

Fall 2023

ENGAGE

A Journal for Church of God Ministries

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Kauai Church Carries MIP Legacy 50 Years Later
- Will Digital Apps Replace Physical Bibles?
- Revive Us!
- What Ministry Leaders Think About AI and the Church
- Five Reasons to Abandon the Attractional Church Model





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

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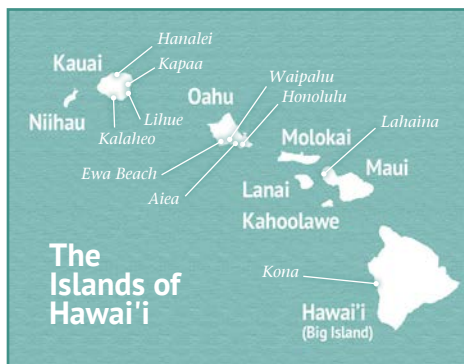
From the Editor | Cameron Fisher

A Small Island and a Big MIP Connection

In the spring/summer issue of *Engage* we were introduced to seven young people living in Hawai'i back in the early 1970s. This unassuming group of three married couples and a young man could not have dreamed that 50 years later they would be asked to recall their experience by telling the story of the launch of the Church of God's Ministerial Internship Program (MIP).

As explained in last issue's editorial, I have a familial connection to MIP, as my father, the late Dr. Robert E. Fisher, founded the program and recruited the first interns. In my research, I discovered so much new information and had extended conversations with four of the seven interns. It has been an eye-opening and truly rewarding experience.

The follow-up article in this issue on the 50th anniversary of this pioneer group tells the amazing MIP connection of one small church on the island of Kauai. All seven of the inaugural interns and others that followed had some tie to the Kalaheo church located on one of Hawai'i's most remote islands. I won't



The interns and the Powell family conducted ministry in several cities across four islands. These cities are discussed in the feature that begins on page 6.

get into it here; I encourage you to read the article on page 6.

An additional, ironically connected tidbit of history is how the Church of God in Lahaina, Maui, crossed paths with this group as well. As we are all aware, Lahaina was decimated by wildfires in August 2023, including the complete destruction of this iconic and historic church.

If you missed the initial article in this series, please revisit the spring/summer issue at cogengage.org to get the whole story. The Church of God Division of Education, which coordinates the modern MIP, is planning to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this highly effective training program, as well as recognizing the Church of God Hawai'i's contribution to it. ■



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Kauai Church Carries MIP Legacy 50 Years Later

By Cameron Fisher

In the last issue of *Engage*, the story was told of the birth of the Church of God Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) in the state of Hawai'i. It was 50 years ago, in 1973, when seven people—three couples and a single man—pioneered the program of intense ministry training under the leadership of Dr. Robert E. Fisher, state overseer of Hawai'i at the time.

Three of the seven interns were recruited from the island of Kauai where they had been radically saved under the ministry of Rev. Jack Powell. Powell and his wife, Sallie, had moved to Hawai'i in 1971 with their three children to pastor a church outside Honolulu. Carrying a burden for the Hippie Generation, in January 1972, Powell and his family moved to Kauai and planted a church at Kapaa Elementary School. Hearing about the hippies living in the Dry Caves on the North Shore, he preached the gospel there, leading many to Christ and baptizing them in the Pacific Ocean. Pastor Powell held services every Tuesday night in the caves and on Sunday afternoon in a garage turned into a church. Later that year, for only



A victorious baptismal service in the Pacific led by Jack Powell (right).

\$10,000, Powell secured a building owned by the Seventh Day Adventists in Kalaheo for the new church. The 11,000 square-foot parcel included an educational building and parking lot.

In January 1973, the church was officially established as the Kalaheo Church of God. Mark and Yvonne Knock and Dennis Duguay, who would be part of the inaugural MIP class, were among the sixteen charter members, whose average age was 25. Also among the sixteen was Vaughn Mathews who had been saved in California and heard of the



ministry at Dry Caves. Led by Pastor Powell, the new converts secured an “evangelism bus,” with help of the “Help Hawaii Hear” initiative, which transported young people from Hanalei to Kalaheo for services.

In June 1973, the seven young people received their six-month assignments when they were commissioned during the Church of God camp meeting. Among the seven were Carl and Terri Oliver, former drug dealers who had been miraculously saved. Receiving their assignments, the Olivers transferred their membership from the Lahaina Church of God on Maui to the Hanalei Church of God on Kauai. After a few months in Hanalei, Carl and Terri transferred to the Kalaheo Church where Carl served as missions pastor under the leadership of Pastor Powell.

Amid the assignments for the seven interns, the Powells transitioned to Oahu to lead the Church of God at Ewa Beach, leaving a pastoral vacancy at the Kalaheo church. Noting the progression in his leadership, State Overseer Fisher appointed Carl the pastor and the church continued to flourish. Over the next three years the Olivers started a coffeehouse ministry and led the construction of the sanctuary that exists

today. Carl and Terri separated and eventually divorced, but Carl stayed connected with the church, marrying his current wife Sylvia in 1980 at the Lahaina Church of God. Carl and Sylvia moved back to Kauai in 1981 where he was hired by the Kauai Police Dept.



Carl and Sylvia Oliver celebrated 43 years of marriage this year

“The Lord helped me complete 25 years as a patrol sergeant, detective sergeant, armorer, range master, and firearms instructor,” Carl stated. “Since retiring, I have been a contract armorer/range master, as well as a civilian firearms instructor. I have also been involved with setting up security for various churches, including my home church, Kauai Bible Church.”

During the Olivers time at Kalaheo, Vaughn Mathews served as



Vaughn and Barbara Mathews (top center) at their wedding performed by Carl Oliver (waving Bible)

Sunday school superintendent at the church. As a newly called believer, and sensing his need for ministry training, Vaughn became part of the second class of ministerial interns from Hawai'i in 1974.

"Dr. Fisher was in the last of his appointment as overseer in Hawai'i and Dr. Bill Sheeks was appointed as overseer," Vaughn recalled. "I was working a full-time job and could not afford to move to Fresno, California, to attend West Coast Bible College. So, when the MIP was presented to me, I jumped at it. I cannot begin to express how thankful I have been for the MIP; it started me in the right direction." After completing the MIP and receiving his

Exhorter certificate, Vaughn planted a church in Lihue where he met his future wife, Barbara. They were married by Carl Oliver in the Kalaheo Church of God on July 19, 1975. In attendance at the wedding was Dr. Sheeks, who offered the newlyweds a pastorate at a church on the north shore of Oahu. That was followed by Kona on the Big Island where he led the building program of the young Kona Church of God.

"I am very thankful for the burden and vision Dr. Fisher had for ministry," Vaughn concluded. "It played a major part of my ministry over the years. I still draw on what I learned during the year of training in the MIP." Vaughn and Barbara went on to serve the Church of God as pastors in Washington state (20 years at Longview, six years at Yakima), and administrative bishop for Western Canada (four years), and Pacific Northwest (eight years) before retiring to Arizona.

The third couple from the first MIP class was Wilfred and Jaye Tabian, who served at the Waipahu Church of God on Oahu for their internship, then moved to Kauai to be near family and became members of the Kalaheo Church.

Coming full circle, today the Kalaheo Church is pastored by former



Current pastors, Dave and Teresa Pennington

Hawai'i MIP graduates, David and Teresa Pennington. Moving to Kauai on October 6, 2018, Kalaheo is Pastor Pennington's first church after serving 32 years in the U.S. Navy, retiring in 2008. Dave and Teresa had completed the Church of God MIP in 2002, at the Newtown Church of God while stationed in Aiea, Hawai'i. They were transferred before Dave took the Exhorter exam, so instead of seeking a position as pastor, they used their MIP training to serve in various lay ministries through the years. After arriving back in Hawai'i in 2018, David immediately took the test to receive his minister's license. In 2019, the congregation voted to change the name to Maranatha Church of God and in September 2022, the church held a reunion of the former pastors and leaders, where Carl Oliver, Vaughn Mathews, and Sallie Powell were in attendance.

"We believe this church is a shining light to Kalaheo to reach the lost," stated Pastor Dave. "May we be faithful and obedient to build on the firm foundation set by those who went before us." ■



Vaughn Mathews speaks at the 50-year celebration of the Kalaheo church last fall.



The Kalaheo Church under expansion in the mid-1970s



The Maranatha Church of God today

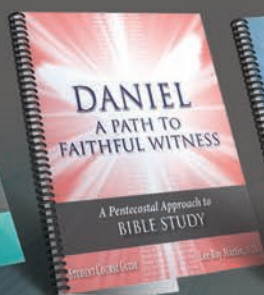
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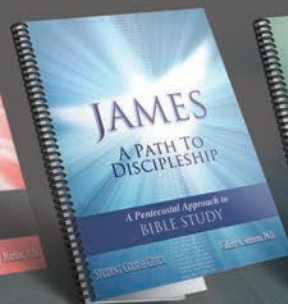
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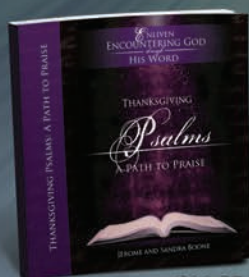
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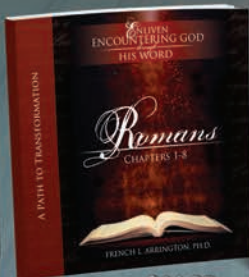
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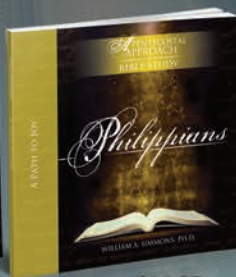
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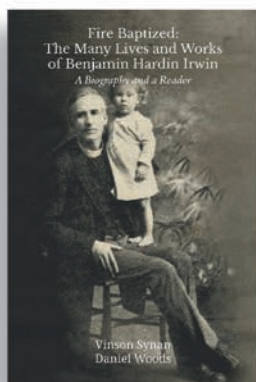
18th Annual Azusa Lecture

Thursday, November 9, 2023

Lee University Chapel

7:00 p.m.

The Confessions of Benjamin Hardin Irwin: Why We Should Bother to Listen



Founder of the Fire Baptized Holiness Association, Benjamin Hardin Irwin was important to the development of the Pentecostal Movement and locating the Church of God International Offices in Cleveland, Tennessee. Yet, he is largely forgotten. Dr. Dan Woods will explore the life and ministry of Irwin and why we should remember his place in our Pentecostal history.



Dr. Woods serves the International Pentecostal Holiness Church as a preacher, teacher, and historian. He has more than three decades of pastoral experience and is Faculty Emeritus at Ferrum College (Virginia), where he taught History for 32 years. Woods consistently highlights the need to keep Pentecostal power, sanctified living, and end-time evangelism intimately connected.

Spirit of Azusa Award Honoring Dr. Harold Bare

Along with his wife, Laila, Dr. Bare was Lead Pastor of Covenant Church (Charlottesville, Va.) for 39 years. Covenant Church included worshippers from more than twenty nations and hosted five services for ethnic minorities. While pastoring, the Bares developed a passion for pastoral families. Through their non-profit, Encouraging the Saints, they visit and encourage pastors' families across the United States and in Europe. With a Ph.D. from University of Virginia, Dr. Bare has written several books including *They Call Me Pentecostal*.



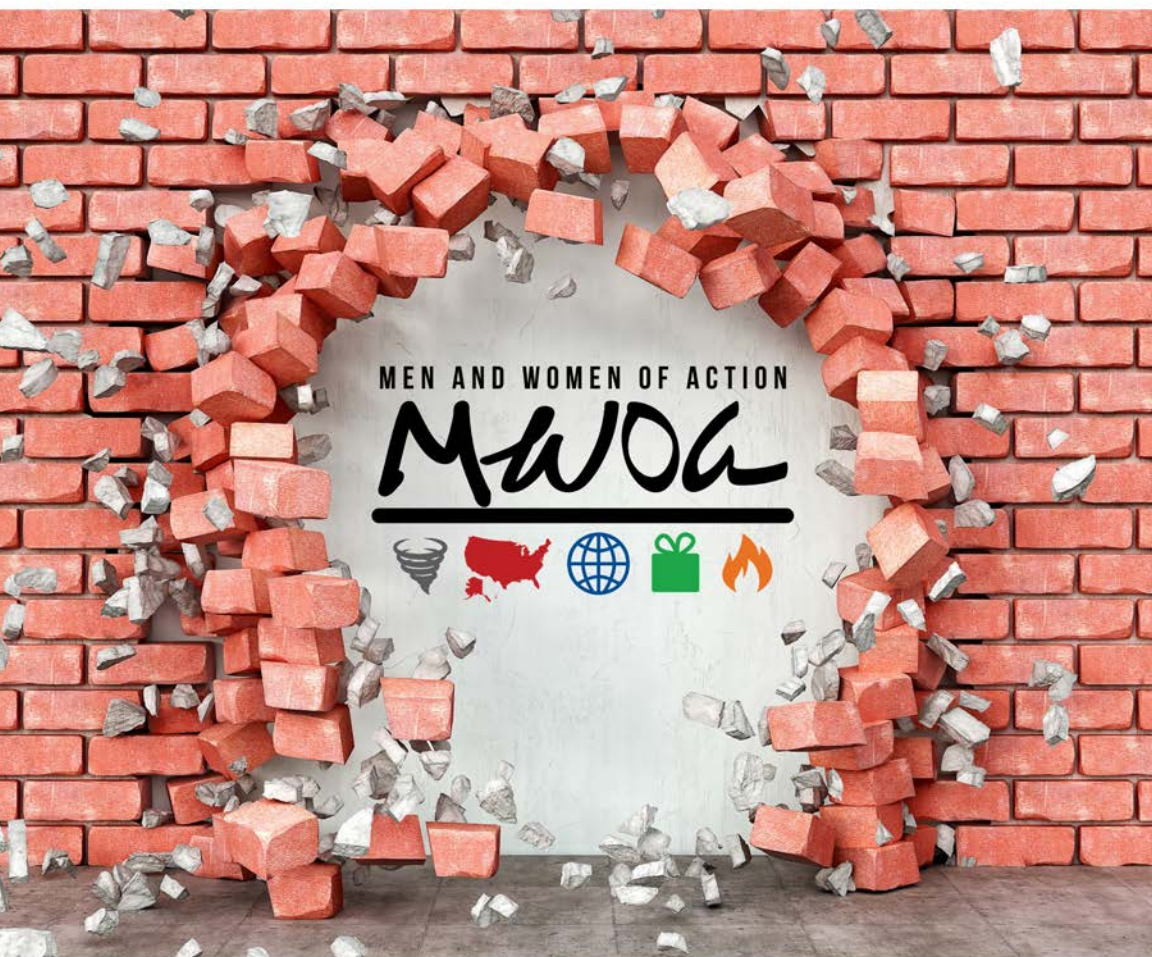
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Will Digital Apps Replace Physical Bibles?

By Leonardo Blair, Senior Features Reporter, Christian Post

With more than 95 installs per minute, Life Church's YouVersion Bible App celebrated its 15-year anniversary this month on more than 575 million unique devices in nearly 2,000 languages, and the digital popularity of the Word of God is showing no signs of slowing down.

YouVersion CEO Bobby Gruenewald explained in a recent release from the donor-funded non-profit that the Bible App was one of just 800 apps available for download when Apple launched its iOS App Store on July 10, 2008.

In the first three days, the app was downloaded more than 83,000 times, far more downloads than Gruenewald had expected to have at the end of 2008. Today, the Bible App continues to exceed expectations even in a sea of more than 1.6 million apps that include hundreds of other Bible apps in the iOS App Store.

"When we submitted the app for approval, we didn't even know if it would make it into the App Store on opening day or even at all," Gruenewald recalled. "It ended up



being one of only a couple hundred free apps available that first day and went on to have an incredible first weekend. Honestly, our minds were blown."

And as people have continued integrating the Bible App into their daily lives over the years, its popularity has only continued to soar.

"Over the last 15 years, YouVersion has leveraged industry innovations to help people build consistent Bible engagement habits, including using push notification reminders, gamification features like streaks, and community features like friendships and prayer," the YouVersion release said.



When the Bible App was first launched, the text featured only two languages, but by its fifth year, it had more than 500 languages. The text of the Bible App is now featured in nearly 2,000 languages, and the plan is to feature Scripture in the world's more than 7,000 languages by 2033.

As digital Bibles like YouVersion Bible App continue growing in popularity, will they one day replace physical Bibles?

For now, according to *Digital Millennials and the Bible* produced in partnership with the Barna Group in 2018, the print version of the Bible appears to be the choice of the majority of young people—47% to 28%.

Women especially preferred the print version 50% to 24% digital. While more men, 31%, than women preferred the digital version of the Bible, 43% still listed a print Bible as their top choice to engage with the Word of God.

Responding to questions from *The Christian Post* about whether data from the Bible app could suggest an eventual replacement of physical Bibles by the technology, Gruenewald said he believes the Bible app complements engagement with the Bible.

"The Bible App has been an effective tool to help people read the Bible more consistently, but I don't think the print Bible is going away. In fact, many of our users regularly use both," he said in an email to CP.

Asked about the use of the Bible on Sunday mornings when many Christians go to church, Gruenewald said every Sunday there is "a spike in the use of the Bible App."

"Ultimately, we want people to spend time in God's Word every day in whatever format works best for them. And while we naturally see a spike in the use of the Bible App every Sunday, we're encouraged to see consistent Bible engagement throughout the week," he said.

"We believe we're just at the beginning of what God wants to do through YouVersion. Even after 15 years, our perspective is that our story isn't in the past tense, but it's a story that has a really big future in front of it as we remain focused on how to help millions of people build intimacy with God through His Word," Gruenewald added.

John Dyer, vice president for enrollment and educational technology and assistant professor of theological studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, also doesn't believe the



printed Bible will be made obsolete by digital versions.

“It appears the Bible is following the larger trend in the book and eBook industry. Initially, many people predicted the Kindles, Nooks, and iPads would completely replace paper books, but after a few decades, it appears people still like reading and studying printed books, including the scriptures,” Dyer, who authored *People of the Screen: How Evangelicals Created the Digital Bible and How It Shapes Their Reading of Scripture*, told CP.

Dyer noted that with digital technology, the Bible “is no longer ‘just the text,’ but a multimedia category, with all kinds of things added to it in all different mediums.”

“It’s available on print, screen, and audio. It has tons of little numbers added a few centuries ago (verses), commentaries, maps, and even interactivity. All of these can be helpful, and all of them can be formative in both positive and negative ways. What matters is that we pay attention,” he explained.

While the embrace of digital Bibles has its benefits, Dyer also worries that it might make Christians even lazier when it comes to committing Scripture to memory.

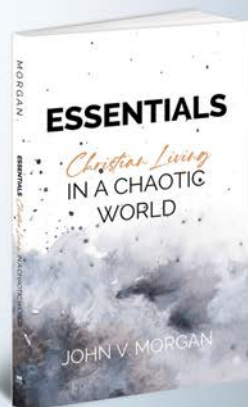
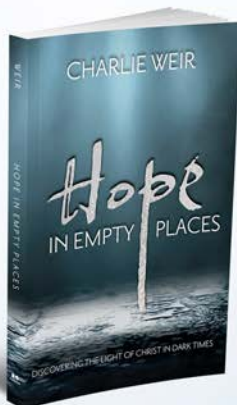
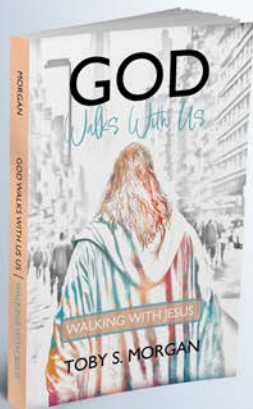
“I have concerns with printed Bibles, including taking the Bible out of the church community and making it highly individualized, adding the chapter: verse numbers which chop up the text and encourages reading sentences rather than paragraphs and books, and decreasing the amount of the Scripture that we have memorized because we always have access to the printed page,” he said. “The digital Bible, in all its forms, mostly accelerates these trends, giving more access (which is wonderful!) but also risking making the Word of God more individualized and atomized, and yet unknown to us.”

Still, Dyer had high praise for the innovators who are working to increase engagement with Scripture.

“I appreciate all the innovators out there trying new things and encouraging new forms of Bible engagement, trusting that the Spirit will guide us,” he told CP. “I encourage both users and programmers to think about how to develop apps and tools that draw us into communities who immerse ourselves in large portions of Scripture.” ■

This article was originally published by Christian Post on July 23, 2023.

New Releases



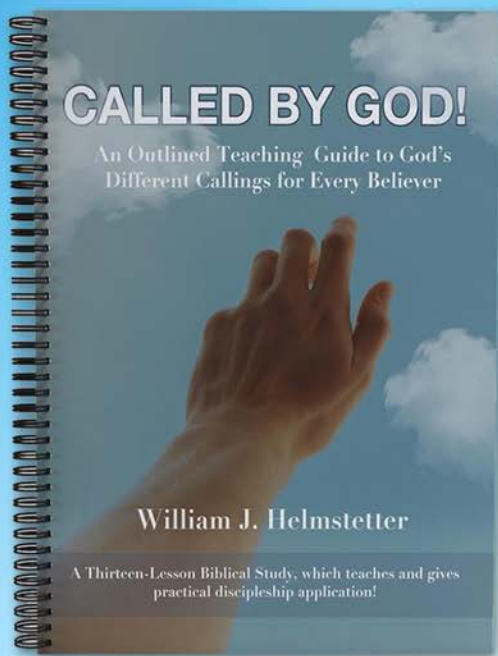
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Revive Us!

By Kaylin Corine Reed

Editor's Note: Kaylin Corine Reed, representing South Georgia for the Church of God, is 18 years old and placed second in the Creative Writing/Articles and Essays category during International Teen Talent held the first week of August 2023 at Lee University. It is presented here as it was to the judges that awarded her for her talents.

Revival is needed! Revival is coming! Revival is here! Have you heard what is happening at Lee University, Asbury, and other places across the world? These are just a few buzz words I have heard lately. Many people are wondering, what is revival? Why does the church need revival? How do we have revival? These questions set me on a quest to find answers. My curiosity led me to begin by searching the Bible to see what God's Word has to say. After all, shouldn't we begin with Him? The paragraphs that follow will reveal my discovery, even my personal experience concerning revival.

Revival is an awakening of the spirit or becoming alive in Christ again. Revival is a restoration of life. These meanings lead me to believe that we, as followers of Christ, were once alive and thriving for Jesus. Then we began to draw back or become dry and stale as people of God. We need a refreshing and refilling of the Holy Spirit. In Ezekiel 37, God asked the prophet Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Sometimes we become discouraged and

lose our excitement for Jesus and give up. We shrivel up. We dry up. God told Ezekiel to speak to the dry bones and tell them what God said to do. The Lord said, "I will make breath enter you and you will come to life." Later in that chapter an amazing thing happened! The bones began to come alive! The awakening of the spirit was restored.

Revival is essential for the body of Christ, the church, and the people of God. For God's kingdom work to continue, revival is necessary. We need revival to be able to effectively witness to the lost. If our witness is parched, non-believers will not be convinced that Jesus is the Savior of the world. Jesus came to look for and save the lost. In Matthew 16:15, He gave us the Great Commission by stating, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (NIV). We need revival to take the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone.

If we want to see revival happen, we must surrender whole heartedly and present our request to Him. In



2 Chronicles 7:14, the Bible reads: “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” Revival starts with God’s people humbling themselves, asking for forgiveness, surrendering completely to God with genuine repentance. We must come broken and rid ourselves of pride. When the people of God do these things, God will hear us and heal us. According to Tenney (1998), “real revival is when the most difficult and unreachable person you know comes to Jesus against all odds and possibilities” (p. 48).

In December 2022, I had the honor of experiencing a revival at The Ramp in Cleveland, Tennessee. My brother and I wanted to ring in the New Year with excitement and bells of revival much like ringing jingle bells on Christmas morning. On the first night there, I really didn’t know what to expect. I noticed people were worshipping God in their own way. Some were jumping up and down while others were running up and down the aisle. I remained at a stance, my feet were planted while barely lifting my hands. My feet felt heavy as if they were super-glued to the floor. I would not be moved! I had convinced myself that I was doing fine. It was enough to give God my half-hearted worship.

However, deep down, I wanted the freedom that I saw most were having. It felt as if a war were going on inside of me. I really wanted to encounter the intense liberty that I saw others experiencing. Yet I wanted to stay in my place of comfort. Eventually, I gave into my deception and rationale. By the third and final night, I felt free to worship in my own way. I will never forget what Youth Pastor Robert said that night, “If you haven’t gotten anything from The Ramp these past two nights, tonight is your last chance to give Jesus your all and press into Him.” I held onto that statement and carried it with me that night. I began to praise Jesus like never before. My feet felt liberated and light as a feather as I started to jump up and down with exuding joy. That is when revival poured out on everyone. I saw a crowd of teenagers crying and weeping. You won’t believe what happened next! The nightly guest speaker told everyone to lift their hands and ask God for His Spirit to pour on them. The Holy Spirit poured out on me and others. The next thing that happened was amazing and unforgettable! The only way I can describe it is I felt a rumbling inside of me that seemed to move up to my mouth. My lips started shaking and I began to hear words I had never heard before. I was speaking in tongues, a heavenly language, as recorded in Acts, Chapter 2.



Kaylin Reed (center) receives her award at Teen Talent from (l-r), Daniel Maples, Brian Yaun, Rob Bailey, and Justin Sharpe

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them the ability (NLT).

Everyone experienced God in their own personal way! Some weeping, some laughing, some standing with arms lifted high. All congregants were caught up in the supernatural

presence of God! We experienced authentic revival!

In conclusion, revival brings awareness of how much we need our loving Father. If we find ourselves in a desolate place, Jesus can bring us restoration. We need revival! Revival begins with each individual completely surrendering to God with a repentant heart. We must create an atmosphere of worship to the King of kings. When God's people submit to His will, revival comes. Revival can happen, but we must hunger for it and ask God to fill us. God honors our request when we seek him first. Your people are hungry and desire revival. We cry out, God revive us! ■



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What Ministry Leaders Think About AI and the Church



Initial results show that church leaders have a general understanding of AI, but are split in their views on how, or if, it should be used in ministry.

Gloo, the leading technology platform dedicated to connecting the faith ecosystem and releasing its collective might, announced initial results of its “AI & the Church Survey.” The survey was developed in conjunction with a working group of partners, including Barna Group, Ed Stetzer, the Lausanne Movement, AI and Faith, and others.

The goal of the survey is to help church leaders be more informed on peer sentiment and equipping leaders to drive the conversation around responsible use of artificial intelligence.

The 25-question survey used a snowball sampling method to cover a variety of topics from ministry role, church size, and congregational background to usage of AI, views on its usefulness, and sentiments on its moral and ethical implications. At the time these results were drawn, 1,573 people



participated in the survey, 83 percent of which were church leaders, and 17 percent were church members. The survey is now reopened, and full results are available and will continue to be made available through Gloop.

Steve Millette, director of common measurement at Gloop, stated, "Not surprisingly, these early results reveal a lot of variability on views of AI in the faith ecosystem. While leaders generally understand AI, they are indicating they need more training in order to use it effectively. More discussion is needed about how the Church can properly use the technology to support ministry."

Key results from the survey include:

Understanding AI:

Sixty-three percent of leaders are comfortable in their understanding of AI, saying they are fairly to somewhat knowledgeable, while 28 percent of church leaders say they are only slightly or not knowledgeable at all. Only nine percent considered themselves very knowledgeable.

Using AI:

While AI tools undergird a wide swath of online and digital tools and platforms, most church leaders do not use AI directly in ministry. Sixty-two

percent state they rarely or never use AI in their work, 19 percent cite occasional use, with another 19 percent that use AI on a weekly or daily basis.

Lead pastor at Kansas City's Westside Family Church, Randy Frazee, said: "As church leaders, we are usually behind the innovation curve. That reluctance costs us real Kingdom advances. While I've got one eyebrow up watching the unfolding AI, I am excited that more people might draw a step closer to Jesus because of it. AI is here to stay, and we can use it as a tool to draw people toward the light."

Concerns about AI:

Fifty-four percent of respondents state they are quite concerned to extremely concerned about ethical or moral issues related to using AI in the church. Another 40 percent indicate they are slightly to somewhat concerned, and six percent are not concerned at all.

"It's a good thing that Christians are curious, yet cautious about AI—the people working in AI are, too. The question is, how will we respond? This data should compel us toward engagement and ethical use of AI," said Ed Stetzer, missiologist and dean of the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University.



Outlook on AI:

A majority of leaders (54%) are somewhat to very uncomfortable with the emergence of AI in the world, while 32 percent are somewhat to very positive or excited. Fourteen percent remain neutral.

When it comes to using AI in a church context, respondents were divided.

Use within their church:

Forty-three percent are somewhat to very uncomfortable with the idea of using AI in their church, with 27 percent being somewhat to very positive or excited, while 30 percent were neutral with no strong feelings either way.

Use by the Big C Church:

Forty-one percent believe that the Church should moderately leverage AI in ministry, and nine percent assert the Church should enthusiastically leverage the technology. Seventeen percent hold that the Church should resist the use of AI in ministry, with an additional seven percent that declare the Church should condemn it. Twenty-six percent hold a neutral position on the use of AI in ministry.

"The data reveals that church leaders are quite split in their opinions on

the role of AI in the Church and how they are reading the terrain," said Savannah Kimberlin, associate vice president at Barna Group. "Forty-three percent of respondents admitted to feeling uncomfortable or anxious about AI being used in churches, and one in four went so far as to say the Church should resist or condemn the use of AI. However, one in three enthusiastically shared they believe AI will improve their efficiency or effectiveness. Stats like these show that the time is right to come together and have meaningful conversations on the topic."

Going forward, Gloo and the working group of partners will continue to gather data, ask new questions, and track sentiment changes over time. A variety of organizations will contribute analysis, commentary, and resources to be made available at no charge to ministries on the AI and the Church Hub. ■

To see the full results, visit gloo.us/ai-survey-results.

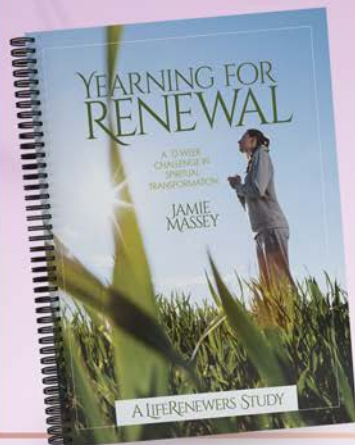
Gloo is based in Boulder, Colorado, employing a team of more than 150 people.

(This article was originally released on August 2, 2023, via *Christian Newswire*.)

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How Will I Be Remembered?	"A Spirit Baptized People"	"A Healed People"	"A Expectant People"
Chapters 4-8	LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE 100 SERIES VOL 4	LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE 100 SERIES VOL 5	LIVING WHAT WE BELIEVE 100 SERIES VOL 6
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Five Reasons to Abandon the Attractional Church Model

By Matt Allbritton



The “Attractional Church,” according to Jared C. Wilson (from *The Gospel-Driven Church*), can be defined as “a way of doing church ministry whose primary purpose is to make Christianity appealing.” Now, there’s certainly nothing wrong with people being attracted to a church, but if attraction is the exclusive mission of a church, they are missing their purpose. Attractional churches would argue that they want to use whatever means necessary to attract the most people in order to see the most people saved. I get that. We could all use more motivation in our efforts to build the Kingdom. But, that’s not all that is going on here.

The other day I saw an ad on Facebook that read, “Click here to find out how we went from 2 families to over 100 people in just 7 weeks.” This church was selling its method for

profit. This is an attractional method for an attractional church. There’s nothing wrong with a church growing in an explosive way; but according to Jared C. Wilson, “the way a church wins its people shapes its people.” Oftentimes, the attractional model does not go deep enough to create true heart change. Wilson added, “If you win people to biblical principles but fail to win them to the biblical Christ, you will simply create religious people who lack the power to change. We create tidy unbelievers.”

I’m not saying that someone cannot become born again in an attractional church, but is that where it stops? Are they discipled? Are they shown how to live a life of mission? Or, is their job simply to be a greeter at the 11 a.m. service? By the way, I’m a believer that this is typically the best-case scenario for attractional



churches. They may appear to reach hundreds to thousands, but how many understand the cost of being a disciple?

According to Wilson, there are five reasons that the attractional church model needs to be reevaluated:

- 1. It is not generationally sustainable**
- 2. The sermons are not deep enough**
- 3. Its members are hitting a discipleship ceiling**
- 4. It is often culturally naïve**
- 5. It is evangelistically ineffective**

This “come and see model” needs to be rebranded to “go and tell.” There is nothing wrong with “seeking and saving,” which the attractional church gets right. But many (if not, most) unbelievers are seeking to find Christ through His church rather than in His church. It seems as if the only way we believe someone will come to Christ is if we bring them, and the pastor happens to whip out his best evangelistic sermon that day. It certainly happens like that, but the entire body of Christ must “go and tell.”

To piggyback on Wilson’s fifth point, evangelism from top to bottom is severely lacking in attractional churches. For one, pastors themselves do not preach evangelistic sermons. Why would church members evangelize if they do not even see it happening in their church? Second, and

perhaps the most important, the Office of the Evangelist is nearly dead. When mega churches started eliminating their support of full-time evangelists, other churches followed suit.

While all Christians are called to evangelize their circle of influence (**2 Timothy 4:5**), there are men and women who have the gift of the evangelist (**Ephesians 4:11**). Because I believe in the authority and inspiration of Scripture coupled with the impact I have seen growing up in the home of an evangelist, I believe the church will continue to decline if we do not allow the Office of the Evangelist to make a return.

Unfortunately, the goal of attractional churches is not to evangelize but to have a respectable answer to the question: “How many you runnin’?” Our postmodern culture is watching us and cringing at our methods. They see right through our approaches to reach them. So, what do we replace the attractional church with?

The early church (originally known as “The Way”) held church in their homes. Perhaps, we need to go back to this model. We will write on this subject more in the future. ■

This piece originally appeared on the Website for Wayhouse Media on May 4, 2020. Matt Allbritton, the owner of Wayhouse, has joined the contributing authors at Faith on View. Essays previously published by Wayhouse Media are being republished in Faith on View.

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LEGAL NOTES

DENNIS WATKINS

Transgender Restroom Laws and Procedures for Churches

Introduction

Transgender restroom use is a widely discussed concern, especially in churches. The question of what to do if a transgender individual attempts to use a restroom that is opposite of his or her gender assigned at birth is not easily answered. With legislation changes and more media attention to the issue, you may be left wondering how this will affect your church and what you should do to prepare your congregation.



Transgender Restroom Laws

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Department of Education have recently established legislation that makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person's sex or gender identity. This means that, in places of public accommodation, transgender individuals have the right to use the restroom that aligns with their preferred gender identification. If places of public accommodation do not follow these laws, it is considered sex discrimination. Therefore, it is imperative to know the laws in your state and various locales.

Churches, despite being open to the public, are not places of public accommodation, at least at this point. As such, they exercise the freedom to deny a transgender individual access to the restroom that does not match his or her gender assigned at birth, as that does not align with the church's religious beliefs. Church of God has sincerely held biblical and religious beliefs regarding transgender ideas and gender identity. Furthermore, this situation can create a potential safety concern and a violation of privacy.

What To Do in This Situation

Going forward, it is important for churches to have an established policy that clearly lays out the position of



the church and procedures for handling these situations. It is acceptable and encouraged for churches to state their beliefs and to ask for the individual to use a gender-neutral restroom. If the individual does not comply, it is permissible to ask the individual to leave, and *reasonable* force can be used if the individual resists doing so. It is important to emphasize that churches are private property and are not places of public accommodation; therefore, they have the right to enforce such policies and to remove any such disruptions.

Once a policy has been established, it should be made available to the congregation, and may even be posted inside and outside of the restrooms. This is to ensure that everyone in attendance is aware of the policies established and given appropriate notice. In fact, a copy of the official Church of God resolution on this subject may be accessed at this link: [Click Here](#)

Another resource that a church could have is a prepared statement in the event that a transgender individual is attempting to use the restroom that is opposite of his or her gender assigned at birth. This statement should be succinct and focus on expressing the sincerely held biblical and religious beliefs of the church. It should also express that the church's

policies are being violated. The statement may include the availability of an alternate option, such as a gender-neutral restroom facility. However, if these persons refuse to comply with the policy, then it should be expressed to them that they will be asked to leave the premises, and that *reasonable* force will be used if necessary. Above all, it is important to express that the church is private property and therefore has the right to enforce such policies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is of utmost importance to establish a policy for your church that is based on the beliefs of Church of God and the Holy Scripture. It may also be beneficial to prepare a statement in the event that there is a transgender restroom incident at your church. Lastly, it is vital that you remain aware of your state and local laws, as they are subject to change. Transgender restroom use remains a very sensitive topic, and it is important to approach it compassionately and professionally. ■

Dennis 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. Special thanks to Grace Tinsley, Grayson Cook, and Elizabeth Poarch for their assistance in writing this article.

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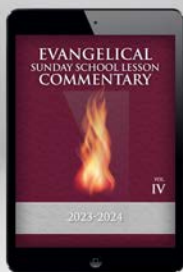
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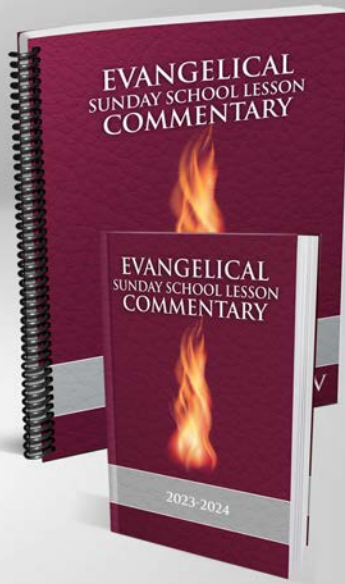
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MONEY MATTERS
ART RHODES

August 2023

Developing a Spending Plan



The first step to financial security is developing a spending plan. Yes, I said a spending plan.

I find that when I speak of having a budget, about 80 percent of the people I am talking to immediately tune me out. However, when I talk about developing a spending plan, most people's interest is piqued.

Simply put, a budget is nothing more than a spending plan. How much money are we going to take in? And

how are we going to spend those precious resources?

It has been said that if you do not plan to spend your money wisely, most assuredly you will not. So how do we go about creating this spending plan? Whether you are creating a spending plan for yourself, your family, your church, or your business, the same basic principles apply. At the end of the day, you want to make sure you have more money left over than you have month left over. So,



our goal is to move forward in a reasonable process, clearly determining what our spendable, take-home income is, and then creating a process of how we spend that money—and nothing more.

One Page

While there are some incredible software programs and apps available for budgeting purposes, I recommend that you start your budgeting process using a one-page budget. On that one page, you want to see all your income, as well as all your expenses. It is my belief that if you can look at it in one glance, you will be more likely to follow the spending plan that you create.

Once you have your one-page budget, then you may want to use an electronic version of your budget to track how well you are doing. But start with the one pager. A simple one-page budget worksheet is available on the Benefits Board's website.

Eliminate Impulse Buying

To have a good budget, you must eliminate impulse buying. I define impulse buying as “buying things you don't need to impress people you don't like.” Seriously, have you noticed that most of your impulse buying is not done to meet a need in your life, but done out of pure desire or want?

You need to come up with a process that will help you eliminate impulse spending. I'm not talking about buying a candy bar when you go into the convenience store. Set a limit and say if you are going to spend over, for example, \$100, you will wait at least 24 hours before buying that product, and in the process, talk about it, and the need for such, with your spouse. That's just a simple step to help you limit your impulse spending.

But don't just concentrate on the big items. The scripture says it is the little foxes that often spoil the vine. So, also keep up with the cash expenditures that you make on a regular basis.

Have you ever gotten \$50 or \$100 out of an ATM machine on one day and 24 hours later had none of that money and had nothing to show for it? Let me challenge you to keep up with every penny you spend, even your cash expenditures, for at least two weeks. I actually did that for several years. That simple experiment basically changed my whole focus on how I spend money. What I realized was I was spending money on things that really didn't matter. I was buying a \$2 bottle of water when I was five minutes away from my home.



Build a Reserve Account

You need a reserve account. Life happens, and that means that sometimes we are not prepared for the expenditures that we face. In those situations, we need a reserve account that we can fall back on in those times of unexpected expenditures or unexpected changes in our life circumstances.

Having at least three months of household living expenses set aside in a reserve account is critical. It would be even better to have six months of household living expenses available. The recent pandemic we experienced brought home very clearly the need to be prepared when your whole world gets turned upside down. Having money set aside to pay the light bill, the rent, and other household expenses is absolutely necessary when you lose your job, or you are unexpectedly laid off for even a few weeks.

Be Flexible

You have to be flexible. Remember that a spending plan, or a budget, is nothing more than a roadmap of how you are going to make and spend your hard-earned money. Don't get locked into a spending plan to the point that you lose all flexibility. I assure you, there will be times

when you will need to make mid-stream adjustments to your spending plan to be able to make it through the month. You may have to move some of your grocery money into your utility budget to be able to pay the electricity bill during the midst of the summer. So, don't lock yourself into an unchangeable spending plan to the point that you give up hope of being able to carry out the gist of what you're trying to accomplish—and that is, keeping your spending in line with your income.

Conclusion

The Bible contains literally hundreds of verses that talk about money, and the impact of money on us as individuals. That signifies to me that the Lord truly is concerned about our financial health. Therefore, we should be concerned as well.

Remember, it is not what you make; it is what you keep. Your financial future is based upon what you can keep.

—Art Rhodes

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DOCTRINE AND POLITY

Human Sexuality, Gender, and Transgenderism:

Position of the International Church of God Cleveland, Tennessee

OVERVIEW

From the very first General Assembly in 1906, the Church of God has demonstrated a belief in the Bible as God's Word with timeless truths applicable for us today. The Bible is God's revelation to His people in all areas of life. It applies to people of all cultures and centuries.

The Bible speaks very specifically to human sexuality. It is our primary guide. In addition, the standards of the Church of God are found in its established doctrines, articles of the Declaration of Faith, listing of Doctrinal Commitments in the *Church of God Book of Discipline, Church Order and Governance*, Practical Commitments, and resolutions of the International General Assembly.

CREATED ORDER

God created humankind in His image, meaning we are rational, volitional, and emotional beings. Another

distinctive in creation is His creating male and female (Genesis 1:27). God's design isn't accidental: males and females are specific. They complement each other physically, emotionally, and spiritually, thus enabling them to fulfill the commission to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). On this basis, we believe a person's gender is not a cultural or mental construct which can be removed from bodily or biological considerations.

Today, for many, gender identity is associated with these societal constructs and not biological or scientific facts. In their deluded thinking, XX or XY chromosomes are irrelevant to their gender or their gender identity as to how society identifies it.

On the basis of Scripture, we believe gender is determined by one's body, evident at birth. A person's biological sex is binary—male or female as God created them.

While individual freedom is part of the image of God, and thus a good



thing to be celebrated, it is not a license to reject God's created order. True freedom must be utilized in keeping with the orders of creation being male and female. Any effort to deny male and female as part of the truths of our biology is not in keeping with the Biblical witness.

SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

Blessed by God, the first man and woman were to unite for the central purpose of sexual intercourse in order to procreate and fulfill God's desire for the entire human race. Their physical union would generate offspring and form a covenant people through whom God would bless the whole world (Genesis 12:1-3).

Marriage is more than a contractual agreement evidenced by a state-issued license. Scripture presents marriage as a covenant of love between one man and one woman blessed by God (Malachi 2:14). It does not include same-sex unions, even when considered legal, they are not the union described by God.

God's design of a man and a woman in a marriage provides for more than procreation. It enables there to be cooperation, companionship, and pleasure. Not only is the image of God reflected in male and female, but their coming together in the marriage relationship is used in God's Word as the most intimate

and loving analogy of God's relationship with His people. The love and commitment of a husband and wife is the example Paul portrays when speaking of the love of Christ for the church (Ephesians 5:25-33).

TRANSGENDERISM

As previously noted, humankind is created in the image and likeness of God, male and female. Our God-given sexuality is a sacred gift that we offer back to Him in our devotion and love for our Creator.

Today, the Church of God and our world are witnessing a cultural tipping point known as the transgender revolution. This is a radical, cultural shift that has led to mass delusion. For decades there has been a steady erosion of cultural mores and norms. The revolution did not occur in a vacuum but was influenced by various social changes; most easily to pinpoint, however, is the incessant push by the LGBTQIA+ agenda to deconstruct how people view sexuality and gender.

The LGBTQIA+ agenda has stepped forward with a convoluted view of identity and experience, arguing that Biblical, biological sex is ambiguous. Nothing could be farther from Biblical truth and reality than this unrealistic viewpoint, which has become the mantra of the LGBTQIA+ movement.



Transgender has become an umbrella term reinforcing that biological sex is malleable and subject to alteration so that a person may choose from a variety of gender expressions such as nonbinary, non-gender, third gender, gender fluid, androgynous, gender conforming, etc. This cultural shift in viewing gender identity as unrelated to biological sex has led to a gender ideology that now portrays transgender identities and transition in a heroic way.

Transgender ideology pushes for even children as young as six to have the right to make a biological choice. Besides being against Biblical truth, these proponents totally ignore the harmful effects which are in effect bodily mutilation. Puberty blockers may contribute to a decreasing of bone density, limit development of a normal sex drive, stop normal growth in height, and possibly lead to infertility.

The participation of transgender athletes in sports has brought harm to biological women. They are forced to share lockers with biological men and to compete against them. Under the guise of human rights, transgender ideology is increasingly removing the rights of biological women in their own sports and bathroom/shower facilities.

The transgender revolution is a destructive, deceptive, and delusional

socially constructed view of human sexuality. As more people allow themselves to become entangled in this web of deception, the church as a haven of redemption must remain committed to Biblical truth and sound doctrine (see Romans 1:12-32).

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Sex is a gift from God, and like any other gift can be abused or misused. The apostle Paul encourages the Corinthian believers to see how their sexual behavior impacts their union with Christ and the church community (1 Corinthians 6:20). As followers of Christ, we are called to be accountable for our sexual choices and behaviors. This includes avoiding some activities and behaviors which are prohibited by Scripture even though promoted by social/culture norms.

Scripture includes prohibitions such as the following: sexual activity outside the bonds of marriage; extra-marital sex; same-sex relations; incest and lewdness; violent sexual behavior along with prostitution and pornography. (See the following scripture references: 1 Corinthians 6:13, 9-11; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5-6; Romans 1:26-27; and Galatians 3:19-21. All of these restrictions/guidelines for sexual behavior fulfill God's purposes and bring human benefits.



OVERVIEW

We believe:

1. God created humans in His image with two sexes, male and female, and established biological complementarianism (Genesis 1:27; 2:18, 21-24).
2. God designed marriage to be between a man and a woman, and it is only in that relationship God has approved for sexual love to occur (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).
3. God calls us to love all persons and resist ideologies that are unbiblical and lead to the spiritual and physical destruction of a person (Luke 10:27; Colossians 2:8).
4. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit which makes believers responsible to their faith community for their sexual behavior (1 Corinthians 6:13-20).
5. The revisionist gay and transgender theological views are contrary to the Bible and our foundational Christian doctrine (Romans 1:21-32).
6. We are called by Jesus to be a “light” in the world, proclaiming the truth and beauty of His design (Matthew 5:14-16).
7. We are called to share redemption through Christ which delivers individuals from sexual brokenness, pain of their bondage, and deception, as well as bringing spiritual, mental, and emotional freedom (John 8:34-36; 2 Corinthians 3:16, 17).



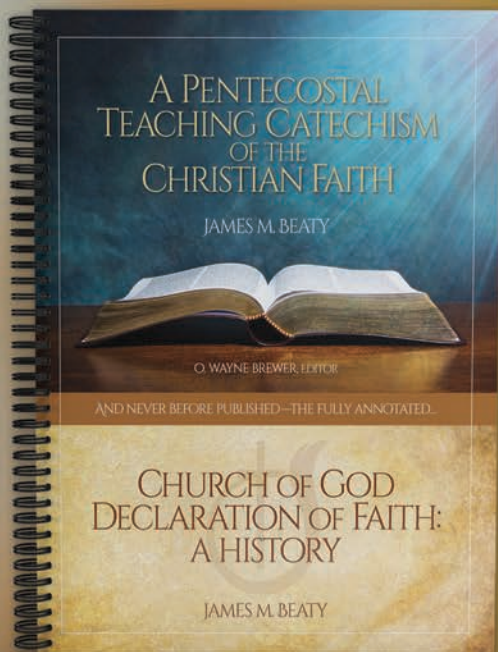
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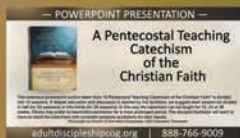
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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS SHARED TO INSPIRE CONVERSATION
TIM HILL, GENERAL OVERSEER

Releasing a New Generation of Camp Meeting Speakers and Evangelists

A New Generation

There is a new generation of men and women whom God is using to speak to the church this summer in the camp meetings held across the nation. I have spent most of my tenure as general overseer praying that open doors of opportunity will come to what I call the “Jeremiah Generation,” and this year’s camp meeting schedule seems to indicate that those doors are indeed opening more and more.

I am grateful.

I still recall when Church of God State Overseer V. R. Mitchell invited me to be the evening evangelist for an Idaho Camp Meeting 42 years ago in 1981. I was 21, and I will never forget that week. For a young man at that age and totally lacking in experience, it was a huge moment for me. After 42 years, I do hope the content of my preaching is much better now than then. Nonetheless, it was an unforgettable experience. What I remember most though, was the night police



officers came to arrest me and the state bishop on a charge of disturbing the peace. It seemed that the neighbors didn’t like the loud music and preaching coming through the open windows and that cars parked in the streets were hindering the flow of neighborhood traffic. We did avoid going to jail, but it was close. That’s a story for another time.

Sometime later, South Georgia Overseer C.E. Landreth invited me as a 30-year-old pastor to the first Southeastern USA Camp Meeting I would preach, back in the day when the same evangelist brought the message every night for seven consecutive nights, Monday through Sunday. In the years since,



Paula and I have enjoyed sharing in camp meetings throughout the Church of God. But needless to say, time does what time does, and just as it should, time makes a place for new voices to speak into the new generations. As one generation begins to exit, embarking on different seasons of fruitful purpose, new sons and daughters find their places on broader ministry platforms. God is pleased and the church is blessed when fathers release their sons and daughters to grow in their gifts and experience the opportunities to which they were called.

Mentoring a New Generation

For myself, I choose to embrace the mentoring role, which I may soon be entering. While I've not quite finished my journey, my greatest goal in that journey is not to add one more camp meeting to my "been there and done it" list. My greatest goal is to now help a younger generation of ministers to succeed. And that includes those who may be given opportunities at camp meetings and other conventions. With that in mind, I have compiled a list of 25 "do's, don'ts, and some things to think about" when invited to be a featured speaker in a camp meeting.

Here we go:

1. Understand where you are and what you've been invited to do. A camp meeting speaker steps into a unique arena and onto what can be viewed by some, as an influential platform. If not treated with holy honor, humility, and respect for God, the people, and the ministry itself, then the altitude of the experience can quickly lend itself to dangerous, shallow breathing and a light-headed, dizzy existence for the human ego. On the other hand, there's something unique about the atmosphere, the anticipation, and even the expectation that God is about to do a marvelous thing. While nothing compares to the ministry of and at the local church, a camp meeting is an opportunity for those churches to bring their uniqueness into a setting where the power of the combined unity among them produces unusual blessings from God.
2. Prepare spiritually, mentally, and physically. The camp meeting speaker becomes the target of Satanic, heat-seeking missiles aimed at your mind, body, and soul. The Enemy wants to



- deplete and defeat you before, during, and after the event. Sometime, I'll tell you my stories. Just know that God will protect you and keep you as you rest in Him.
3. Consider the demographics of the region. This is important to remember if you are one who needs crowd response and feedback. The response to your preaching will be different from region to region. Don't let it throw you.
 4. In sermon preparation, lean toward what the Holy Spirit may have been speaking to you in recent days in your own setting of ministry. It's fresh and inspiring to you and will most likely speak to many others in a camp meeting setting. Of course, if it's a sermon or a series specific to your own congregation, few others may know or appreciate your context.
 5. Don't focus on displaying why you deserve to be there. It is assumed that God has invested something in your life that He is using to bring you to this kind of platform. Let your gift speak for itself.
 6. Preach to encourage, inspire, and strengthen the people. Preaching on current events and issues has its place and never be afraid to go there. However, the pastors you are speaking to have been gut-punched by something or someone, somewhere and they need a dose of hope. Don't forget that.
 7. Don't buy into the idea of using "Camp Meeting Currency" to achieve a particular future. Don't intentionally try to use this opportunity for paving any kind of particular pathway. Granted, the camp meeting platform has by its very nature, introduced many individuals to a broader audience. That can't be ignored. However, this should never be a motivator for anyone to aspire to stand on such a platform.
 8. Remember who your audience is. You are preaching to pastors, evangelists, and laity. Honor them for their faithfulness to God and to the Church.
 9. Publicly give honor to the state/regional overseer and his vision for the region and show appreciation for him, his wife, and their team.



10. Don't rehash every name on the program that someone else has already listed. It's just not necessary.
11. Don't be imprisoned by the pressure to perform. Flow in your gift as a preacher. Be yourself and don't try to be anyone else. In one camp meeting, a man actually said to me as I was stepping up to preach, "Tim, you're only as good as your last camp meeting sermon." He said it as a joke, but I wrestled with the reality of that pressure for a few minutes until I could preach my way out of it.
12. Preach with the end result in mind. The altar call and prayer time is what you are working toward. Unfortunately today, camp meetings have somewhat moved away from the evangelistic, soul-reaching revival they were originally birthed to be. However, the evangelist must never forget it is still likely that in a camp meeting crowd, someone needs Jesus and backsliders need to come home. Give them that opportunity.
13. Worship along with everyone from the start of the service. It's too late to study your notes at that point. Participate in the service. Everyone appreciates it.
14. Always express publicly your gratitude for the opportunity you have been given.
15. Depend on God's ability to use all you have laid before Him in prayer.
16. If, after your first camp meeting, you'd like to speak at more of them, then trust God to be your best promoter. I promise you, it will take care of itself. It's fine to place on social media your expressions of joy and honor of being involved, but use good judgment, good taste, and good sense.
17. Remember, you're in a Pentecostal meeting so approach it as such.
18. Respect and support the other speakers by attending at least one service in the morning when they are speaking.
19. Don't make grand entrances and leave your entourage at home. It's not that impressive.
20. Honor your spouse in your remarks. After all, she has likely heard this sermon at least twenty times already and she deserves some appreciation for that fact alone.



21. When possible, walk slowly through the crowd when the service is over. Love the people and let them connect with you.
22. Go to your room at the end of the evening and thank God for giving you an opportunity to represent Him and speak into the lives of hundreds of pastors and others who possibly will even repeat in their own sermons what they heard you preach.
23. Acknowledge within yourself that you didn't get "there" alone. It was God's calling, the Holy Spirit's anointing, your own personal preparation, an open door offered by an overseer, a denomination that still values these kinds of gatherings, and of course, your own credibility and availability. It all works together. It's kind of like the turtle sitting on a fence post. It didn't get there without some help.
24. With much humility, be grateful that you were invited to participate in such a gathering. Not everyone will get to.
25. Give yourself to God for any future opportunities, remembering that your greatest goal

in life is NOT preaching that camp meeting or a hundred more. Your greatest goal is to serve the Lord by loving your family, washing the feet of the beggar, feeding a hungry child, and caring for "the least of these, my brethren."

Jesus will never say, "Well done, thou good and 'well-in-demand' camp meeting preacher. You brought in the crowd and astounded them with your eloquent oratory." The fact is, Jesus isn't as nearly impressed that you preached a camp meeting as you think He might be.

What you do want to do though, is survive your success and not let it inflate your self-worth. Lay it down at Jesus' feet and rejoice when He refers to you as His "good and faithful servant."

Now let's have camp meeting and pray for the Lord's touch on a new generation. ■

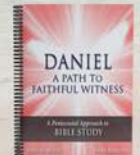
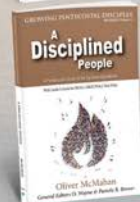
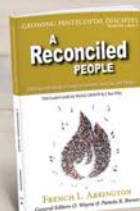
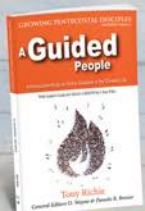
This article was originally published on June 6, 2023, as the camp meeting season was unfolding. Visit letstalkaboutitbytindhill.com to read other posts in this series.

Looking for a discipleship plan for your congregation? Look no further. Here is a discipleship plan for your church, from *Church of God Adult Discipleship.*

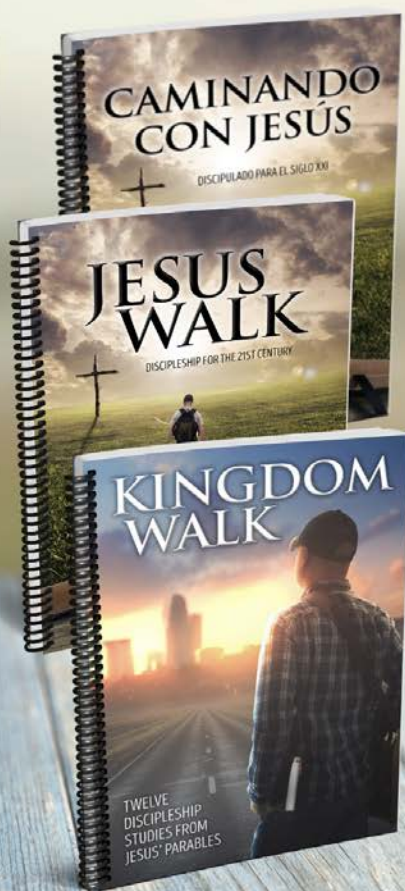
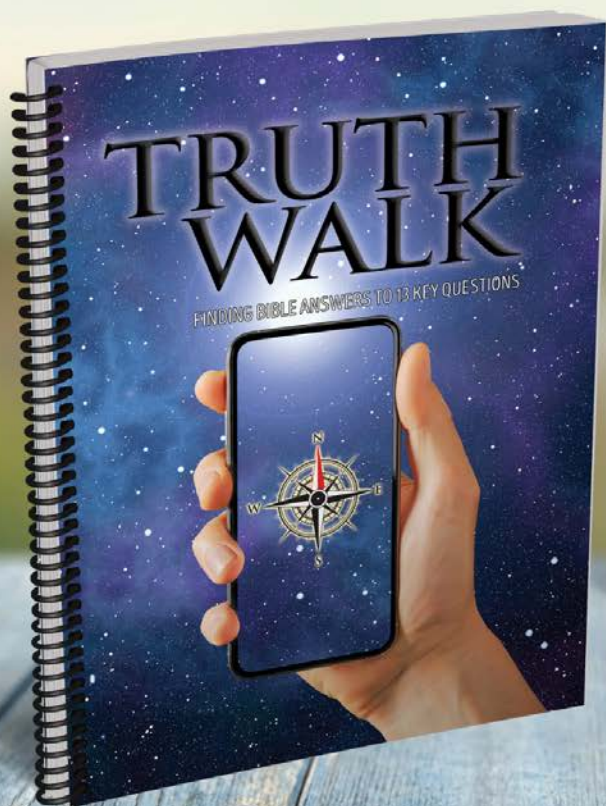
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"A Guided People" (Divine Guidance in Life)	"A Ministering People" (The Believer's Ministry)	"A Hopeful People" (God's Hope for Christians)	"Getting The Upper Hand In Spiritual Warfare" (Chapter 4 from "Fighting The Good Fight")
GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 1	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 2	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 3	
<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>
4 Weeks	4 Weeks	4 Weeks	4 Weeks
"Principles & Power of Intercessory Prayer" (Chapter 6 - 7 from "Fighting The Good Fight")	"A Reconciled People" (Living in Harmony God/People)	"A Disciplined People" (Understanding Spiritual Disciplines)	"A Shepherded People" (Following Jesus as Shepherd)
GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 4	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 4	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 6	GROWING PENTECOSTALS 300 SERIES VOL 5
<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>
5 Weeks	4 Weeks	5 Weeks	4 Weeks
"Understanding & Destroying Strongholds" (Chapter 8-9 from "Fighting The Good Fight")	"Galatians - Path To Freedom" (12 wks) . . . or "Ephesians Path To Glory" (12 wks) . . . or "Daniel - Faithful Witness Bible Study" (10 wks) . . . AND 2 Weeks, "Surviving Spiritual Abortion" (Chapter 10 from "Fighting the Good Fight")		
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Church of God HIGHLIGHTS

*Abbreviated items from Faith News, the Church of God's official news source,
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Lee University Awards First Doctoral Degrees

May 11, 2023—Cleveland, TN—Six students from Lee's Doctor of Education (EdD) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Marriage and Family Therapy recently became the university's first doctoral graduates in their respective programs.

Three EdD graduates and three Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) graduates successfully defended their dissertations this semester and received their degrees during the university's spring commencement, which took place on May 6, 2023.

Lee's first EdD graduates include Dr. Allen Clark, Dr. Kristen Early, and Dr. Joseph Parker.

"As the inaugural EdD program director, I am so proud of the accomplishments of our first terminal degree graduates in the Helen DeVos College of Education (HDCOE)," said Dr. Roy Y. Chan, director of graduate studies in education and assistant professor of education. "The quality of the work they produced was outstanding, and each graduate—all working full time and raising a family in Cleveland—has earned the right to be called a doctor."

The three MFT graduates are Dr. Danielle Gray, Dr. Eboni Long, and Dr. Joel Lyon.

Launched in fall 2020, the EdD Program in Professional Practice seeks to develop passionate and empathetic educational leaders through the practice of ethical action, redemptive service, and responsible citizenship in the church, community, and the world. The mission of the Lee University Marriage and Family Therapy Doctoral Program is to prepare leaders in the marriage and family field that serve the underserved through Christian organizations and their surrounding communities.

International General Assembly One Year Away



July 10, 2023—One year from this week, July 8-12, 2024, delegates from around the globe will be gathered for the 79th International General Assembly of the Church of God. The



biennial event will take place at the Indianapolis Convention Center in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Indianapolis, nicknamed the crossroads of America, was originally scheduled as the host city for the 2020 General Assembly, which was cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The postponement of the 78th Assembly from 2020 to 2022 was the first time the Church of God was compelled to reschedule an Assembly since a similar pandemic forced cancellation in 1918.

The 2024 General Assembly will begin on Tuesday morning, July 9, 2024, with the drop of the gavel by General Overseer Tim Hill. Nominations for church leaders are scheduled to be the first order of business for the General Council. The General Council will then elect the 18 members of the International Council of Eighteen from among their fellow ordained bishops.

Registration for GA24 will begin in January 2024 with the release of a website dedicated to the event. Accommodations at partner hotels will offer event-specific rates as well.

Thousands Participate in Teen Talent

August 8, 2023—Cleveland, TN—Some called it the Canadian Invasion. Others considered it a Caribbean Crusade. Either way, the students who needed a passport to come to Lee



Students, parents, chaperones, and youth leaders cheer at the awards ceremony on August 4, 2023

University last week stole the show and won the most hardware at the International Teen Talent competition this past week at Lee University.

In all, thousands of students from 37 states and seven nations showcased their gifts and talents in Music, Drama, Arts, Multimedia, Bible Quizzing, and Bible Teaching. Trophies went to the Top-3 in every category, with several going home with scholarships to Lee University.

The Top-3 winners (aged 12-19) from every state and region qualified for the international competition, which took place in person at Lee University for the first time since 2019. Live performances were conducted all week in front of a panel of adjudicators. Artists and writers didn't stand before judges, but got to stand beside their work during the Artist Meet and Greet on Tuesday.

"We are so grateful for your talent and your anointing," said Bishop Rob Bailey, the International Youth and



Discipleship director. “This is just the beginning for many of you. Now let’s take these talents home and continue to glorify God.”

—David White,
Director, Youth and Discipleship, Kentucky

Pentecostal Theological Seminary (PTS) Signs Historic MOA

August 15, 2023—Cleveland, TN—On the campus of PTS, August 14, 2023, a celebrated ceremony signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), convened with two significant Pentecostal denominations: The Pentecostal Theological Seminary—A Church of God Ministry, and the Charles H. Mason Theological Seminary of the Church of God in Christ (COGIC).



Leaders of the Church of God, Church of God in Christ, and Pentecostal Theological Seminary celebrate the historic signing on August 14, 2023

Following months of planning and preparation, executives and educational representatives of the COG-IC Commission of Education and executive leadership of PTS and the

Church of God (COG), signed the MOA. The MOA provides for a collaborative partnership reflecting a primary purpose to promote the highest quality in academic programming in the area of theological studies. Dr. Michael L. Baker, PTS President, stated, “Today was momentous and historic as representatives from both Pentecostal denominations signed the MOA joining hearts and hands to prepare men and women, called of God for Spirit-filled, Spirit-led ministry around the world. Together, our Pentecostal synergy will touch every nation on every continent with the Spirit and Power of Pentecost.”

Church of God in Hawaii Continues Relief Efforts

August 17, 2023—General Overseer Tim Hill and Secretary General Gary Lewis conducted a Zoom call on Wednesday, August 16 with Hawaii State Overseer Rob Taylor, who gave an update on the efforts of relief and recovery following last week’s devastating fires on Maui.

The International Christian Fellowship (ICF) Church of God in Lahaina was completely destroyed by the wildfires which has wiped out the town and left more than 100 dead as of Wednesday.

Taylor reported that the outpouring of relief on the state has been overwhelming.



Only ashes remain of the Church of God in Lahaina after wildfires decimated the historic town.

“Response by the Church of God family has been amazing,” Taylor said. “We have been able to transport over 5.5 tons of supplies, including toiletries, diapers, food, and water. Goods have come from all the islands, and local air services shipped the initial supplies for free. This direct touch outreach has been a blessing to watch.”

Taylor described how the home of Benny Mariano, pastor of the ICF Church, was miraculously spared from the fires, but they are now housing nine families.

“Benny is a tremendous leader,” Taylor said. “Two of their staff lost their homes and are now staying in Wailuku, much like the 12,000 residents of Lahaina who have dispersed across Maui and to the other islands. While hotels and shelters on Maui are full, these fires have affected all of Hawaii.”

“The first wave of relief has been delivered, but much of the supply is tapped out,” Taylor continued. “Unfortunately, you can’t load up an Operation Compassion semi and drive a truck full of product to Hawaii.

Everything has to arrive by air or ship, which can take weeks, not to mention the expense and red tape. By far, the best way for folks desiring to help can do so through contributing funds to purchase supplies already here in the islands.”

“We are standing with Pastor Benny, you, and the Church of God in Hawaii,” said Hill. Lewis, who serves as the Covenant Team leader for Hawaii said, “This is going to be a journey, and we are going to continue to pray for God to receive the ultimate glory through it all.”

Taylor ended the call sharing the heart of the Church of God going forward as three-fold: (1) Relief—the supplying of basic needs, (2) Recovery—determining the new normal for those affected by the disaster, and (3) Rebuild—looking for the best approach toward rebuilding the historic Lahaina church.

To give directly to the Church of God Maui relief efforts, visit hawaiiicog.org. This interview has been posted to the Church of God Facebook page. To view, visit @COGHQ. ■



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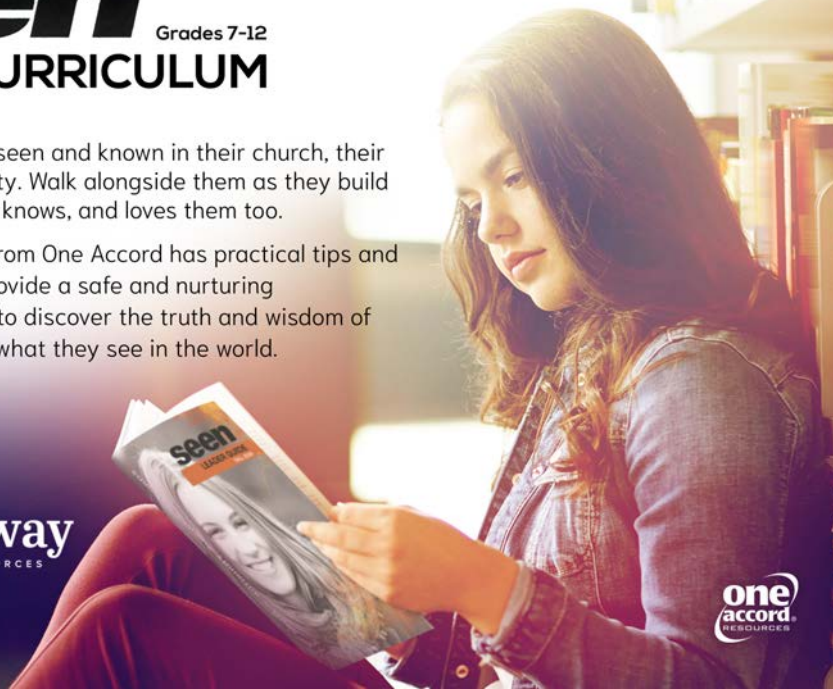
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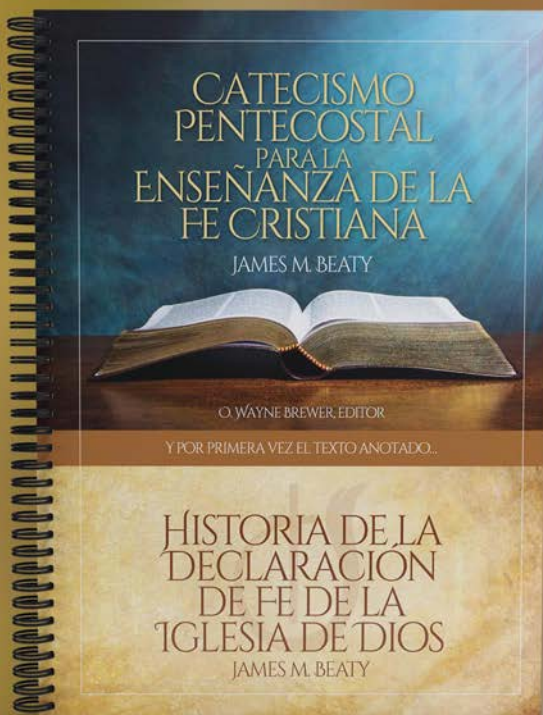
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