

WINTER
2022



engage

A Journal for
Church of God
MINISTRIES

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The Eight Biggest Mistakes
Leaders Make

Preparing for Online Church
to Be Mainstream

Don't Be a Doubting Thomas

Fighting the War for Your
Family

WINTER 2022
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An Appropriate Honor

THE CHAPEL IN the World Evangelization Center at the International Offices has been named in honor of David C. Blair. The details of the renovation and campaign are featured in an article on page 8 of this issue.

David Blair was not a past general overseer or a member of the Executive Committee. And while he was the director of the Department of Youth and Discipleship at the time of his death last year, it was not his position that sparked the sentiment to name the space in his honor. It was more of what and who he represented.

As the article states, the chapel was long overdue for a technology upgrade. Perhaps more than anyone in leadership at headquarters, David understood the value of the latest trends to communicate the Gospel. After decades of producing Winterfest events, he knew it was the “wow factor” of a great show that captured the attention of teens at Winterfest, drawing them in and eventually into the message of Christ. With these updates, the new center now has the capability to electronically reach not just youth, but also all ages around the world.

The chapel was also dedicated to honor those who lost the battle with Covid-19. David represents the more than 300 Church of God ministers receiving their heavenly reward during this historically tragic period.

Finally, David was one who knew the value of prayer. The new David C. Blair Global Prayer and Training Center appropriately re-launches this space for what it was intended 54 years ago—A place where prayer is ultimately the most important element.

Rest in peace, David. Your legacy will carry on for generations. ■

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

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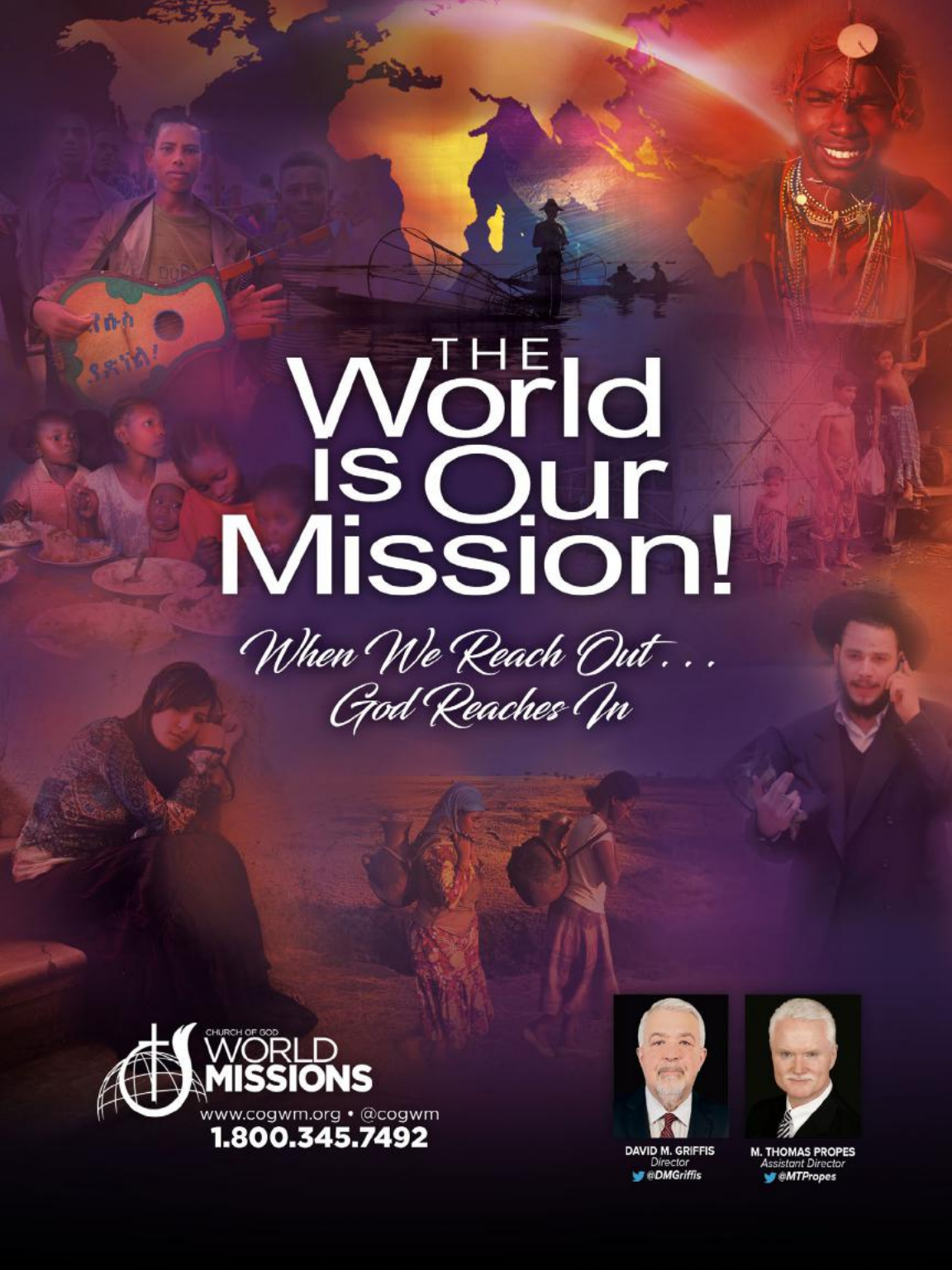
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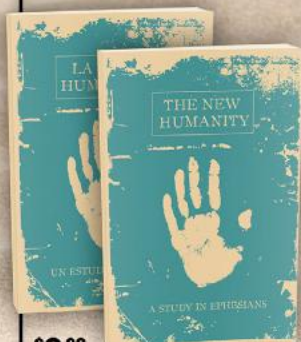
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International Offices Chapel Repurposed for Modern Ministry

THE SUDDEN PASSING of international director of Youth and Discipleship, Dr. David Blair, in March 2021, was a devastating loss to the Church of God. The void left in the ministries he served and the people with whom he influenced was immeasurable.

To honor his life and ministry, the International Executive Committee announced last year the *Grace² Initiative*—a project to bless generations and fulfill a great need in two areas of ministry close to the heart of David Blair. A major portion of *Grace²* was fulfilled when the chapel at International Offices was renovated and repurposed as the **David C. Blair Global Prayer and Training Center**.

Since original construction of the International Offices in 1968—more than 54



years ago—its chapel, located on the second level of the World Evangelization Center, had not received a significant technology upgrade. The site of

hundreds of services and meetings through the decades, the chapel space had become outdated and relegated to gatherings with minimal A/V requirements. Monthly chapels with the International Offices family

had long been moved to the Leadership and Communications Building.

David Blair knew well the critical need for the latest electronic technology to reach the Jeremiah Generation through decades of planning and leading Winterfest events. The purpose of *Grace²* was to enable the extensive renovation and upgrade of the chapel with the latest communication technology, allowing for a repurposing of the chapel into a 24/7 prayer and training center. Every department and ministry at International Offices now has access to this center and will be able to constantly flow training and ministry to 185 nations around the world.

A second focus of *Grace²* involved an investment at the Church of God school in Aboud, Israel, originally planted by Church of God Missionary, Margaret Gaines. David Blair traveled many years to Israel to personally bless the Aboud School. Combined with a generous commitment from a businessman whose family came to Christ through Gaines's ministry, a portion of funds went toward improvements and upgrades at the Aboud facility.

In announcing the project last year, General Overseer Tim Hill characterized it as, "A dual need requiring double favor from God, hence the name of the endeavor, the 'Grace² Initiative.'"

Funding for the extensive upgrades at the chapel came from a number of resources, including an allocation from the Church of God Executive Committee, and gifts from the Church of God World Missions, the Church of God Foundation, Jentezen Franklin Ministries, and others. States and regions joined in the effort to make *Grace*² an amazing victory for helping reach around the world with prayer and training.

Both projects also honor more than 300 ministers and their companions around the world, who have passed away due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Plaques honoring individual and corporate donors adorn the entrance of the chapel.



ABOVE: Voices of Lee perform during the inaugural event in the new Blair Center. Upgrades include new carpeting, chairs, lighting, A/V and acoustics. BELOW: Coordinator of Media Services Chad Guyton in the new control room.



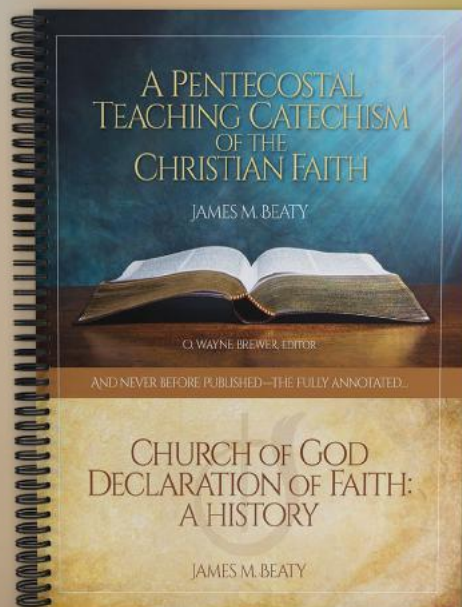
The new Blair Center was completed last fall and the first official event was conducted in December as the International Offices family held a Christmas celebration. A formal dedication of the facility will be held later this year.

—Cameron Fisher, Editor, *Engage* magazine

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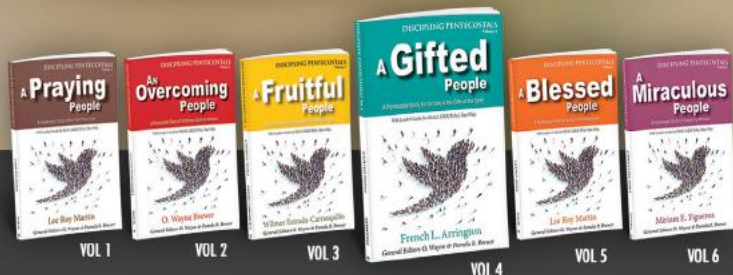
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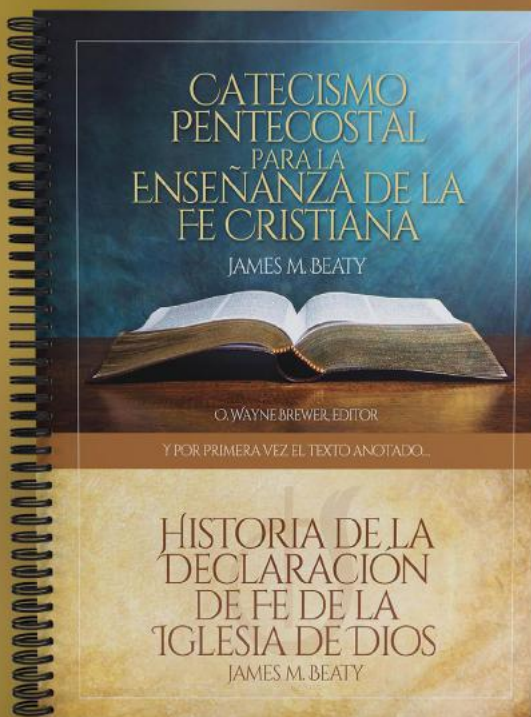
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MONTH	DAY	SCRIPTURE	MONTH	DAY	SCRIPTURE
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JANUARY

Prayer

2	1 John 5:14-15
9	1 Peter 3:12
16	Hebrews 4:16
23	Jeremiah 33:3
30	Hebrews 7:25

FEBRUARY

God's Love

6	Ephesians 3:18-19
13	1 John 3:1
20	Numbers 6:24-26
27	2 John 1:6

MARCH

Abundant Life

6	John 10:10
13	Deuteronomy 28:12
20	Psalms 31:19
27	Hebrews 11:6

APRIL

Strength

3	Philippians 4:13
10	Isaiah 41:10
17	Psalms 29:1
24	Ephesians 6:10

MAY

Hope

1	Romans 15:13
8	Zechariah 9:12
15	Romans 5:6
22	Micah 7:7
29	Romans 12:12

JUNE

Fear

5	2 Timothy 1:7
12	Isaiah 43:1-2
19	1 John 4:18
26	Romans 12:12

JULY

Battle of the Mind

3	Psalms 19:14
10	2 Corinthians 10:3-5
17	Proverbs 3:5-6
24	Philippians 4:8
31	Proverbs 15:15

AUGUST

Peace

7	Isaiah 26:3
14	John 14:27
21	2 Thessalonians 3:16
28	Philippians 4:6-7

SEPTEMBER

Children

4	Lamentations 2:19
11	Jeremiah 31:16-17
18	Isaiah 54:13
25	Deuteronomy 30:19

OCTOBER

Trouble

2	Nahum 1:7
9	Ephesians 6:12-13
16	Zephaniah 3:17
23	John 16:33
30	James 1:2-4

NOVEMBER

Thanks

6	Ephesians 3:20-21
13	Exodus 15:2
20	Daniel 2:20
27	1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

DECEMBER

Gifts of God

4	James 1:17
11	1 John 4:9
18	James 1:5
25	Psalms 29:11

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MES	DIA	ESCRITURA	MES	DIA	ESCRITURA
ENERO Oración	2	1 Juan 5:14-15	JULIO Lucha con la Mente	3	Salmos 19:14
	9	1 Pedro 3:12		10	2 Corintios 10:3-5
	16	Hebreos 4:16		17	Proverbios 3:5-6
	23	Jeremías 33:3		24	Filipenses 4:8
	30	Hebreos 7:25		31	Proverbios 15:15
FEBRERO Amor de Dios	6	Efesios 3:18-19	AGOSTO Paz	7	Isaías 26:3
	13	1 Juan 3:1		14	Juan 14:27
	20	Números 6:24-26		21	2 Tesalonicenses 3:16
	27	2 Juan 1:6		28	Filipenses 4:6-7
MARZO Vida Abundante	6	Juan 10:10	SEPTIEMBRE Hijos	4	Lamentaciones 2:19
	13	Deuteronomio 28:12		11	Jeremías 31:16-17
	20	Salmos 31:19		18	Isaías 54:13
	27	Hebreos 11:6		25	Deuteronomio 30:19
ABRIL Fortaleza	3	Filipenses 4:13	OCTUBRE Angustia	2	Nahúm 1:7
	10	Isaías 41:10		9	Efesios 6:12-13
	17	Salmos 29:1		16	Sofonías 3:17
	24	Efesios 6:10		23	Juan 16:33
MAYO Esperanza				30	Santiago 1:2-4
	1	Romanos 15:13	NOVIEMBRE Gratitud	6	Efesios 3:20-21
	8	Zacarías 9:12		13	Éxodo 15:2
	15	Romanos 5:6		20	Daniel 2:20
	22	Miqueas 7:7		27	1 Tesalonicenses 5:16-18
	29	Romanos 12:12	DICIEMBRE Dones de Dios		
JUNIO Temor	5	2 Timoteo 1:7		4	Santiago 1:17
	12	Isaías 43:1-2		11	1 Juan 4:9
	19	1 Juan 4:18		18	Santiago 1:5
	26	Romanos 12:12		25	Salmos 29:11

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PREPARING FOR ONLINE CHURCH TO BE MAINSTREAM

BECAUSE OF COVID-19, more than three out of every four evangelical Protestants in the United States have experienced watching church online instead of attending in person. More important is

that going forward, the majority who did, now want to make online viewing part of their normal church experience.

These findings come from the new report, *The Ripple Effect: Congregations, COVID, and the Future of Church Life*,



from Infinity Concepts and Grey Matter Research. The study, which included more than 1,000 American Evangelical Protestants, examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on church attendance and attitudes about the experience. Most notably, the study explored how evangelicals want to attend church in the future.

Nearly nine out of ten evangelicals (87%) were attending church on at least a semi-regular basis prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. Among churchgoers, 89% stopped attending for at least a short time due to the pandemic, and more than three out of four viewed church services online as one of the substitutes for in-person attendance.

This experience with viewing church online led to a number of important developments. First, "One statistic that really stands out to me from this study is that a surprisingly large number of evangelicals do not necessarily see superior advantages to attending in-person services," says Mark Dreistadt, Infinity Concepts founder and president. "We found that 45% of those who experienced online church services now believe that worship online is equal or superior to the in-person experience in at least one of the eight areas we explored."

The two areas in which online viewing was most likely to have a perceived advantage were their personal comfort (26% said online viewing is superior to in-person attendance in this area) and their ability to experience different churches (24%).

Where evangelicals are most likely to see in-person church as the superior experience is in their level of connection/engagement with the church (81%), having an authentic worship experience (73%), the music/singing (69%), and the ability to give the service their full attention (67%).

Second, among those who viewed online services as a substitute for in-person church, 19% not only viewed services from their own church, but also from at least one church they did not regularly attend prior to the pandemic. Another 13% only viewed services from a church other than their own, but this may have been because their regular church did not offer online services.

"One of the most fascinating and potentially important findings is how many evangelicals took the opportunity to 'digitally visit' other churches, even though their own church was streaming services," says Ron Sellers, president of Grey Matter Research & Consulting. "One has to wonder whether this will ultimately lead to 'church nomads' who surf the internet for new church experiences rather than putting down roots and becoming part of a church community."

The study finding with the greatest potential to impact churches going forward has to do with evangelicals' future plans. With COVID restrictions ever-changing, infections continuing, and no true end to the pandemic in sight, online church services are going to be a necessary option for the foreseeable future. For most evangelicals

who experienced it, the option to worship online is also one they hope will continue long after the pandemic is behind us.

“Our findings show that only 44% of evangelical Protestants who viewed services online want to return exclusively to in-person worship once the pandemic is over,” Dreistadt noted. “That means 56% would at least like to keep their options open in the future. That’s 21 million evangelical adults.”

This desire raises a lot of strategic questions for churches. If online becomes an accepted option for many evangelicals, how will that impact giving? How will it impact Sunday school, youth and children’s programs, and other traditionally in-person activities that may not be available online? What will happen with smaller churches that may not have a high-quality streaming service, or even any at all?

Much remains unknown about the lasting impact of online services as a substitute for in-person attendance. But Grey Matter and Infinity Concepts hope their partnership on this research helps churches, denominations, and ministry leaders think and plan strategically.

“Our study raises a lot of ‘what ifs’ for the future direction of congregations,” Sellers noted. “The pandemic gave millions of evangelicals an online church experience whether they wanted it or not—and many found out that they wanted it, at least occasionally. It’s time to start talking about how this will impact the future for churches.”

To request a copy of the full report, contact Darrell Law, Infinity Concepts VP

& Chief Growth Officer at darrell@infinityconcepts.com or 724.930.2801.

Definition of “Evangelical Protestant”

This study used the definition of “evangelical” favored by the National Association of Evangelicals. Respondents who agreed strongly with four statements about their spiritual beliefs (*The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe, It is important for me to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior, Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin, and Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation*), and who were not aligned with a non-Protestant faith group (e.g. Catholic, Orthodox, Mormon) were included in the study.

About Infinity Concepts:

Infinity Concepts is a brand communication agency that inspires people of faith to action through consulting, branding, fundraising, public relations, creative, traditional media, and digital media.

About Grey Matter Research:

Grey Matter Research is a marketing research and consumer insights company with extensive experience serving both the charitable and religious sectors. ■

This article originally appeared on Christian Newswire on September 27, 2021, and was titled, “New Study Shows Many Evangelical Protestants Now Plan for Online Church to Be Part of Their Lives.” Source: Infinity Concepts



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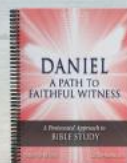
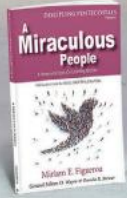
"Getting The Upper Hand In Spiritual Warfare"

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The Dixon Pentecostal Research Center is a founding member of the Consortium of Pentecostal Archives. The Consortium is a collaborative effort by repositories of Pentecostal archival materials to make their resources accessible online at www.PentecostalArchives.org. Among the hundreds of thousands of available pages, the Church of God provides digital access to the *Church of God General Assembly Minutes* (1906–2016), the *Church of God Evangel* (1910–1964, 2005–2020), *The Faithful Standard* (1922), *Samson's Foxes* (1901–1902), and *The Way* (1904–1905).

Our most recent contributions are the digitized versions of our holdings of the *Minutes of the Annual Assembly of the Church of God (Colored Work)* that met from 1925 to 1965 and the full run of the 1980s professional journal, *The Pentecostal Minister*.

These are vital resources for understanding the history and heritage of the Church of God through events, personalities, education, and policies.



"We will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord. We will tell of his power and the mighty miracles he did."
Psalm 78:4 NLT

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by J. LEE GRADY

The Eight Biggest Mistakes Leaders Make

HAVE BEEN BLESSED to know many wise and courageous ministry leaders over the years. Some have been examples from a distance and others have been mentors up close. But I have also known many leaders whose churches or organizations failed because they did not adopt the solid principles of leadership found in the Bible.

Today, I constantly remind young leaders what I have observed. Based on the eight biggest blunders any leader could make, I offer this cautionary advice:

1. Never treat people like projects.

Many leaders are so caught up in their heavenly vision that they view people like pawns to achieve their dreams. If you do not love and respect people, you will run over them. Learn to value people by offering encouragement, affirmation, and rewards for service. When Paul said goodbye to the elders of Ephesus, they wept and embraced him because they knew he genuinely loved them (see Acts 20:36-38). Love people; do not use them. If you treat them like cogs in a machine, they will not feel sad when you leave!

2. Never try to do everything yourself. Can you imagine if Nehemiah had tried to rebuild the crumbling walls of Jerusalem by himself? Yet some leaders try to manage multiple projects rather than delegating the work to people who have the skills and the passion to achieve a common goal. Stop thinking you can do every job better. Help each team member find their place “on the wall” where they can work effectively. If you never take the time to train others, your ministry will remain small and you will eventually burn out.

3. Never focus on your critics. All leaders receive negative comments from armchair quarterbacks and petty people. Get over it—this is just one of the many occupational hazards of ministry. Never become obsessed with what people are saying behind your back. Their words are like the buzzing of insects; what Mrs. Jones told Mr. Smith after hearing Mrs. Williams’ criticism of your sermon will not affect you. Keep your heart focused on Jesus and let the sound of your joyful praise crush Satan’s accusations.

4. Never make big decisions without wise counsel. Some leaders jump from one

big project to the next, jerking their church or organization to the left and then to the right as if they do not really know where they are going. These erratic leaders never submit their ideas to others for accountability—or they surround themselves with yes men who rubber-stamp every foolish idea. Proverbs 11:14 (NASB) says, “Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.” Stop jerking people around and ask wise advisers to pray with you about your plans.

5. Never avoid confrontation. Every ministry will develop problems. But a good leader will see a problem when it first buds and take the initiative to correct it. Leaders who fear confrontation will let things fester until the problem spreads like a poisonous vine that eventually chokes the life out of the ministry. When the apostle Paul stepped in to correct a problem in the Galatian church, he warned them: “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9 NASB). Never assume that a problem will “take care of itself.” Deal with it!

6. Never try to pour into others when you are empty. Even Jesus had to go to a lonely place to pray after ministering to the crowds (see Luke 5:16). Yet many leaders will run on fumes for weeks without resting and recharging. If you work your fingers to the bone without taking care of your own spiritual life, your axe will get so dull that hours of work will become fruitless and exhausting. Pull away regularly to sharpen your blade.

7. Never close your heart to personal ministry. One ministry school in the United States taught its students that pastors should never share their struggles with anyone—because people would gossip about them or stab them in the back. I feel sorry for any pastor or leader who does not have a network of mentors and friends with whom he/she can share their deepest struggles. Leaders are just as flawed as anyone else and they need to confess their sins, process their pain, and receive healing prayer. Leaders who stay isolated will end up emotionally unhealthy and they do not finish well.

8. Never lose your spiritual passion. King Saul is a sad example of failed leadership. He started well but ended miserably. May the Lord deliver us all from the spirit of Saul, who felt the call of God and experienced the oil of the Spirit’s anointing in his youth but departed from God’s ways in his later years.

We cannot stay faithful to the Lord if His flame is not continually blazing in our hearts. Even when the apostle Paul was in prison, he wrote, “I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Paul continually stoked the fire of the Holy Spirit in his life because he had a secret life with God. He prayed continually, he soaked his mind in God’s Word and he lived on the altar of surrender every day. May Paul’s passionate devotion be ours. ■

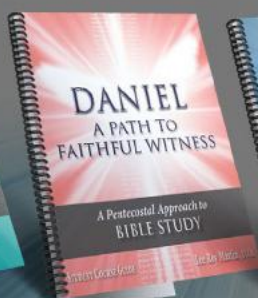
***J. Lee Grady** is the former editor of Charisma magazine.*

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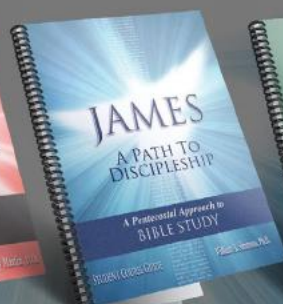
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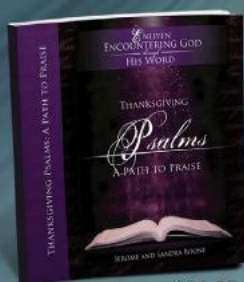
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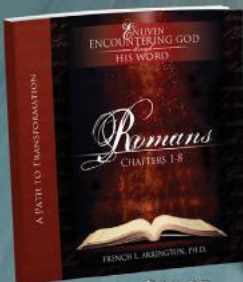
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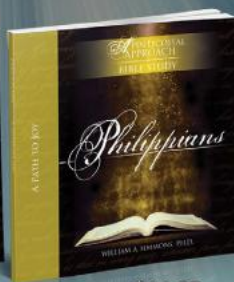
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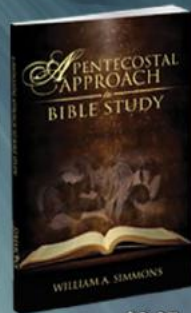
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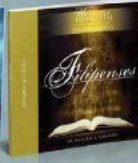
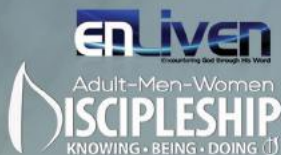


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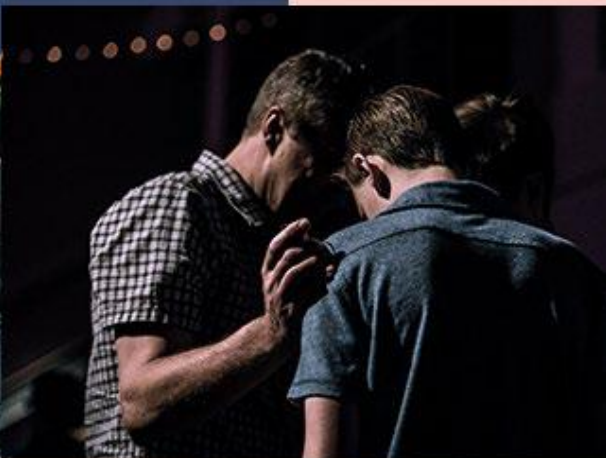


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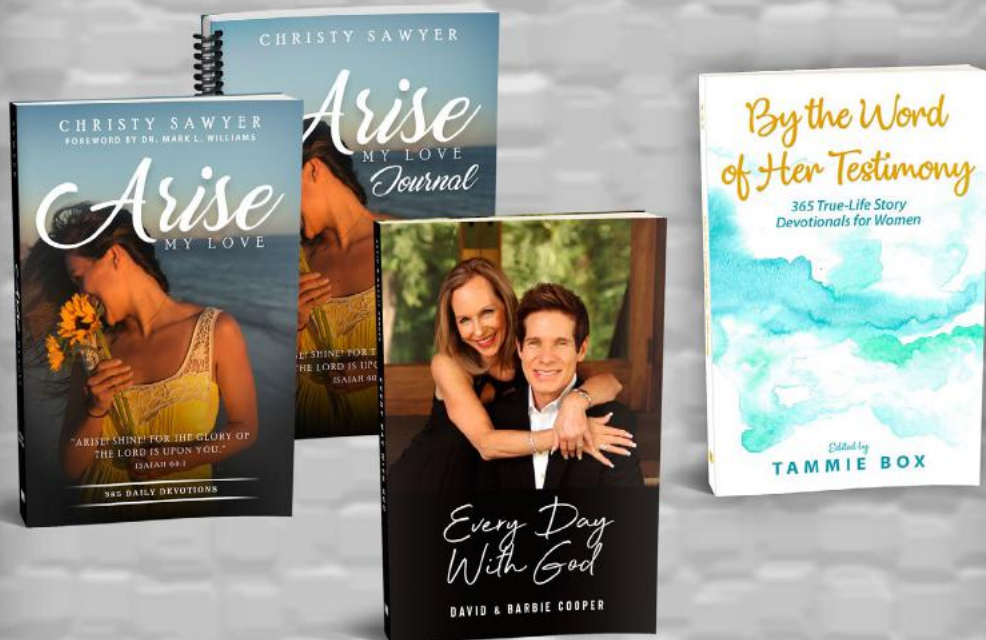


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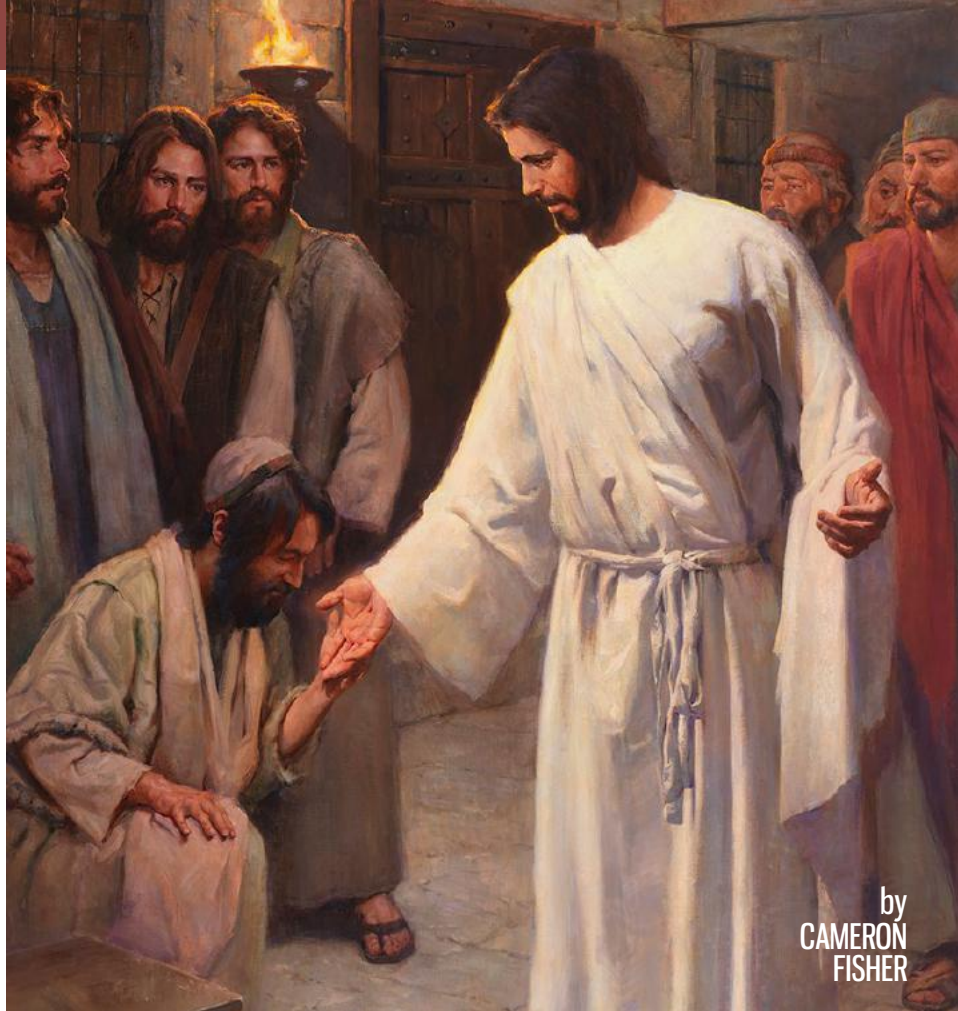


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DON'T BE A DOUBTING THOMAS!

ONE OF THE MOST memorable of the 12 disciples of Jesus is Thomas. However, Thomas is not remembered for his leadership style, his evangelistic fervor, or even his loyalty to Jesus.

Thomas's claim to fame is the moniker in front of his name—*Doubting*.

Growing up in Sunday school one of my favorite choruses was about Thomas. The second portion of the song went something like this:

*Don't be a Doubting Thomas,
rest fully on His promise,
Why worry, worry, worry—
when you can pray?*

This one verse from a whimsical children's song speaks multiple, powerful truths. It admonishes us to cast all our cares on the Savior; to rest in Him and the promises He has given us; and, finally, it ties doubt and worry together, and presents the solution to both—prayer.

In Matthew 21, Jesus characterized doubt as the opposite of faith when he said in verse 21, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea, it will happen'" (NASB). In the sixth chapter of Matthew, Christ asks the familiar question, "And which of you by worrying can add a day to his life span?" (Luke 12:25 NASB).

Have faith; do not doubt. How are we to reconcile this simple statement with a society and culture in which we find ourselves today? How are we to compartmentalize our fears and anxieties when just as a pandemic was beginning to subside, it reemerged with a vengeance? We have even incorporated this negativity into our casual conversation when we respond with phrases such as, "I doubt it," or "seems doubtful."

All of us have dealt with doubt and will continue to do so as long as we live in an imperfect world. It will rear its ugly head when we receive a dire health report. We will begin to doubt when a promise is broken... yet again.

Our task as believers is to conquer the fear of doubt by going back to the song about Doubting Thomas. "Rest fully on His

promise." That promise comes from Matthew 11:28-29: "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (NASB).

The first part of that little chorus also speaks to conquering doubt. It goes something like this:

*Why worry when you can pray?
Trust Jesus . . . He'll be your stay.**

Scripture powerfully backs up this part of the song as well:

- Proverbs 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (NKJV).

- Jeremiah 17:7: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose trust is the Lord" (NASB).

- Psalm 56:3: "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You" (NASB).

- Psalms 37:5: Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it" (NASB).

As simple as it sounds, I have to ask the question: *Why worry, when you can pray?* ■

Cameron Fisher is Coordinator of Communications for the Church of God International Offices.

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78TH INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 25 - 29 • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

GA22

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Event & Hotel Registration Begin January 2022

Register Now for the International GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2022!

FOR THE FIRST TIME in four years, the Church of God will gather for an International General Assembly as beautiful San Antonio, Texas, will be the setting for the 78th International General Assembly—GA22.

San Antonio became the venue following a postponement from Indianapolis in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In an action not taken since the 1940s, the International Executive Council of the Church of God made the difficult decision to postpone the 2020 Assembly to 2022. Negotiations with the city of San Antonio were already underway for the 79th Assembly, which would have likely been the site for 2022. Indianapolis officials concurred with the decision to postpone, and the Church of God will return to Indianapolis for an Assembly in the future.

San Antonio has been a popular destination for past gatherings. Since the 72nd Assembly back in 2008, many improvements have taken place. Previously, the Alamodome was the site for business sessions and worship services, which necessitated a shuttle ride or significant pedestrian crossing of a bridge over Interstate 37.

In 2022, all services and business sessions, as well as special events, will be staged at the newly enlarged Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. Beautiful hotels, many located on the famous San Antonio River Walk, have also been renovated since 2008 and will offer easy walking access to the Assembly events.

Business sessions will begin on Tuesday, July 26, and will be held through Friday morning, with the concluding International General Assembly set for 2:00 p.m. Friday, July 29. Any registered delegate aged 16 and older will be eligible to vote at the Friday session.

Worship gatherings will feature an opening service on Wednesday, with an emphasis on world missions on Thursday, followed by the Friday closing message from the general overseer. A number of pre-Assembly gatherings, as well as activities taking place once GA22 gets underway, are planned. On Monday, July 25, the one-day L.E.A.D. Conference is set to take place on Monday afternoon, July 25. The traditional women's service is also part of the week's schedule of activities, as well as the staging of Junior Talent competition. Further information on these and other Assembly-related items will be updated as they become available on the official website of the 78th Assembly, ga22.org.

Housing options and registration information to attend GA22 is available through a number of methods, including mailing of the forms contained within this issue of *Engage*. Quick and easy online registration is available on the Church of God website or at ga22.org. Other items of interest will be added to the site until opening day of GA22. During the week of the General Assembly, the website will feature livestreams of business sessions, downloads of documents, videos, photos, and the latest news and information.



DELEGATE REGISTRATION FORM

CHURCH OF GOD 78th INTERNATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 25 - 29, 2022 • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

DELEGATE INFORMATION

First Name M.I. Last Name Date of Birth Gender ☐ Male ☐ Female

Ethnicity ☐ African-American ☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other ☐ Translation Required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Native American ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ White-Non Hispanic

Mobile Phone Receive GA22 SMS message updates? ☐ YES *Standard Message & Data Rates Apply* Email

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Ministerial File Number Ministerial Status ☐ Full-Time ☐ Part-Time ☐ Retired ☐ Widow ☐ N/A State/Regional Office Where You Report Lead/Senior Pastor? ☐ YES

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This section must be completed to be registered as a layperson. By completing this section you affirm the following: "I am a member of the Church of God listed below."

Local Church Where You Are A Member City & State State/Regional Office Name

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Ethnicity ☐ African-American ☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander ☐ Other ☐ Translation Required? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Native American ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ White-Non Hispanic

Ministerial File Number Ministerial Status ☐ Full-Time ☐ Part-Time ☐ Retired ☐ Widow ☐ N/A State/Regional Office Where You Report Lead/Senior Pastor? ☐ YES

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This section must be completed to be registered as a layperson. By completing this section you affirm the following: "I am a member of the Church of God listed below."

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DEADLINE is 6/17/2022. Registration submitted or received after the deadline will NOT be processed and will be returned. Onsite registration will be available in San Antonio beginning 7/25/2022. Delegates should receive confirmation within 5 business days of registering. Credentials will be awaiting your arrival in San Antonio and can be picked up at onsite registration.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Married Couple	\$150	\$175
<input type="checkbox"/> Family (includes children under 16)	\$175	\$200
<input type="checkbox"/> Retired Minister or Widow of Minister	\$0	\$0
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior Talent Family Member	\$25	\$50
Additional Event Selection (Must be a registered delegate to attend additional events)		
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<input type="checkbox"/> LEAD Conference	\$0	# of Tickets <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Women's Ministry Service	\$0	# of Tickets <input type="text"/>

TOTAL AMOUNT OWED \$

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Church of God

78th International General Assembly

July 25-29, 2022

HOTEL MAP

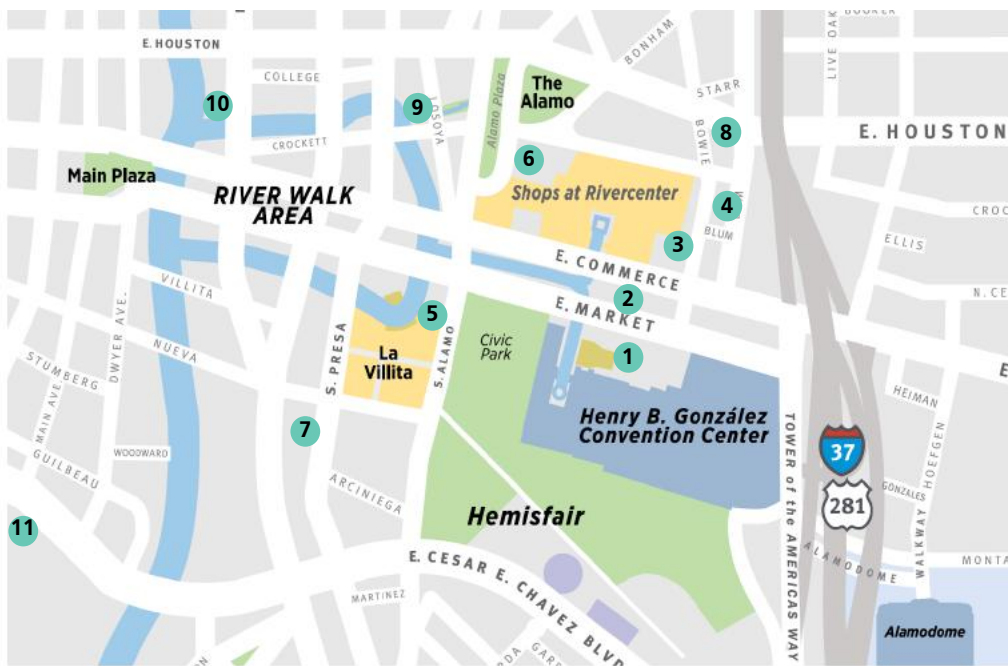
Hotels by distance from the Henry B. González Convention Center

Map

Address

Distance

1. Grand Hyatt	600 E. Market	Adjacent to Entrance
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7. SpringHill Suites SA Downtown	524 S. St. Mary's St.	4 Blocks
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9. Hyatt Regency San Antonio	123 Losoya	5 Blocks
10. Coutyard by Marriott Riverwalk	207 N. St. Mary's St.	6 Blocks
11. Fairfield Inn & Suites SA DT	620 S. Santa Rosa	8 Blocks





78th International General Assembly
July 25-29, 2022 – San Antonio, TX

DELEGATE HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

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Complete one form for each room requested. Multiple reservations will not be accepted under one name.

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3. _____ 4. _____



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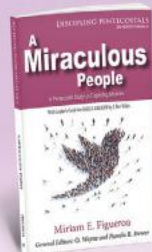
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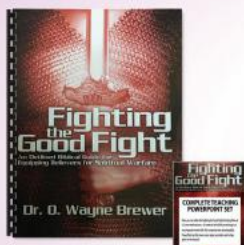
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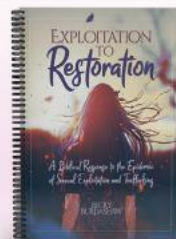
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by RYAN FOLEY, Christian Post

POLL Evangelical Churches Have Higher Percentage of 'Practicing Christians'

A NEW SURVEY reveals that Evangelicals account for a higher share of practicing Christians than their mainline counterparts.

The American Bible Society released the seventh chapter of its 11th annual State of the Bible [report](#) Thursday, titled, "The Bible in the American Church." Data in the chapter was based on a survey of 3,354 adults conducted in January (2021).

The chapter differentiates between self-identified Christians and practicing Christians. A practicing Christian is defined as one who "identifies as a Christian, attends a religious service at least once a month, [and] strongly agrees their faith is very important in their lives." In contrast to practicing Christians, who "have incorporated the faith into their lives and routines in a transformative way," self-identified Christians are those who "simply say they believe."

The study found that practicing Christians account for . . .

- 42% of those affiliated with the evangelical tradition,

- 31% of historically black denominations,
- 28% of mainline Protestants, and
- 22% of Catholics.

Additionally, two-thirds of practicing Christians (67%) are Scripturally engaged, 29% are in the movable middle, while 4% are Scripturally disengaged.

An earlier chapter in the report outlined the different categories of "Scripture engagement," which respondents were placed into based on a "Scripture engagement scale" created from responses to a questionnaire about the frequency with which they read the Bible, the impact it has on their lives, and the centrality of its influence on the users' choices and decisions.

Bible-engaged Christians achieved a score of at least 100 on the Scripture-engagement scale. They were defined as those who "interact with the Bible regularly," the values and principles of which "mostly influence their relationships with God and others."

Those in the "Movable Middle" received a score ranging from 70 to 99 on the

Scripture-engagement scale and “range from those who sporadically interact with the Bible on the low end, to those who periodically open the Bible as a source of spiritual insight and wisdom.” The “Bible disengaged” scored less than 70 on the Scripture-engagement scale and “interact infrequently with the Bible,” which has “minimal influence on their daily lives.”

The survey also found that three-quarters (75%) of practicing Christians read their Bible at least once a week, while 84% read the Bible at least monthly. By contrast, just 28% of nonpracticing Christians engage with the Scripture on at least a weekly basis, and 39% read the Bible at least once a month. The groups with the highest rates of practicing Christians engaging in weekly Bible reading were evangelicals (93%), historically black Protestants (87%), and mainline Protestants (80%).

A plurality of practicing Christians (46%) believe that “the Bible is the actual Word of God and should be taken literally, word for word,” while an additional 40% agree with a statement asserting that “the Bible is the inspired Word of God and has no errors although some verses are meant to be symbolic rather than literal.” A plurality of self-identified Christians (34%) sympathize with the latter point of view.

Baby boomers account for the plurality of practicing Christians among evangelicals (34%), historically black Protestant churches (35%), and Catholics (36%). The only denomination where millennials comprise

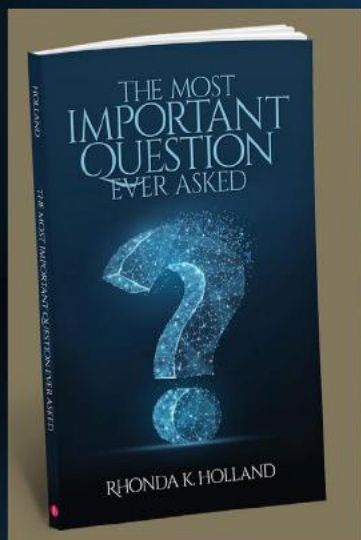
a majority of practicing Christians is mainline Protestants, where 27% of millennials fall into the category, followed by 23% of baby boomers.

While 50% of practicing Christians reported that the amount of Bible reading they have engaged in has increased over the past year, just 21% of self-identified Christians said the same. Increases in Bible reading were largest among evangelical practicing Christians, 55% of whom said they spent more time with the Bible in the past year. A majority of historically black Protestant practicing Christians (54%) also reported a growth in Bible engagement over the same time period.

Reacting to the data from the latest chapter of the State of the Bible report in a [statement](#), John Farquhar Plake, the director of ministry intelligence for the American Bible Society, said, “Across all traditions, the Church needs to recognize that there are a growing number of people who call themselves Christians but don’t actually know how to interact with the Bible or live a life dedicated to Christ.” Plake expressed optimism that the number of practicing Christians will increase going forward.

“The data show us a real opportunity to step into that gap to actively encourage and disciple believers to engage with God’s Word,” he added. ■

This article originally appeared on October 16, 2021. Ryan Foley is a reporter for The Christian Post. He can be reached at: ryan.foley@christianpost.com



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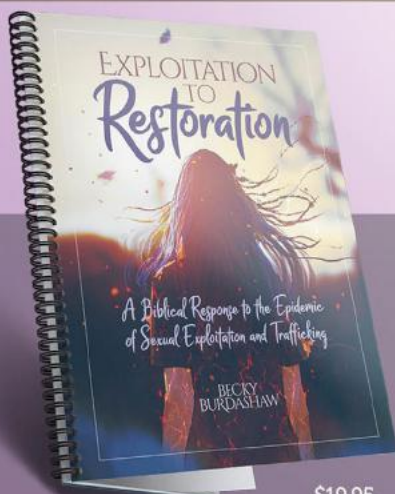
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RESET IN 2022

by BILL JENKINS

THE BEGINNING OF The New Year is a perfect time to evaluate our lives and prepare for a reset. If you are generally unhappy, in a slump, feel burned-out, or questioning your productivity then you need a refreshing from the Lord. If you are finding wrong in everything and everything wrong is finding you, then you need to hit the spiritual Reset button in 2022.

Resetting your life does not mean you throw the baby out with the bath water. It is not divorcing your spouse, quitting your job, leaving your church, or moving out of state. Resetting is seeking to improve things, not always to remove things. We improve things by changing things. Here are four questions to ask before hitting the Reset button:

1. What change do I need or want to make?
2. Why do I want to make a change?
3. Who is stopping me from making a change?
4. How am I going to make a change?

Honestly answering these questions will provide a path moving forward and prepare you for what lies ahead—see the acronym below. Now you are ready for your reset. Resetting your life in many ways means you are rejuvenating yourself and restoring your life.

R = RENEW

Resetting is renewing. To renew is to make something new, strong, and fresh again.

Renewing Includes:

1. Repairing damage
2. Replacing the old for the new
3. Restoring the freshness

A Reset requires fixing any previous damage and learning to walk in total forgiveness. It also requires you to go back to your last act of disobedience and make the wrongs of life right again. You have to replace the old mindsets, with new godly mindsets, in order for the Reset to truly have a lasting impact. When those things are done, a refreshing will be released.

One of the hardest parts of Resetting is ending something old and beginning something new. It might feel like a room without an opening to escape. No windows, no doors, but in reality, there is a way out, and you hold the key. Don't let the fear of not knowing what is on the other side keep you from entering.

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles (Mark 2:22 KJV).

E = EAGER

Personal Resets must be accompanied by a desire for self-improvement. You may be good at pointing out the flaws of others, but Resets begin with an enthusiastic hunger to draw a circle around yourself and seek change. To understand what I mean by eagerness, it might be good to understand the opposite of eagerness. The opposite of eagerness is apathy. Apathy is when you lose feeling or stop caring. It's when you lose interest and become numb to the things in life. That is a dangerous place to land in life, and that's why a Reset is required to generate a passion to reach for the best God offers you.

Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart (Psalm 37:4 KJV).

S = SURRENDER

You cannot fully Reset any area of your

life until you surrender every area in your life to the Lord. We make Jesus our Savior, but we forget to make Him our Lord. Until you make Jesus Lord *of all*, He is not Lord *at all*. The word "Lord" is used in terms of someone ruling or owning something. Does your relationship with Jesus Christ mean He owns and rules your thoughts, your actions, and your life? Are you fully surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of your life?

To surrender means to agree to stop fighting, hiding, and resisting because you know that you will not win or succeed without giving up. You internally come to terms with the fact that you have to let go and let God be in charge. You may say Jesus is Lord over your life, but feel the need to give God your two-cents. Don't be a backseat driver who desires to be a copilot. Remember that God does not need you to be His GPS for your life.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:1-2 KJV).

E = ENDING

Resetting begins with stopping bad behavior. Reset is really displayed in this acrostic: **R**eleasing **E**verything **S**o **E**levation **T**akes place in your life. You have to end

bad behavior, bad relationships, and bad things that desire to keep you from fulfilling your God-given destiny. The Bible encourages you to not be unequally yoked with others in life.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14 KJV).

Five Areas Never to be Unequally Yoked In:

- Business
- Marriage
- Government
- Friendships
- Finances

Being unequally yoked will always take you where you do not want to go, cost you more than you can afford to pay, and keep you there longer than you want to stay.

T = TRUST

And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee (Psalm 9:10 KJV).

Trust is a belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, and effective in all their ways. The opposite of trust is strife. So when there is the presence of trust, there will be the absence of strife. Whenever there is a presence of strife, it is because there is an absence of trust. Resetting is getting to the point where you

quit having internal struggles and stop arguing with God. Resetting is settling the fact that God knows and will always do what is right for His children. Knowing the nature of God is knowing the characteristics of God. It is knowing He will always be there and will never forsake you. Many people in the world and in the church have “daddy issues” because of their natural, earthly fathers not meeting their expectations. Do not ever make the mistake of comparing your heavenly Father with your earthly father. Your heavenly Father will never let you down.

Oh Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee (Psalm 84:12 KJV).

Resetting is not always easy, but it is required to stay on course when things are not working well in your life. Always look inwardly to what you can do instead of pointing fingers and placing blame on others. Remember, you cannot control others, you can control only yourself. You do not have to answer for others; you have to answer only for yourself. Take responsibility, do what needs to be done to stay on track, and complete the course of your life faithfully unto the Lord.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7 KJV). ■

Bill Jenkins is pastor of Destinyland Christian Center in Rancho Cucamonga, California.

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LEGAL NOTES
Dennis W. Watkins

COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates: Must You? Can You? Should You?

IN MY TIME working with the Church, I have never witnessed an issue like the Covid-19 vaccine mandates. The Church of God has pastors and constituents literally “all over the map” on this issue. And I have learned that you may not be able to accurately predict the position of any specific person on whether or not to take the vaccines!

CHURCH OF GOD POSITION ON THE VACCINES

I will repeat the Church’s position on whether or not to take the vaccines. This position has been set out by our Presiding Bishop/General Overseer Dr. Tim Hill:

“Whether or not to take the Covid-19 vaccine is a personal and individual healthcare decision that each person should make in consultation with his/her doctor or healthcare provider.”

STATUS OF THE LAW ON THE VACCINES

On November 5, 2021, President Biden’s administration, through the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (“OSHA”), issued a rule that requires employers with 100 or more workers to ensure that their employees are vaccinated against Covid-19 or to undergo weekly testing. The rule officially comes into effect starting January 4, 2022, and there is a December 6, 2021, deadline for employers to identify which employees are vaccinated or not, and to enforce a mask mandate.

Almost immediately after the rule came, lawsuits were filed challenging it. Within 10 days, 34 lawsuits were filed, including lawsuits in all 12 U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals regions! The day after the rule was entered, the United States 5th Circuit Court of Appeals issued a stay of the rule, citing the

rule as unconstitutional and “a one-size-fits-all sledgehammer that makes hardly any attempt to account for differences in workplaces (and workers).” That Court later reaffirmed its decision.

Because of so many lawsuits covering the Covid-19 vaccine mandates, under the procedural rules, a lottery was held for one United States Circuit Court of Appeals to hear the matter, and the Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, based in Cincinnati Ohio, “won” the lottery to decide that issue. Even if the 6th Circuit Court decides this issue soon, it is likely that any decision would be appealed and that litigation on this matter will continue for some weeks and months. Also, this case could end up before the U.S. Supreme Court. This means that the deadlines under the rule may change.

COVID-19 VACCINES FOR CHURCHES—CAN YOU? SHOULD YOU?

I have been asked by pastors of local churches whether they can or should require the vaccine for church employees. The short answer legally is that yes, you likely can require the vaccines for your church workers. Regarding the OSHA rule, very few of our churches have over 100 employees, but some churches do and some states may have laws for employers with less than 100 employees.

My thought on this issue is that because of the wide variance of opinion about the Covid-19 vaccines, if you attempt to enforce the mandate on your church employees, you likely will ignite a firestorm that you did not see coming! I say this because this is such an *emotional, political, and volatile* issue now. You will see strong feelings exhibited at every level of the spectrum!

It should be pointed out that the Covid-19 vaccine rules still allow for exemptions for persons with religious and medical objections to taking the vaccines. Whether or not to grant the exemptions based on these objections is a decision that is made by the employer. I have received many calls about religious objections to the vaccines.

CONCLUSION

It is possible that the entire landscape of this issue may have changed after the writing and submission of this article, which is around December 1, 2021, but one thing is for certain: rarely will we ever see an issue as controversial and polarizing as the Covid-19 vaccine mandates! ■

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 and Kayla Foley for their assistance in writing this article.



Creating an Accountable Reimbursement Plan

TO DEAL WITH ministerial expenses in a non-taxable manner, the church's governing body (Church Council or the church as a whole operating in a business meeting) must adopt a resolution creating an accountable reimbursement plan. The resolution should be very simple, for example:

"The Anytown Church of God, through this action of the Church Council, does hereby create an accountable reimbursement plan for Pastor Phil Pulpit. The church agrees to designate \$500.00 per month of the pastor's compensation to cover all necessary and proper business expenses incurred by him during the normal course of conducting business on behalf of the Anytown Church of God. Expenses must be substantiated to the church treasurer as to the date, amount, and purpose within 30 days after they are incurred. Any excess reimbursement must be refunded to the church within 60 days after expenses are paid or incurred. This resolution shall be good and valid for the upcoming fiscal year and all years afterward unless changed by this body."

This resolution should be reviewed and examined each year. However, the last sentence of the resolution keeps such active in

case the church fails to place a new resolution in the records.

Disbursement of the "expense" money can be made on a regular basis, either in advance or upon submission of receipts. If expenses are paid upon submission of expense receipts, there is no problem of "excess" expenses that has to be returned at year-end. However, many ministers would rather receive their "expense" money in advance so they do not have to use their personal funds to "float" the expenses of the church. Advancing expenses is perfectly fine. However, the minister still must provide receipts to the church treasurer. While the IRS regulations require that receipts must be submitted within 60 days of incurring the expense, the church can demand that receipts be submitted more often—say every 30 days (or by the first of the month). A shorter time period generally helps assure that proper receipts are presented.

For mileage purposes, the minister should maintain a detailed log of all miles traveled for business purposes. The minister should save the logs for at least seven years to respond to any inquiry that might be raised by the Internal Revenue Service.

The church should **not** use a salary reduction arrangement to pay for the minister's business expenses. Under this type of plan, the minister's "salary" check would be reduced weekly or monthly by the amount of expenses he submitted. Such arrangement is nonaccountable and any "reimbursement" must be counted as income to the minister.

In creating a valid accountable reimbursement plan, let us assume that a pastor is entitled to minimum compensation of \$1,000.00 per week—or \$52,000.00 per year. As a part of his planning, the minister estimates that his weekly expenses will be \$200.00 (\$10,400.00 per year). According to the *Minutes* and IRS guidelines, the church governing body (either the Council or the church as a whole) should designate \$10,400.00 as an accountable reimbursement plan and designate \$41,600.00 as salary. If the minister substantiates, documents, and reports expenses up to \$10,400, that amount would not be taxable for either income taxes or SECA taxes. The remainder (\$41,600) would be taxable income for all purposes.

This process differs from salary reduction. Under this type of arrangement, the "total" compensation scale is used to determine what expenses, if any, the minister will incur. In addition, an amount is set in advance as to how much is expenses and how much is "taxable salary."

From a church bookkeeping standpoint, the local church does not have to cut the pastor a separate check each week for expenses. He can be given one check that includes his taxable compensation, his accountable reimbursement expense funds, his housing

allowance, and any other compensation or reimbursement for which he is entitled. Those differences can be noted in the ledger—and should be dealt with on the minister's Form W-2 as well.

It must be remembered that any amounts paid under a valid accountable plan is not considered income to the minister and does not appear on his Form W-2.

Any amounts in excess of those to cover substantiated expenses must be returned to the church. For example, at the end of the year the minister has documented and substantiated expenses to the church treasurer of \$8,000. However, each week he has received \$200 for expenses from the church in advance – or \$10,400 for the year. The minister must return the \$2,400 difference to the church or the plan is deemed by the IRS to be a nonaccountable plan. Even if the church decides to give the \$2,400 to the pastor as a gift, the IRS requires that it must be returned by the minister to show a paper trail that the accountable plan is separate from the gift. Of course, if the \$2,400 is given as a gift, it becomes taxable to the minister as income.

A valid accountable plan for business expenses is as important as having a housing resolution in place. If an accountable plan is not provided for the minister, it is almost a certainty that the minister will pay too much in income taxes. ■

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.



DOCTRINE and POLITY
J. Ayodeji Adewuya

THE CHURCH: Unity and Diversity

THE WORLD TODAY is characterized by divisions along many lines sociocultural, political, ethnic, racial, religious, and several others. Unfortunately, the Church has not been immune to such evils. The question then is, “How can the Church transcend the divisions that plague its context, and not be swept off its feet by the prevailing torrents of disharmony, divisions, and disunity?” An answer that is being proffered in this essay is the Church must recover its scriptural identity.

The letters of Paul in the New Testament offer an experience and understanding of the early church through his eyes as he wrote to various churches with whom he was associated in one way or another. Those letters remain crucial in the twenty-first century as we navigate the various issues that the Church faces—particularly unity and diversity. Paul’s letters continue to confront the reader with powerful images, conflicting ideas, and the living witness of believers in the Lord Jesus.

While it may be argued that Paul did not present a fixed doctrine or a systematic theology of the Church, the dynamic portrayal of the life, commitment, and zeal of Paul, his coworkers, and the congregations, is by far a more vital testimony to the reality of the Church.

As Paul’s letters show, division within the Church is not a new phenomenon. What is new in the twenty-first century is the Church is being threatened by the construction of more boundaries. Despite Paul’s attempts to minimize racial, gender, and social distinctions within early Christian communities, social rankings continued to be operative, to some extent, in those communities as evidenced in the Pauline churches.

As it is in today’s world, social location was a major contributing factor to the interpersonal problems in the early Christian communities. The ethnic and socioeconomic mix of the Pauline congregations had a direct bearing on the problems that were addressed among those communities. Paul’s

challenge was to create a group with a clear sense of its moral and theological identity while incorporating a diverse group of people: Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. Paul wrote letters partly to clarify what the church's social relations with the surrounding environments could and should be. The preservation of the identity of organizations causes a continued separation from the outside society. A group's distinctiveness must be clear to its own members and outsiders. However, in the attempt to reach out to others or draw a demarcation line between believers and the world, there are two resultant effects, both of which are opposite to each other. The former results in missional inclusiveness, and the latter, distinctiveness as the people of God. In addressing the issues that plagued each church, Paul employed many metaphors that vividly illustrate the unity and diversity of the Church.

ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

One of the most significant analogies that Paul employs in describing the Church is that of the "body of Christ" (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23, 30; Col. 1:24). In the Pauline letters, the concept of the "body of Christ" is frequently mentioned, and one finds a rich variety of examples presented by way of analogy in explaining it. In the context of Paul's discussion on the diversity of spiritual gifts (see Rom. 12:4-11), Paul employs the analogy of the members of the body,

contending that every part of the body is not only essential to its proper functioning but also in fulfilling its potential. It is definitely an appropriate analogy. The human body is composed of many parts having widely different functions. Yet, as one body, it is a single functional unit and all of its members work smoothly and in harmony together for the good of the whole. The human body, should it lack one of its members, is deemed crippled and its ability to function impaired. Likewise, the members of the Church each have a different set of talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts. For the Church to function well, each member must contribute his talents, abilities, and charismata to the work of the Church. Thus, the Church, like the human body, operates as a functional unit; and, like the human body, when one or more of its members is malfunctioning, it is to that extent crippled. Each member of the Church has his/her definite position, function, and value within the whole "body" of the Church.¹ The wholeness of the body of Christ is at risk when some say: "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). Yet Paul fears just such a mutilation regarding the church-as-body at Corinth. If both voices were true, the body would be radically diminished—first, by the loss of those who feel they do not belong, and second, by the amputation by those who find certain parts unnecessary. Mutilation would result, and with loss of wholeness, a corresponding loss of holiness of the body, the Church. Hence, Paul

perceives any threat of division and loss of unity in the body as an attack on the boundaries of holy space (see 1 Cor. 1:10; 3:1; 11:18; 12:25; 13; Gal. 5:20). Yet according to Paul, the community's boundaries are threatened from inside, and so attention and energy are focused there. Paul's image of the body provides the vehicle for reinforcing the unity of the group with its diversity of gifts.²

Paul adds an unexpected twist to this analogy, however. Where we should expect to find him using the word "Church" or a similar term, Paul uses the word "Christ." He seems, in this usage, to equate the "Church," the whole organization of Christians as a group, with Jesus Christ himself. He says, "For just as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12 NRSV), and he makes the point again in v. 27: "Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it . . ." (1 Cor. 12:27 NRSV). Paul's description of the Church as a functional unit like the human body is obviously important. When he equates the Church with the body of Christ, however, it does not seem to be an analogy any longer. It appears to be a statement of fact. Paul seems to push his own analogy to its logical limits when he says the Church does not merely appear to be a body, nor merely function like a body, but actually is in some real sense a body—the body of Christ—

Christ himself. This "body" is characterized by having been endowed through one Spirit; by service to one Lord; and by having inspiration from one God (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

A human body does not merely tolerate diversity. Rather, its wholesome existence and functioning depends on it. So it is with the body of Christ. Because of Christ, we become His body, and He ensures the Church's development and growth through the presence of the Spirit. The Church partakes of the one Spirit who gives gifts to everyone, regardless of social status, race, and gender, to nourish and nurture the body of Christ. Paul uses the analogy of the body as his starting point for understanding the spiritual gifts and ministries in the Christian community.

Unity and diversity, harmony and peace are possible within the dynamic organism that is Christ's body.

Paul's description of the Church as the body of Christ makes allowance for a particular understanding of authority in the Church. Authority for believers expresses itself in the Church's service, primarily in the recognition and utilization of the endowments of the Spirit. All members share in the authority of Christ which becomes crystalized in service.

The Christian community must continue to maintain and manifest the unity of all and radical equality despite differences of status, gender, or ethnic origin. In other words, within the community, equality must pave the way for each member assuming

responsibility according to his/her gifts. Stereotypical and traditional roles that are assigned based on gender, geographic location, social status, kinship, etc., must lose their force. The ideas and leadership that develop community life must become everyone's responsibility. Paul provides several examples in his letters. Onesimus is to be treated as a brother and no longer a slave. Also, women like Apphia—whose contribution to the spiritual life of the church at Colossae was probably no less important than Philemon's—deserve recognition (see Philemon 2, 16a). The foregoing echoes James's warning about favoritism in James 2:1-13. When we show favoritism, we become like evil judges who manipulate justice in favor of the rich and rob the poor of justice and fairness against an oppressor. When the Church, as the people of God, discriminates on the basis of social status, education, and/or gender it results in the neglect of those who are spiritually minded and accord special privileges to the few who may not even be qualified. Nominating committees often choose men and women more for their bank balances than for their abilities, characters, or spirits. The Church must be able to share the love of Christ to all regardless of differences in gender, skin color, social status, or even age. It goes against the teachings of our Lord, and it will receive severe judgment on the day of His visitation. If such attitude prevails in the society, the Church must be willing to turn the tide.

NO JEW, NO GENTILE; NO MALE, NO FEMALE; NO MASTER, NO SLAVE³

Galatians 3:26-29 is the conclusion of Paul's argument in Galatians 3:6-29. Here Paul moved from the general statements in 3:7-9 to the explicit claims in verses 26-29. The argument in the section begins as an answer to the question, "Who are the children of Abraham?" It ends by affirming that those who believe in Christ are both "Abraham's offspring" (3:29) and children of God (see 3:26). In contrast to the Greco-Roman milieu of Paul, where people were valued based on their geography, gender, and genealogy, the important identity marker is "in Christ." The interpretation of the passage, especially verse 28, has suffered misconceptions that need to be addressed if one is to make sense of what Paul is trying to articulate. First, is the wrong assumption by many interpreters that the verse has no present social implications. The meaning is only spiritual. Understood this way, the passage is a "pie-in-the-sky" eschatological ideal, a laudable and ideal goal that will find its fulfillment at Christ's return. However, an interpretation that limits the passage to a future realization is, at the least, questionable on both rhetorical and grammatical grounds. On the one hand, regarding rhetorical prowess, the problem that engulfed the Galatian churches was more urgent than Christ's return. It was a lack of understanding of what it meant to be one in Christ and live together as the

people of God—both Jews and Gentiles. Grammatically, on the other hand, the prevalence of the present tense in verse 28 suggests a present reality. In Jewish society the Jew, the free man, and the male were all superior; while the Gentile, the slave, and the female were all inferior.

Second, some interpreters understand Galatians 3:28 as an implicit suggestion of the obliteration of social distinctions in which case, the Church achieves unity through the abolition of social distinctions and having them replaced with an amalgamated, undifferentiated Christian identity. However, one must say that if the thrust of Galatians 3:28 is the obliteration of social distinctions, Paul undermines the basis of own missionary activity and evangelistic mission.

Paul's proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles was aimed at bringing them into the Church with their distinct identity as Gentiles who are not to be saddled with obedience to the Law as a means of their inclusion in the people of God. The issue in Galatians 3:28 is that of dominance or power which was being exerted by one over the other because of those differences. Thiselton rightly notes, "To remain Jewish or non-Jewish does not spring from general indifference, but from its salvific irrelevance. As with in the case of gender, such distinctions are not abrogated wholesale. . . ." The new creation transforms and relativizes such distinctions, but they have a place.⁴ As Campbell also asserts, "So whilst, eschatologically, there is no longer

Jew or Greek, this does not mean that these are not abiding realities in ethical matters in everyday life of the churches."⁵

Unity in Christ does not lend itself to an undifferentiated identity. It comes as a result of each person's and each Christian community's relationship with Christ—relationships that do not only ensure that we treat each other with respect but also ensure that we relate to one another with equality and mutuality despite our "otherness" and many differences. Lowe's remarks are poignant: "The sociological basis on which Christianity rests is not ties of kinship, as in the case of Judaism, but that of fellowship—fellowship in Christ. . . . Such fellowship may acknowledge kinship as a potential ally, it may regard it indifferently, as comprising an unequivocal force; or repudiate it as being a distracting encumbrance. Whichever position it holds, the ties of kinship are, for Christianity, in the last resort expendable."⁶

The following concluding observations could be made. First, one must note that in Galatians 3:28, Paul is not dreaming of an ideal state or setting forth ethical demands; he is stating a fact. Paul is not suggesting there will be no more racial or national distinctions in the world, no more slave/master relationships, no more recognition that God created male and female. Rather, he is saying that as God regards baptized believers in Christ Jesus, all have the status of *huiōi* (sons and daughters). Hence, Galatians 3:28 emphasizes a radical equality of believers in Christ, and the elimination

of social and gender distinctions in the community of faith. For Paul, not only do stereotypical and traditional roles lose their force but also the ideas and leadership that develop community life become everyone's responsibility.⁷

Second, present-day society, particularly the Western world, continues to struggle with a system where circumstances of birth, education, ethnicity, and social status continue to define how people are treated. Even in matters of justice, one could hardly speak of equality. Christians cannot retreat into their citadel of spiritual unity and ignore their responsibilities as members of the society. The inferential truth in this passage is that, as people of equal value in the eyes of God, none should be discriminated against by those who profess to be followers of Christ. Paul's declaration, "There is no longer Jew or Greek. . ." (Gal. 3:28a), is an assertion from below: "[we] Jews [Asians, non-Europeans] are not inferior!" Paul was a counter-colonist whose message decolonizes by freeing the colonized to be conscious of their divine status as children of the promise (see Gal. 4:23, 28, 31), regardless of their cultural contexts, ethnicity, gender, and social status (see 3:28). Thus, the African can shout "Hallelujah!" Christ has freed the African/African-American to say "yes" to their "blackness or African-ness," and the woman to say "yes" to her "female-ness." Galatians 3:28 does not promote a "raceless" or "genderless" society, but one in which each person could embrace and celebrate not only oneself but also the "other."

Racial distinctions are irrelevant in the Church and racial discrimination in the Church is sinful. Paul's message in Galatians 3:28 must be brought to bear on the day-to-day life of the people of God. Paul's interpretative framework powerfully shapes and frees enslaved people with a view to creating new postcolonial communities in Christ. As the language of Galatians 3:28 shows, the principal forms of social domination that prevailed in Roman imperial society were supposedly transcended in the new alternative society. Presumably this formula expressed at least the ideal social relations in the new movement, the *Ekklesia*, and for Paul in his own mission. Paul was adamant that there be "no longer Jew or Greek" in the assemblies he helped organize among the peoples of Asia Minor and Greece. This was in contrast to the ideology of the Roman imperial order. However, for Paul, history had come to its fulfillment, not through Rome, but through Israel.⁸

Third, we must be careful that in striving to articulate an account of identity and social dynamics in opposition to that which characterized the Greco-Roman milieu of Paul that we do not obliterate the difference and the silences that are present within the object of study itself.

Fourth, acknowledging diversity is neither enough nor strategic for the fulfillment of the Church's vision and mission. Rather, the Church must strive for inclusion in order to turn the existing diversity into its greatest strength. Inclusion means involvement and integrating diversity in organizational

systems and processes and thus shaping a work environment that gives everyone the same fair chance to deliver their best work.

Fifth, focusing on a common goal and shared vision (rather than emphasizing these differences) requires a certain mindset, and creating an inclusive culture requires new behaviors. It means to go beyond the easy solutions common in like-minded groups. It means to disrupt conformity and prompts us to question assumptions, scrutinize facts, and think more deeply.

In conclusion, there is a beautiful story about a hymn, “In Christ There Is No East or West,” written in 1908 by the noted English writer, John Oxenham. The song was part of a script for a pageant at a giant missionary event sponsored by the London Missionary Society’s exhibition—The Orient in London. An interesting account of the impact of this hymn comes from an incident during the closing days of World War II, when two ships were anchored together, one containing Japanese aliens, and the other American soldiers, all waiting to be repatriated. For an entire day they lined the rails, glaring at one another. Suddenly, someone began to sing, “In Christ There Is No East or West.” Then another on the opposite ship joined in. Soon there was an extraordinary chorus of former enemies united, praising God with this song:

In Christ there is no East or West,
in Him no South or North,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts ev’rywhere
their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord
close-binding all mankind.

Join hands then, brothers of the faith,
whate’er your race may be;
who serves my Father, as a son
is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,
in Him meet South and North;
all Christly souls are one in Him
throughout the whole wide earth.
(Public Domain)⁹

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NOTES

- ¹ J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Holiness and Community in 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1: Paul’s View of Communal Holiness in the Corinthians Correspondence* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 173.
- ² James W. Thompson, *The Church According to Paul: Rediscovering the Community Conformed to Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2014), 70.
- ³ This section is a modified version of my essay, “Galatians 3:28 and the African Story,” in *One in Christ: Essays on Early Christianity and “All That Jazz” in Honor of S. Scott Bartchy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014).
- ⁴ A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 550–551.
- ⁵ William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Christian Identity* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 92.
- ⁶ Raphael Lowe, *The Position of Women in Judaism* (London: 1966), 52–53.
- ⁷ Helen Doohan, *Paul’s Vision of the Church* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 179.
- ⁸ Richard A. Horsley, “Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings,” ed. Allen Dwight Callahan, et al., *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), 177.
- ⁹ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 34.

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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Tim Hill, General Overseer

Fighting the War for Your Family

THIS IS A PERSONAL story from Paula's and my journey of rearing a family while in ministry and leadership.

THE MOST DIFFICULT WAR

In the past, I have waged war with the Enemy over various matters. Of all the challenges I have faced, nothing has ever arrested my soul more than when navigating through struggles that concern my own family.

As most know, Paula and I are parents of three beautiful daughters, all of whom are grown and enjoying their families and varied careers. Each of our girls is a wonderful and unique blessing in our lives, and they have each brought us tremendous joy through the years. Like every family, we have had our dramas as well. Our family portraits, complete with smiling faces and formal poses, do not tell the whole story. What I am about to relay is more in line with our reality and the reality most people experience.

We had just returned from commencement exercises on a Saturday in 2008. One of our girls had graduated with a business degree, complete with a 4.0 grade point average over four years. She had even been selected to give one of the speeches about her university experience while completing the program. We laughed, had a cookout, and beamed with joy as we gave her gifts and celebrated the grand occasion. She had worked hard and had overcome the deep disappointments that come with being uprooted and moving frequently to follow her parents in their ministry assignments.

FIGHTING FROM OUR KNEES

On Sunday morning, she awakened early, packed her car, and moved to Ohio where she quickly found a good job with a bank in Columbus. Gifted in music and as an incredible lyricist, she began to write songs that caught the attention of a producer and promoter of rock music. It wasn't long before our daughter called us to

say that she would be giving up her good job making good money to travel with a rock band. Success came quickly as they acquired recording contracts and toured throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. Though we were extremely proud of her talent, our hearts became heavy as we followed her tour schedule on the internet, realizing the kinds of venues where she was performing.

On many nights, Paula sensed alarm in her spirit and would find her way to our child's bedroom and fall across the bed in tearful intercession. She did it so frequently that on the occasions when our daughter would visit us at home, she would ask about the smell of Paula's perfume emanating from the bed. According to the press releases and music reviews, they were attracting a large fan base. Yet Paula and I continually agonized over this path our daughter was traveling.

As we traveled around the world preaching and giving altar calls so other parents' children could be saved, we were fighting privately for our daughter's soul. More than once while I was preaching or carrying out church business, I was under a barrage of heart-seeking missiles of condemnation from the Enemy. I remember one night in Spain watching as hundreds of young people responded to the opportunity I extended to them to accept Christ. While I rejoiced at that moment, I later went to my hotel room and muffled my groanings in a pillow as I wept for my child. I could only

find sleep after reading aloud every scripture I could find about household salvation and then claiming them as personal promises for my own family.

Years went by. Years of Paula walking down the hall and falling across that bed. Years of my following the band's tour on their website and then wishing I hadn't, because I would rather not have known the kinds of places they were playing. Years of putting on the face and taking a deep breath before walking on a stage to try to help somebody get through their own spiritual war.

I have learned along the way that there are some things you will go through that are more about your endurance than your achievement.

Paula and I often inquired of the Lord. Through those times, we found the drive to keep praying and carrying on our ministry to others. To this day, I do not know exactly what occurred. But I do not need to know and have not ever asked. What I do know is that one day, my daughter called home and told her mother the band was ending. She then shared an encounter that came as a result of a friend's testimony of grace in her own life. It was not long until our daughter returned home and began a new journey that came with trials and tears, ups and downs, and setbacks and victories. Paula and I leaned heavily on God's grace during this particularly difficult season; and as a result, we experienced joy even in the midst of struggle.

GOD'S MERCY ENDURES FOREVER

That young lady is now in her mid-thirties and far beyond my watchful eye and discipline. The best I can hope for now is good and godly influence. She has founded two businesses, purchased her own home and has become a landlord and even buys her dad dinner on occasion. Yes, there have been difficult times of relapse and a regression of the journey. There have been multiple gut-wrenching dad/daughter exchanges where the unstoppable force (her) collided with the immovable object (me). Life is what life is—a journey of ups and downs, and victories and disappointments. There is no pretense here that all is perfect or anything that resembles it. Not unlike you, days and decisions still present themselves as their own unique reasons to go to my Father in prayer on behalf of all my children and family for that matter but God is good and that thing called “mercy” keeps doing what it does—enduring forever.

Someday, I won't be the general overseer of a denomination, but I will be my daughter's father and that is what will matter most.

KEEP BELIEVING

To every pastor and leader who is fighting for the soul of your child, hold on. To the hundreds who after hearing our story, or after reading it in one of my books, identified with a church leader who experienced similar tears and heartaches as you have, hold on. To the dozens of leaders and pastors who know our story and have

called me or asked for a private meeting seeking prayer and advice on how to navigate the storms in your family, hold on.

We are in this together and there are more of us than you will ever know or imagine. Satan wants our kids because he wants us.

Hear me, pastor. Your child's struggle does not disqualify you from leading and preaching the gospel of Jesus. I am sure I have failed more than I have succeeded as a Dad.

Like that time I gave that “I'm not financing your road trip to Hell” speech. That went over really well with a teenager. NOT!

I had borrowed that line from some fire and brimstone story I had heard another preacher tell. It sounded good coming from him. No, I did not always get it right and still don't. I've dissected Proverbs 22: 6 every way it can be cut. Sometimes I still feel the tug-o-war in my own heart and I haven't had a teenager in my house for more than 10 years.

But the last time I checked, 2 Timothy 1:12 still rings true also...*“For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day”* (NASB 1995).

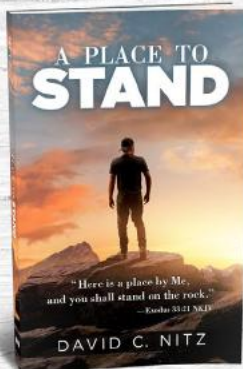
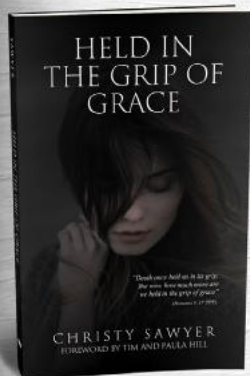
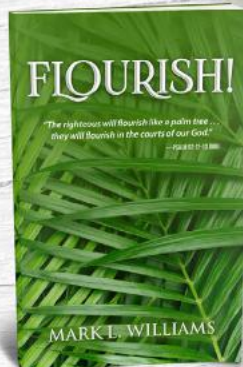
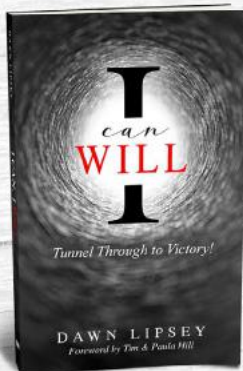
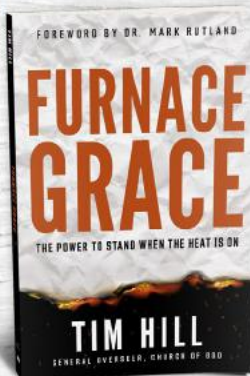
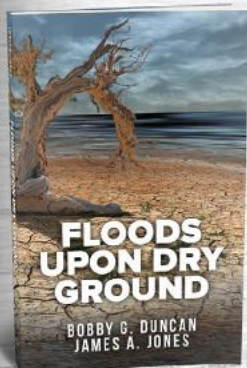
Yes, that includes your children. ■

(This article is written with the knowledge and expressed permission of my daughter and family and lifted from the book, The Amos Paradigm published in 2014 and later The Speed of Favor published in 2016.)

This and other entries can be found at www.letstalkaboutitbytimhill.com.

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CHURCH OF GOD HIGHLIGHTS

*Abbreviated news from faithnews.cc between June 1, 2021 and January 7, 2022.
To read the entire articles, please visit faithnews.cc.*

PRIORITY: Weekly Online Prayer Gathering Launches Jan. 10

Jan. 7, 2022—Cleveland, TN—Church of God General Overseer Tim Hill has announced a new call to prayer, set to take place every Monday at 9:00 a.m. EST. The initiative, named PRIORITY, is set to begin on Monday, January 10, 2022, via Facebook Live.

The guiding scripture for PRIORITY is taken from Matthew 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (KJV). The eight-month-long prayer event will conclude on August 1, the Monday following the International General Assembly, set for July 25-29, 2022, in San Antonio, Texas.

General Overseer Hill explained that PRIORITY is a continuation of the #WePrayCOG movement, launched in late 2019 with a primary focus of prayer for the International General Assembly that was set to be held the following summer in Indianapolis. In April 2020, the International Executive Council made the difficult decision to postpone the Assembly that year due to the worldwide spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRIORITY can be found on the Church of God’s Facebook page, @COGHQ.

General Assembly Website Launched

Cleveland, TN—A website has been launched with preliminary information regarding the 78th

The graphic features a world map in the background with a color gradient from orange to purple. In the upper left, there is a logo consisting of a purple circle with a white hashtag symbol inside. To the right of this logo, the text 'WEPRAYCOG' is written in large, bold, orange letters, with 'THE CHURCH OF GOD UNITED IN PRAYER' in smaller, white letters below it. Underneath this, the word 'PRESENTS' is written in small, white, all-caps letters. The word 'PRIORITY' is prominently displayed in the center in large, white, bold, all-caps letters with a purple outline. Below this, the text 'A FACEBOOK LIVE MONDAY MORNING PRAYER GATHERING' is written in white, all-caps letters. This is followed by 'LED BY PASTORS AND LEADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD' in white, all-caps letters. Then, '9:00 A.M. EST, BEGINNING JAN. 10, 2022' is written in white, all-caps letters. At the bottom, there is a Facebook logo (a white 'f' in a blue square) followed by the word 'LIVE' in white letters on a red rectangular background, and then '@COGHQ' in white letters.

#WEPRAYCOG
THE CHURCH OF GOD UNITED IN PRAYER
PRESENTS
PRIORITY
A FACEBOOK LIVE MONDAY MORNING PRAYER GATHERING
LED BY PASTORS AND LEADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD
9:00 A.M. EST, BEGINNING JAN. 10, 2022
f LIVE @COGHQ

International General Assembly of the Church of God. The site can be accessed at churchof-god.org or directly at ga22.org.

Delegates are headed to the state of Texas and the city of San Antonio next summer where ministers and laypersons will gather for the first time in four years, following a postponement from Indianapolis in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Business and worship services will be conducted at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center, along with numerous events and activities during the week of July 25-29, 2022.

Other items of interest will be added to the site until opening day of the International General Assembly. Once the week begins on July 25, 2022, the website will transform into a place where “all things General Assembly” will be available, such as livestreams of business sessions, downloads of documents, videos, photos, and the perusing of the latest news and information. GA22.org will also have a strong social media presence, including regular posts on the Church of God Facebook page.

Whites Inducted Into Hall of Prophets

November 9, 2021—Cleveland, TN—Former Church of God General Overseer Dr. Robert White, and his late wife, Kathryn Shires White, were inducted today into the prestigious Hall of Prophets at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary in Cleveland, Tenn.

For nearly fifty-four years, Robert and Kathryn White were a ministry team until Kathryn’s passing. Robert White served the Church of God as evangelist, church planter, pastor, state youth director, administrative

bishop, and the first director of the Department of General Education. In subsequent years, White was elected General Director of World Missions, Assistant General Overseer, and served as General Overseer from 1994–1996. He has also served as president of the Church of God School of Theology (now Pentecostal Theological Seminary), and as an international evangelist. He was elected to the denomination’s Executive Council for sixteen years. Dr. White oversaw the development of a Men’s Discipleship Initiative—LifeBuilders. He represented the Church of God in more than one hundred countries and ministered in more than seventy. Dr. White made the denomination’s first contact with underground churches in China (1979) and Russia (1989), and he organized the first Church of God in Kenya.



General Overseer Tim Hill, left, and PTS President Michael Baker, right, lay hands on Dr. Robert White during the ceremony.

In service outside the Church of God, White served on the Board of Administration for the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Under the umbrella of NAE, he served on the Commission on Higher Education and on the World Relief Commission. Dr. White has either authored or edited nine books.

Presenting the honor to Dr. White was PTS President Dr. Michael Baker who explained the purpose of the Hall of Prophets designation as reserved for "Pentecostal ministers whose service to Jesus Christ and the Church of God has been meritorious." A feature of the Hall of Prophets is the establishment of a scholarship in honor of the nominees, which will be a perpetual source of funding for PTS students preparing for ministry.

New Members Appointed to General Board of Education, Pentecostal Theological Seminary, and Lee University

Cleveland, TN—Following their regularly scheduled September meeting, Dr. Timothy M. Hill and the International Executive Committee announced the addition of several members to the General Board of Education and Board of Directors at both the Pentecostal Theological Seminary and Lee University.

In making the announcement, Dr. Timothy M. Hill, General Overseer of the Church of God, stated: "The Executive Committee is pleased to appoint two new members to the General Board of Education, three new members to the Board of Directors at PTS and five new members to the Lee Board. Each of these men

and women, along with those currently serving on our educational boards, have a commitment to scriptural integrity, allegiance to Church of God doctrine, and a faithful devotion to our educational mission and institutions. In these most challenging and complex times, I call on every member of the church to be in prayer for all our presidents and leaders in more than 130 Church of God educational institutions around the world."

Teresa Holder and Yvette Santana are new appointees to the General Board of Education. Tim Oldfield, Gerald McGinnis, and Wanda Landreth Gibson are new appointees to the Board of Directors at the Pentecostal Theological Seminary. New members of the Board of Directors at Lee University include Dr. Mark Williams, Kevin McGlamery, Eli Bonilla, Dr. James McIntyre, and Dr. Michael Knight.

Youth and Discipleship Announces 2022 YWEA Project

The Church of God Department of Youth and Discipleship officially announced the YWEA project for 2022 titled, "Land of the Rising Sun." The announcement came from International Youth and Discipleship director, Rob Bailey.

"Sixty-one years ago, Youth and Discipleship began a journey to impact the world through a new initiative called Youth World Evangelism Action, or as it's known now, YWEA," Bailey stated. "Since that time, more than \$38 million dollars has been raised by Church of God children, students, adults, and churches."

"It is with great excitement that we now are launching the YWEA 2022 project, 'Land of the

Rising Sun,” Bailey continued. “This incredible effort targets Asia, the most populated region of the world that is home to more than 4.6 billion people. Our goal for 2022 is to make a global impact in three strategic countries: Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines.”

“There are 4.6 billion reasons we need you!” Bailey proclaimed in a recent video. “Each person in Asia is special to God. He desires to reach the 99 percent of the population in Japan that is lost. God also desires to be a Father to

the fatherless in Vietnam, feeding little girls and boys, protecting them, and showing His love to them through the Vietnamese Orphanage and Feeding Program. And for more than 40 decades, God’s primary vehicle to prepare leaders to reach Asia is taking place through the Asian Seminary of Christian Ministries, and He needs us to help finish their new building project that will provide for their future growth.”

To learn more about the YWEA 2022 effort please visit cogyouth.org.

