believers, faith remained the only way of salvation.

In the deliberations of the Council, appeals were made to reason, as well as to Scripture, experience, and tradition. Peter reasoned from the purification of the Gentiles by faith and the outpouring of the Spirit on them that uncircumcised Gentiles who believe should be accepted into the church at par with Jewish believers.

According to Peter's argument, if the legal prescriptions demanded by the Judaizers were laid upon the Gentiles, that would tempt God and would become a burden that the Jews had not been able to bear. Likewise, James reasoned that on the basis of Scripture and tradition, the Gentiles must abstain from certain pagan practices. Consequently, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Council reasoned to a common position.

The Council's case rested on Scripture, experience, tradition, and reason. When problems are dealt with from these perspectives and in the spirit of love, they soon find their solution in the power of the Holy Spirit. ■



# Make a splash, be a difference maker

Work with the MWOA Action Team in your church to:

- help meet needs in your church family
- support local schools and nonprofits
- reach out to your community
- work projects where you can learn new skills and be Christ's example to others

Men and Women of Action come in every age and experience level!

Get with your pastor and Action Team to see how you can be a part of making a big splash!

---

## does your church have an action team?

An action team is vital in building community, helping your church grow, reaching out to the local community, and meeting project needs within your church family. If your church doesn't already have an action team, contact the MWOA office to learn about getting one started.

You don't want to miss out on this incredible opportunity!



# Distracted Driving and Cell Phone Use Policy

**D**URING A RECENT TRIP on church business, I came very close to being involved in an automobile accident. Above is a picture of the accident that occurred in front of my vehicle. This picture came from a local news article reporting that incredibly, the driver of this car was not seriously injured as a result of this accident!

In addition, the news report disclosed the driver of this vehicle stated she took her eyes off the road for a mere two seconds upon which she found herself underneath the 18-wheel truck in front of her! It was a classic case of distracted driving. This illustrates how quickly distracted driving can become potentially disastrous.

The subject of distracted driving is at the forefront of the news these days, but unfortunately is becoming a potential legal issue for churches and pastors to consider as well. In a recent issue of *Church Law and Tax Report*, our friends at *Christianity Today* reported one of the first cases against a church for alleged liability arising out of dis-

tracted driving by a pastor while on church business. In that case, at the time of the automobile accident, the pastor was talking on his cell phone with a church employee. According to the lawsuit filed against the pastor, a married woman who had five children was killed in the accident as a result of his negligence.

Also due to this horrific accident, an additional claim was filed against the church where the minister pastored. The lawsuit claimed because the pastor was on church business while he was driving in a distracted manner, his church/employer should also bear legal responsibility for his negligence. In that case, the church's insurer ultimately prevailed in its argument that liability did not extend to the church under those circumstances. However, it is very arguable that this lawsuit likely will portend a trend in the future, because the same issue is being raised in lawsuits around the country.

Since I am of the opinion that we will see more of this subject, I am including a sample "Cell Phone and Handheld Device Policy for

I am recommending that our churches have all employees to read, sign, and abide by a written policy in which they AGREE NOT TO TEXT WHILE DRIVING.

a local church." I am recommending that our churches have all employees to read, sign, and abide by a written policy in which they agree not to text while driving or to engage in any use of a cell phone that could ultimately be interpreted as "distracted driving." Hopefully, emphasizing this precaution may save lives from death or injury.

I realize that it may not be popular, and I acknowledge that we cannot enforce these policies from Cleveland, Tennessee, because we are not the employer of local church

employees. However, I am recommending that all employees of our churches sign the applicable policy or one similar to it, and strictly abide by it. As the old saying goes: "The life you save may be your own!" ■

*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

# New Financial Challenges for Ministers and Churches

**L**OCAL CHURCHES and ministers in America are facing several potential new challenges in the days ahead. Let's briefly address just a few of those challenges:

## MINISTERIAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

As we have previously discussed in this forum, the ministerial cash housing allowance was held unconstitutional by a federal district court judge in Wisconsin on December 13, 2017. (See <https://www.benefitsboard.com/housing-allowance> for more details.) Pending appeal, the judge's order has been held in abeyance and will not be enforced until all appeals have been exhausted and an additional 180 days have passed. The case has been appealed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago where the different parties to the case are currently filing position briefs with the court. The Church of God denomina-

tion and the Church of God Benefits Board filed a "friend of the court" brief in this matter, along with other similar organizations and denominations on April 26, 2018. It is expected that all briefs will be filed, and the matter will be fully before the court by late June 2018.

Oral arguments have been requested by the appellate court, and it is expected the arguments will occur sometime in the fall of 2018, with a decision possibly by late 2018. Regardless of the outcome in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, it is expected that the "losing" party will appeal the case to the U. S. Supreme Court.

Court observers are suggesting that the housing allowance has about a 50/50 chance of surviving this constitutional challenge. But what happens if the housing allowance is held unconstitutional by the higher courts?

Based upon the district court's December 2017 decision, the impact would not be felt

for 180 days following all appeals being exhausted. Such time would allow for Congress to act and try to rectify the problem. However, discussions with congressional leaders have already started and there seems to be no clear way for Congress to respond. Those discussions continue in an effort to produce a solution.

But if in fact the ministerial housing allowance truly went away in another 18–24 months, how will local churches and ministers respond? This is a matter that should be under discussion now between pastors and their church council. Upon implementation, pastors could see their tax bill jump substantially. Will the church help offset that tax liability by giving the pastor a raise? Will the church have the resources to assist the pastor in this regard?

Regardless of the situation, a discussion about the ministerial housing allowance should begin today. If we are fortunate and the housing allowance is held to be constitutional in this case, you can be assured that new challenges will be filed in the months ahead. So, don't wait. Start talking about this important issue now.

## **POTENTIAL DECLINE IN CHARITABLE GIVING**

Much discussion continues about the potential impact on charitable giving due to

the 2017 Tax Reform Bill, as well as the shifting demographics of congregations. With an increase in the standard deduction to \$24,000 for those who are married and filing jointly, most donors to local churches will no longer get a tax benefit from making contributions to their local church. Simply put, you will get the \$24,000 standard deduction whether you give to your church or not. Combine that change in the tax code with a younger group of givers that are more “cause” focused than the typical giver of the last half century, and the church could be in for a struggle over the next decade.

Again, it is appropriate to ask what the local church is doing to address these potential challenges. While some churches may not experience these dynamics, many churches see a substantial increase in giving toward the end of the year, all primarily driven by donors seeking to obtain tax advantages. Some churches have reported that their giving increases by 50 percent to 100 percent during the month of December. According to one source, 31 percent of all charitable giving for the year is done in December, and further, twelve percent (12%) of ALL giving for the year occurs on the last three days of the year.

Have you mapped out a “survival” strategy if you lost, for example, 5 percent or 10 percent of your annual income? If you

haven't had such a discussion with your church council, I would suggest now would be a great time to do so. Recently, the staff of the Church Loan Fund reviewed a church's "survival" strategy and came away impressed that the board of the church had literally spent hours discussing the steps they would take with different declines in giving.

Just saying that we have faith that such a drop in giving is not going to occur is not sufficient. We all have faith and know that we serve a God that is more than enough to meet every need. However, there are times that we face hardships and the church needs a plan when those situations arise. Who must be let go? Does the pastor or the mortgage get paid? Again, we do not like to think about having these delicate discussions but it is better to have them now, rather than when you are in the midst of a major financial crisis.

So, a financial "survival" strategy meeting may be in order for the pastor and the church council soon!!

## PERSONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

As part of the Lilly Endowment grant received by the Church of God, a series of seven short videos were created to help pastors better prepare for their own financial

future. These videos have recently been released publicly for all ministers to view at their convenience. To access the videos, you can go to the Church of God/Lilly Endowment web page ([www.coglilly.org/resources/](http://www.coglilly.org/resources/)) or you can view the videos on the Church of God Benefits Board site ([www.benefitsboard.com/lilly-videos-](http://www.benefitsboard.com/lilly-videos-)).

The videos range in length from 15 minutes to 45 minutes, and they address practical financial topics that will be helpful to all ministers. For your financial health and wellness, take some time and view these financial planning videos today. Rest assured that they are well worth your time.

## CONCLUSION

Financial matters are not the foremost issue on most ministers' minds . . . until they have a financial crisis, either in their home or their church. All the suggestions above are made not to cause fear, but to encourage being prepared. We need to "count the costs" in advance. Hopefully, a little preparation today will save many heartaches later. ■

*Art Rhodes is president and CEO of the Church of God Benefits Board, Inc. The Board of Trustees and the staff of the Benefits Board are not engaged in rendering financial advice, legal advice, or other financial planning services.*

**Rates as low as 5.00%**

Visit [www.churchloanfund.com](http://www.churchloanfund.com) for more info

**The Church Loan Fund, Inc.**

# Marriage and Family Enrichment Cruise

*The Perfect Getaway Enrichment Vacation!*

Guests Include:

**November 5-10, 2018**

On the Carnival ship,  
"PARADISE"



Mike and Sharon Baker



Daniel and Jenny Vassell



Lynn and Mary Ruth Stone

**Ports:**  
Tampa, FL  
Mahogany Bay, Isla Roatan  
Cozumel, Mexico

**Reservations:**  
423-478-7011  
[mcm@churchofgod.org](mailto:mcm@churchofgod.org)  
[mcm.cogdoe.org/cruise](http://mcm.cogdoe.org/cruise)

**BOOK YOUR CRUISE TODAY!**





## POINTS FROM THE PASTORAL STAFF

Christopher Wayne Brewer

# The Role of a Teaching Pastor

**A** FELLOW MINISTER and friend once told me, “We are only ever showing up in the wake of God’s activity.” To say it differently, there is no life, community, conversation, circumstance, or time, which could be encountered where God is not already present and involved. The underlying reality of this thought has been a liberating force in my life. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit, a teaching pastor has the responsibility to help the congregation more faithfully approach Scripture, thereby drawing the church into a more Godlike lifestyle.

At New Covenant Church of God, practical aspects of being the teaching pastor include: (1) Recognize that everything we do in church is instructive, so work with the staff to make sure a coherent message and ethos is communicated; (2) Identify those within the church with teaching abilities and provide a platform to help develop/engage those gifts; and (3)

Develop and implement a churchwide catechism—provide the space to teach/reflect on what being Christian means.

Of course, other practical steps exist and all these could be explored at length, but perhaps the readers of this article will be best served by discussing a bit more about why I believe knowledge of and trust in God’s prior activity in people is vital to ministry and the office of teaching pastor.

First, being a teacher means taking James’ admonition to be quick to listen and slow to speak all the more seriously... if it is true that God is already at work, then I should be attentive to what the Spirit might be saying to or through the congregation before I ever attempt to talk. Time and prayerful listening are required.

This brings me to the second point; there *is* time to be taken. The one who formed us in our mother’s womb has always been actively with us and has not ceased acting formatively. God is patient, and sometimes

Being a teacher means taking James' admonition to be **QUICK TO LISTEN** and **SLOW TO SPEAK** all the more seriously... if it is true that God is already at work, then I should be attentive to what the Spirit might be saying to or through the congregation before I ever attempt to talk.

caring well for people, but it looks like He is resisting the temptation to offer immediate responses to questions.

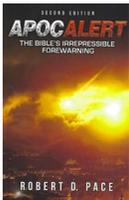
Of course, I don't mean shirking a basic responsibility of the teacher; rather I want to acknowledge that God's activity will cause us to ask questions and sometimes wrestling with the questions is more important to our discipleship than receiving the answers. Taking time isn't passive; it is actively trusting that *how* we come to discern is no less important than *that* we discern.

Third, taking part in the cultivation of God's work in people's lives means recognizing the form teaching takes is no less important than the content. In Scripture, Jesus rarely speaks or acts in expected ways, and He is still speaking in surprising ways to His people—so, teaching the gospel in ways that only serve to confirm what people already believed to be true about God means I am probably proclaiming something less than the good news of

our risen Lord. Faithful teaching about the God whose ways are higher than ours will require some deconstruction, but this is always done lovingly, with sensitivity to the maturity of the congregation and toward truthful, constructive ends. A teaching pastor is just that, a pastor, and at no point is pastoral care dispensable.

Finally, if God is already at work in the life of anyone I might minister to, then much of the work I'll need to do is akin to midwifery. The Holy Spirit is moving such that Christ's character might be birthed in them—that transformation, like labor (so I hear), is a difficult process and they will need someone to come alongside, remind them to breathe, and let them know they don't need to be afraid. God is at work for their good. ■

*Christopher Wayne Brewer is the teaching pastor at New Covenant Church of God in Cleveland, Tenn. and an adjunct professor of theology at Lee University.*



## APOCALERT: The Bible's Irrepressible Forewarning

**P**ERHAPS NO OTHER event in human history has caused more questioning and disagreement among Christians than the end time. A new book, published by Pathway Press, titled *Apocalert: The Bible's Irrepressible Forewarning*, explores end-time events—showing the calamitous things the earth is facing and what we must do to survive the troubles that will befall the world.

Author Robert D. Pace, in introducing the book, writes, “The Holy Spirit urged Christians to be well-acquainted with the Apocalypse in both the alpha and omega chapters of Revelation. And since Revelation has been earmarked to believers, it means they can indeed know its mysteries. Yes, *you* can know! But there is something Christians must understand. During the days immediately preceding the Parousia, the cosmos will be shaken, the earth will rattle, and man will cringe before the wrath of God’s holy judgment. And this prophetic information is definitely something that people should not ignore!”

This book is more than a fanciful presentation of end-time events and characters. Instead, author Pace sets forth a biblically based explanation of what will happen during the coming apocalypse during which the earth will be shaken as never before.

Pace proposes five explanations for the occurrence of the Tribulation. They are:

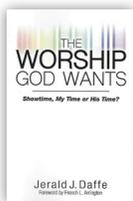
1. The Tribulation occurs to publicly demonstrate the “lordship” of Jesus Christ.
2. The Tribulation occurs to punish those who have rejected God and His plan of salvation.
3. God uses the Tribulation to chastise His chosen people—the Jews—for their rebellion and mishandling of His covenant.
4. God uses the Tribulation to avenge the righteous of their persecutors.
5. God uses the Tribulation to cleanse the earth of its pollution.

Author Pace covers subjects such as the harbingers of the scroll: The super sign of prophecy, the spirit of antichrist, discerning the days, signs, and wonders of Noah’s day return, secrets of the battle of Gog and Magog, and surviving the apocalypse.

Writing in the Foreword, Carl H. Richardson says, “Boldly, scripturally, and authoritatively, Robert D. Pace accurately identifies the key players and events of the apocalypse. His chapter concerning Israel and the battle of Gog and Magog is spellbinding, as it unfolds like a dramatic movie. He shows how the finger of God repels the attack of Russia and its mighty Arab coalition and presents a truly glorious ending. You will find that its termination unleashes a glorious global revival, which includes a spiritual outpouring upon Arabs, Iranians, Israelis, and all Gentiles.”

“As you read [*Apocalert*], you will discover that it forewarns without being dogmatic. It thunders without being offensive. It is mystical without being eerie or weird.”

*Apocalert: The Bible's Irrepressible Forewarning*, 300 pages, softcover, ISBN 9781596849709, is available from Pathway Bookstore. ■



## THE WORSHIP GOD WANTS: Showtime, My Time, or His Time?

IN HIS NEWEST BOOK, *The Worship God Wants: Showtime, My Time, or His Time?*—prolific writer Jerald J. Daffe asks, “When we come to a church worship service, what time is it?”

Is it *showtime*, when leaders step on stage with a performance-driven mentality?

Is it *my time*, with people coming to church with a fillingstation mind-set?

Is it *His time*, when individuals push aside tiredness, worries, and frustrations to focus on the living God?

In responding to these questions, Daffe says, “God expects our best, but does He want a show? God blesses His people, but is it so they can go home saying, “I got mine”? God is “looking for those who will worship him . . . in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24 NLT).

The author then expounds on these points throughout the pages of this well-written book. Presenting his hypothesis that worship should be centered on God and should be *His time*, Daffe lays out biblical, historical, philosophical, and practical perspectives on the worship God deserves and demands.

In the opening chapter, Daffe offers further details on *showtime*, *my time*, and *His time*. He concludes that worship should be all about God—our worship should be truly *His time*. Daffe says, “It is much easier to say these words

than to make it a reality in our personal and corporate lives. Worship which truly becomes “His time” requires a concentrated effort. It demands pushing through and overcoming those factors which attempt to detour or blur our focus.”

Daffe explores various worship styles and their place in contemporary worship. He also looks at music, from the hymnal in the pew to “singing off the walls,” which can often be controversial. The author says, “It is regretful that these two types of music have become battle lines in many congregations.” He suggests that worship leaders take responsibility for developing “a blended style of worship, which brings individuals of different ages and preferences together in worship.”

This book should be on every minister’s bookshelf. It is an excellent resource for individual reading, small group study, and as a guide for worship leaders who want to see their worship services become truly *His time*.

In the Foreword, Dr. French L. Arrington writes, “This book on worship has the potential for use in pastoral studies in seminaries, Bible colleges, institutes, and universities; it tells us what the Bible teaches about worship and is an excellent resource for church leaders, boards, and worship committees as an aid for rethinking their worship services in this twenty-first century. I expect to hear of pastors teaching their people from this book about worship.”

*The Worship God Wants: Showtime, My Time, or His Time?* was recently released by Pathway Press, ISBN 9781596849853, 188 pages, soft bound, and is available from Pathway Bookstore. ■

# CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

*Church of God News and Events Between January 16 and May 15, 2018*

## Paul F. Henson Passes Away

**April 26**—Rev. Paul F. Henson, a Church of God pastor, state overseer, and popular minister of the gospel around the world, passed away on Wednesday, April 25, 2018, at his home in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Henson, 84, started his ministry four months following his conversion and a few days shy of his sixteenth birthday. He became a



licensed Church of God minister the same year and received his ordination at just 25 years of age. He was pastoring his first church (in Marks, Mississippi) at the age of 22, where he was

tapped after three years to become the Youth and Christian Education director for the state. From that first appointment where he served for the next six years, Rev. Henson became one of the youngest elected to the post of assistant director of Youth and Christian Education for the Church of God at the age of 31. Four years later, he would be elected to the director's post. From 1972–1976, Henson was state overseer of Oklahoma, followed by four years as overseer of the Church of God's largest region—North Georgia. In 1980, Henson returned to the pastorate for six years where he led the congregation of Westmore Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee. In his final years of leadership, Henson was an inter-

national evangelist, and from 1998–2004, he served as the director of SpiritCare Ministries. Between the years of 1974 and 1994, Henson served on the International Executive Council for a total of 16 years. He was also a member of the World Missions Board, Youth and Christian Education Board, and chairman of the National Radio and T.V. Board. Over his more than 50 years of ministry, he was the speaker at more than 100 camp meetings and numerous youth crusades.

"Paul Henson represented the best of a generation of ministers who rose to prominence in leadership through hard work and dedication to Kingdom building," stated Church of God General Overseer Tim Hill. "Throughout his ministry, he exemplified a kind and loving spirit, winning hundreds to a saving knowledge of Christ. He demonstrated a quiet and effective leadership in every office he served."

Paul Henson was married to Geri Henson for 68 years, and they are the parents of seven children.

## World Missions Partners With YWEA

**March 28**—For many years, the youth of the Church of God, totaling tens of thousands of students, have joined with their youth leaders and pastors throughout the Church of God denomination to impact the world for Christ through YWEA (Youth World Evangelism Action).

The concept of one large annual project began in 1961 with the building of a church in

Brasilia, Brazil. Over the years, young people walked, jogged, rocked, washed, and merchandized their way to raise millions of dollars for the projects. In the YWEA process, young people also learn something of missions and prayer, and active concern for others. Even as local economies at times may have been sluggish, giving in recent years has gone steadily upward.

Technology has changed in providing online giving through smartphones, etc., and fundraising methods have evolved into giveaways of iPads. The one constant thing, though, is Church of God youth still overwhelmingly respond *en masse* to the direction of the Holy Spirit and to the passionate cry of people in need.

After many generations, the joint venture between Church of God World Missions and International Youth and Discipleship teams continues to inspire a new wave of students to experience and engage multiple cultures across the globe. The partnership is a healthy and

effective one. Students can reach the world half a globe away through YWEA.

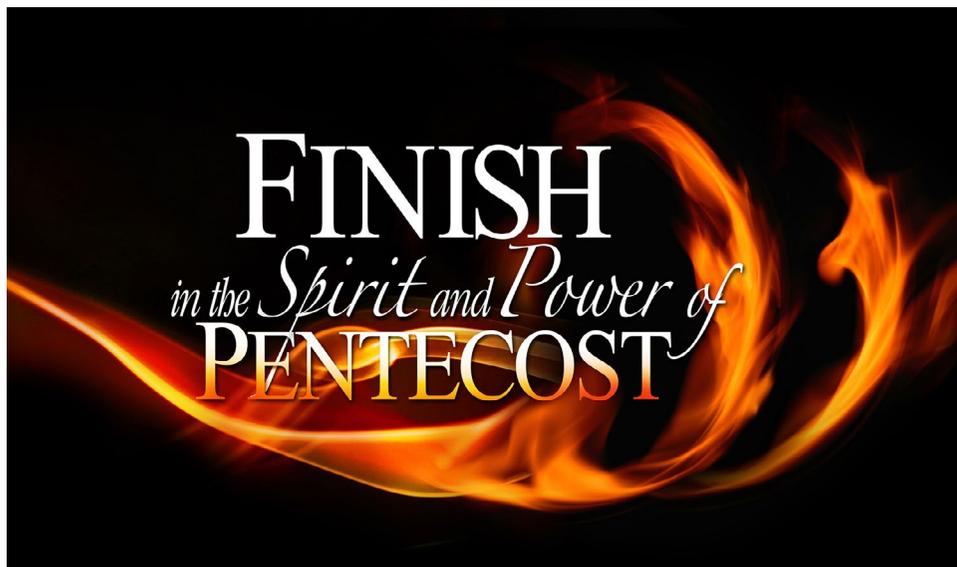
Visit [myywea.com](http://myywea.com) for more information.

## Hill Announces Theme for 2018 General Assembly

**March 16**—Church of God General Overseer Timothy M. Hill took to Facebook Live to officially announce the theme for the 77th International General Assembly set for July 30–August 3.

“FINISH in the Spirit and Power of Pentecost” will be the theme for the Assembly, to be held in the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. The biennial international gathering and business meeting of the ministers and laity of the Church of God will be conducted in the West Concourse of the OCCC.

In announcing the theme and accompanying logo, Hill stated: “This theme carries with it our Pentecostal heritage and distinctive...it is part of our mission statement that we proclaim the gospel ‘in the spirit and power of Pentecost.’ I want



you to know that your Executive Committee has made this a top priority in our prayer time together.”

Hill described that for the past two years, the Church of God has been focused on FINISH, specifically finishing the Great Commission challenge found in Matthew 28.

“We are continuing our efforts to fulfill and finish the Great Commission, but over the next two years, we will focus on the reality that such cannot be accomplished unless we are operating in the Spirit and power of our Pentecostal heritage. As we continue to see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I believe that we will move toward the complete fulfillment of the Great Commission in our lifetime.”

FINISH stands for Find...Intercede... Network...Invest...Send...Harvest.

## Voice of Hope Broadcasting in Israel

**February 20**—The Church of God national overseer of Israel sent a report on how Voice of Hope evangelical radio is making waves in the Mideast. World Missions’ approach is to reach Palestinians and Israelis by encouraging prayer for Israel and the Arabic peoples who will hear the message of Jesus Christ.

U.S. government officials vividly portray why Bible-believing Christians love and pray for the people of Israel. Twenty percent of them speak Arabic, and the radio transmits Jesus 24/7 from the studio on the Sea of Galilee’s shore. As a commercial-free, 50,000-watt AM station, they depend on the gifts from partners to continue broadcasting.

## Women’s Ministries Launches New Website

**January 22**—Church of God International Women’s Ministries President Paula Hill has

announced the newly launched website [www.cogwomensministries.com](http://www.cogwomensministries.com).

Within the site will be several resources, links, and information regarding events and projects of Church of God Women’s Ministries, including the 2016–2018 project Hope Released—an initiative to raise \$500,000 for the Provisión de Amor Safe House in Cota, Colombia.

“This project will provide a place for displaced and abused women who have been victims of an ongoing war in Colombia to find safe haven,” Paula Hill stated. “This project seeks to provide much needed supplies for a school which operates alongside the home.” Hill noted that 21 classrooms need furnishings for the 270 current students. She also noted the \$500,000 goal will be split between building a protection home (\$350,000) and supplies for the classrooms (\$150,000).

Other features of the website include profiles on women in ministry around the globe. Two debut features are of Poppi Smith from Indonesia and Julie Martínez in Cambodia. There is also a link to the Women’s Ministries newsletter, CONNECT, and a place for state and regional women’s ministry directors to submit their quarterly reports electronically.

“We are excited to offer this resource to the women of the Church of God,” Hill stated. “We will be regularly updating and adding more to it as we go along. We want this website to be the go-to place for the exciting things happening with the women in ministry in the Church of God around the world!”



# CHURCH OF GOD 77<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 30 - AUGUST 3, 2018 • ORLANDO, FL  
REGISTER TODAY AT [GA18.ORG](http://GA18.ORG)

## FINISH *in the Spirit and Power of* PENTECOST

INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



**Dr. John D. Childers**  
*Secretary General*

**Dr. Raymond F. Culpepper**  
*1st Assistant General Overseer*

**Dr. Timothy M. Hill**  
*General Overseer*

**Dr. J. David Stephens**  
*2nd Assistant General Overseer*

**Dr. David E. Ramirez**  
*3rd Assistant General Overseer*