

Faith Networks

A Newsletter for Cooperation in the Churches of God

November, 2007

The Passing

There used to be a movie short called "The March of Time." It was a kind of newsreel, and dealt with important current events. The march of time is a familiar idea, but it is altogether misleading. Time does not march. Time does not pass. We pass. Like a fast car running westbound on the Interstate, we pass mile marker after mile marker, but the markers don't move. We move.

On this interstate, there is no eastbound lane. We pass mile marker after mile marker, but we can never go back. We can't even stop. And this is one of the more profound truths of the Bible. We are rushing headlong through life. We are here for a little while, and then, we pass. "*Man, that is born of a woman*" said Job, "is few of days, and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down: he flees also as a shadow, and then he's gone." (Job 14:1-2)

A long time ago, God decided to impress upon all who would be his friends a lesson about time. He asked his friend Abraham to leave his home, his city, and the house he lived in. He promised him a city. Abraham made the journey, and he went without knowing where he was going. By faith, he lived in that new land, dwelling in tents. For the remainder of his natural life, Abraham never had a permanent home, never lived in a house. And

in so doing, he made a statement that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb 11:8-10)

What is so very striking about this is that Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and all the other examples cited, died in faith, *never having seen that city* (Heb 11:13-16).

It is so tempting to try to make a permanent home for ourselves along this highway. We would love to have a sense of permanence, but any such feeling is an illusion. We are here today, gone tomorrow, and nothing we can do will change that. The best we can do is to pitch a tent, a tabernacle, along the highway.

My Dad used to sing in a Stamps Quartet, and he dragged my mother and me all over the Ozarks to Gospel concerts and singing conventions. A lot of the Gospel music of that era had been written during the Depression, and it was very different from what you hear today. Both Southern Gospel music of that era and the Negro Spiritual had a theme in common that I didn't really understand at the time.

Over time, I grew to love both Gospel music and the Spiritual. The best religious music arises from hard times, you know. It arises out of a



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lost hope in this world, where the only hope that it is left is for a better world. I remember a song from my dad's quartet that says what I am trying to say. "O Lord, you know, I have no friend like you. If heaven's not my home, O Lord what will I do. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, and I *can't feel at home in this world any more.*"

Thus, I learned from my dad's music that this world was not my home. There are some themes in the Bible that the composers of Gospel music captured. Heaven was shorthand for the Kingdom of Heaven, of which Jesus spoke often. The Promised Land, Canaan, was a symbol for Heaven, as in the old hymn, "I am bound for the Promised Land." The Jordan River was the boundary between this world and the next. And that old song began: "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand and cast a wistful eye on Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie." Crossing Jordan was

death and resurrection: "When I come to the river at ending of day, when the last winds of sorrow have blown."

The wilderness wanderings were symbolic of this life with all its troubles and trials. Camping and "tabernacled" were symbols of the temporary life we have now. And the songs found hope, not in this world, but in the land across the river: "There's a land across the river, that they call the sweet forever. And we only reach that shore by faith's decree."

It is only natural that when times are good, we invest a lot of ourselves in this world. When times are hard and the days grow short, when we start to realize that all our hopes and dreams are going to end in death, that's when the music of our lives really begins to tell. The message of pain is that you are mortal, and that it is vain to place your hopes in the here and now. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1 Cor 15:19) [FX](#)

Heard a Good Message? *Understanding Spiritual Hunger*

Synopsis by
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Author of the *Field Guide to the Wild World of Religion*, Pam Dewey, explores the search for a "more real" experience with God in her seminar message, *Understanding Spiritual Hunger*.

While many mainstream churches are declining in membership, some religious groups are attracting thousands. If you wonder why some churches are growing, when others are nearly empty, this message will help you to understand the underlying needs that attract people to growing churches.

Millions of spiritually starving people are desperately searching for God. While these people are starving around us, we have not been reaching them with the truth. Pam reviews some of the practices in the more "popular" churches, and suggests innovative ways to share the true gospel. Especially helpful are the "Five Steps to Effective Personal Evangelism and Discipleship."

If you are looking for a tool to help in your spiritual outreach, Pam also offers a free resource, "Each One Teach One

Faith Networks is a voluntary effort by a group of individuals interested in promoting cooperation among the Churches of God and encouraging healthy relationships both within congregations and between them. Resources have been made available for the initial stages of Faith Networks by members of the Church of God Cincinnati.

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Discipleship Lessons.” The 16 lessons are described in this message, and suggestions are offered for how to use this tool to disciple new believers. They can be downloaded from the Internet at <http://www.youall.com/eoto.htm>.

Many of us have been taught that ministry is the job of the minister. Pam challenges this belief and exhorts church members to assume the role of “ministering” to the spiritual seekers around us. Learn what unbelievers need most from Christians, and how to effectively reach them one-on-one.

This message will inspire you and teach you how to serve the bread of life and living water to those around you who are hungering spiritually.

Learn more by requesting a free copy of this DVD message from Oasis Ministries, Pam and George Dewey, 4 Stonecreek Drive NW, Rome, GA 30165-1260 . Or contact Pam via email at her new email address: oasis777@comcast.net. 



To be ignorant
of what occurred
before you were
born is to remain
always a child.

—Marcus Tullius Cicero

Freedom and Liberty Part II: How Liberty Enables the Commission and Unity

America is losing its liberty, while few actually understand what the purpose of liberty is. As a result, our culture is collapsing, and a once-proud, prosperous nation is heading for despotism and ruin.

In a microcosm of the nation at large, the Christian church mirrors our culture—in some cases, on a more tyrannical level. The reason for this is that many with a mindset of authoritarian control have convinced enough brethren that they too are not to be trusted with liberty, and that freedom is how leadership defines it. In the church, this manifests itself by requiring obedience to sets of “rules,” extra-biblical and man-made, as the measure of what it means to be a Christian.

Many in the Sabbatarian Church of God culture have experienced, or are experiencing, the abuse that comes when liberty has been ceded to a powerful central government structure. Like all governments of men, it will ultimately regulate congregational and individual freedoms—for the sake of control.

True liberty requires the responsibility of each to conduct ourselves as Christ would have us, using our gifts as God leads and thus fulfilling our purpose as Christians in God’s Church. Not exercising our responsibility for liberty means we are leaving it up to someone else to dictate our conduct and purpose for us. The “pay, pray, and obey” model of some churches serves those who are ambitious for absolute authority and control but does little to empower the individual towards making fellow followers of Christ.



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True liberty is what the spirit in man yearns for, yet it is the hardest thing to achieve when one has been shackled to oppression. Indeed it is far easier and safer to attach oneself to the dictates of authoritarians than to take a risk for freedom.

Our founders understood that truth and even addressed it in our foundational document.

“...all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.” –The Declaration of Independence, 1776

What this means is that people by nature are willing to endure oppression and tyranny in any form rather than to take the responsibility and risk to free them of it.

Ancient Israel exemplified this disposition to tolerate evil. After suffering horrible slavery at the hand of the Egyptians and then being freed by God Himself from the yoke of bondage, they began to wish for a return to the same bondage under which they were accustomed in Egypt rather than face the risks that freedom brings.

This explains why some, even after complaining about authoritarian abuses of leadership, are content to continue suffering under those abuses. Others, seeing no other place to go, will endure the same. Some, of course, are loyalists to their church denomination or local congregation, and no amount of abuse, oppression, or tyranny from their

leadership will shake them from their support of it.

Sometimes however, after a long train of abuses, efforts grow to either change the oppressive leadership, or establish a new institution. This often happens only after an intolerable set of oppressive circumstances forces those with ideas contrary to the leadership out of the fellowship or into silence.

As in the early days of the American Revolution, there are arguments supporting oppression and the authoritarian controls of a central leadership, mostly centering on the subject of rebellion. The loyalists often cited Romans 13:1-7 as forbidding any Christian to rebel against any authority, even one that is oppressive and tyrannical. That argument usually wins the majority opinion. Less than a third of the colonists were actively engaged in risking their lives for liberty. As history often shows, the liberty of the majority is won by the blood and effort of a minority willing to risk it.

However, when you understand true liberty—where it comes from and what a Christian response should be in protecting that liberty—you begin

to understand how the passion of so few was able to challenge the mightiest empire on Earth and change the world.

According to the scriptures, "...He that rules over men **must** be just, ruling in the fear of God." (2 Sam 23:3) When taken in light of what the Apostle Paul states in Galatians 5:1, (RSV) "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery," it is evident that subjects of the Most High are to be submissive to those who are just and rule in the fear of God, but avoid being under the bondage of those who would interfere with their relationship with God.

Yes, the aspect of "slavery" in that verse is well understood to mean "sin." However, we understand that sin itself enslaves us, and we must understand that those of sin would seek to enslave the disciples of God and prevent Matthew 28:19 ("Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...") from taking place outside of a central governing authority of men. This understanding of true liberty is what empowered the colonists to stand together against the mightiest empire on earth—and win the day, and your liberty.



Liberty requires maturity. Most of the founding fathers were of differing religious denominations. Had the founders allowed the differences between their biblical understanding and practices become a litmus test of fellowship they would have never stood together on the **common foundation** they shared as Bible-reading Christians. Because they focused on the commonalities they shared, they took a stand against what they understood to be a direct threat to their God-ordained right as a Christian people to worship God as He had afforded them since the 1600's.

Sadly in this nation, that truth has been lost, and likewise, is in danger within the Church itself. When everything from calendar dates, head coverings, and other myriad doctrines become the primary focus of fellowship and interaction, it prevents unity with anyone in common foundation because the focus is on the differences and not on what unites us. Whether what unites us is Sabbath keeping or just plain belief in Christ as Redeemer, we can stand together against those things that truly pose a threat to our freedom, and find bridges of unity that we can all agree on in order to grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

Looking at the proofs of America's rise to greatness based in the foundation of liberty, we have a physical example to understand how liberty should work within the church in order to fulfill Our Lord's mission.

We must trust our brethren and neighbors with liberty. The tyranny of a minority is just as harmful as a tyranny of the majority.


Liberty and freedom require maturity in order to have them, responsibility

in order to maintain them, vigilance in order to preserve them, and morality in order to keep them.

Liberty is a gift from Jesus Christ, not only to His church, but to mankind itself, and the liberty given to us is based on the liberty to serve God and one another free from the shackles of sin and the oppression of men. This is an attribute of free moral agency that we understand God has ordained for us.

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another. Gal 5:13-15 (RSV)

That truth was to be the brick and mortar of this Republic. Liberty allows each mature Christian the ability to allow God's Spirit to move them towards using their spiritual gifts in service to others. Using our liberty to deprive others of theirs, because of disagreements with their particular understanding of either the scriptures or the constitution, results in endless backbiting and discord among brethren, as evidenced by the decline and discord in our nation today.

The independent Churches of God have been blessed with a great gift of Liberty. Let us not be like the Israelites who, after being freed from Egypt and led into the wilderness, wanted to return to Egypt. Let us not seek to return ourselves to the slavery to which we have become accustomed. Let us choose, instead, to remain free and serve our mighty God as He leads each one of us to fulfill His mission and purpose! 

That They Were Proud Of

Randi is a 17-year-old High School Senior. She shares the circumstances that led her to write the poem below:



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Last night I could not sleep...I was so upset about the things that have been being told to me at work. I work with teens and adults that are making poor choices in life, as we all do sometimes. But they are to the point where they almost seem proud to tell you what awful thing they had done the night before. I know our world is full of sin and evil, but I am so sad that is becoming something that people are proud of! I felt inspired to write about what I was feeling. A poem came out.

*And that they were proud of
Their addictions and crimes,
Boldly confessing the things
That they called "Good Times."*

*"I got smashed at twelve,
And partied all night,
I totaled a car,
And got in a fight."*

*"I took some of that,
Then I felt like I could fly,
But then I threw it all up,
And watched my best friend die."*

*"I am taking more tonight,
I need to ease this pain,
I'll drink till I can't see,
Till my own thoughts I can't explain."*

*"I'm watching my baby sister tonight,
But I didn't make it home,
I got in another fight,
But that's ok, she'll be all right."*

*"I will do these things,
Till the day I die,
I will fill that empty place,
That only wants to cry."*

*"Because I am better than that,
I don't need your help,
I can find my own way out,
I have bled and I have dealt."*

*"If I can't fill that space,
Then I will drown it out,
Throwing down all those pills,
Or drinking away the doubt."*

*If only they knew the pain they caused,
Mothers and fathers who stopped and paused,
Wondering what else they could have done,
Only wishing they could have saved their son.*

*To all of you, with addictions and pain,
Just know there are many who feel the same.*

*Don't let those things control you,
They are not going to ease your pain,
There is only one who can do that,
And His name is always the same.*

*I am trying to be real with you my friend,
To show you there's an open door, without an end.
I do not want to see your body abused,
You have a choice so don't choose to loose.*

*He paid a price for that door to be open,
So please take that step so you will be certain
He has a purpose and plan for your life—
Choose now my friend ... choose eternal life. FN*

Reading My Own Obituary

The sign on the marquee outside the funeral home in St. Clair, Missouri, read: “William Stough; graveside; Jefferson Barracks.” It had been posted July 13, 2007, and stayed there until Monday, July 16. In a town where I am well known this created quite a stir. Phone calls were being made to friends of mine asking what had happened. There had been no indication that anything had been wrong with me, but people can die very suddenly. That occurs commonly and can happen to any of us.

The obituary was actually referring to my 95 year old father who had just died and with whom I had been spending extensive time as his death approached. But in this community I am the one who is well known, and he is not. His name is also William, although I go by Bill. When a store in adjacent Union, Missouri, inquired if I were dead, I told them (as Mark Twain was once said to have declared), “The rumors of my death are greatly exaggerated.”



Nonetheless as I read that marquee, I thought about how that could be me. Indeed, one day I will be joining him.



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We don't like to think about it, but a wise person will occasionally meditate on the fact that death is in our future. It is wise to make our days count.

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart (Eccl 7: 2 NIV).”

God wants us to have our heads screwed on straight and seek him while we are alive. Note what Solomon writes in Eccl 12:1-2, 5-7:

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain; ... because man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: or ever the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

I once made a service call to a recently retired man, and he was showing me about his home and pointing out all the improvements he was making. Then he suddenly stated, “I wonder if I shouldn't be putting some time and effort into God and eternal life rather than just this house only?” He caught me by surprise, but we had a good discussion following that. Shouldn't we all listen to my customer's concern?

It's easy to get snared in the here-and-now, and Satan would love it to be that way. In Matthew 13, Christ gave the parable of the sower and the seed. He describes being overly- concerned with the cares of this life (verses 7-9 and 22). It is compared to thorns choking the growth of a plant. Always remember that this life is short, and something far more important lies ahead. Put efforts there and not just into the cares of this life. We each need to be a praying person and be involved in helping others. Use your gifts. Don't let fear paralyze you. Don't be stopped by the fact that "someone else can do it better." Do things anyway. We don't have forever in this life. Make it count.

What good is pursuing money? I have known so many who did nothing but that. But they died, and how did that money help them? What will they have when they come up in the resurrection? And what good is pursuing power and recognition in whatever personal form it takes for us? All these things will be gone when it is our name posted outside the funeral home.

Jesus wants us to seek him and his righteousness and let him be the

provider (Mat 6-33-34). If we do that, we don't have to be obsessed with what it takes to survive in the here-and-now.

David brings out the motivation an older person should have in Psalms 71: 17-18: "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come." (NIV)

Jesus knew he had a short time to do his work. He died before he was 34 years old. "As long as it is day we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:4-5)." (NIV)

We too must work on things that matter while it is day. When we die, it is night. Your name will at some future time be posted outside a funeral home.

God remembers us and what we have done. Job described it elegantly in Job 14: 14-15: "If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait for my renewal to come. You will call and I will answer you; you will long for the creature your hands have made." (NIV) [FN](#)



God's Boutique

When I was a student in the early 1960's, an executive secretary spoke to our women's group about dressing for work. Paraphrasing her advice, she told us we didn't have to have a different outfit for every day of the week. Our goal should be to dress appropriately and be clean, modest, neat, and well-groomed. This is good advice for any woman of any decade working at any job. The same advice works equally well for men.

God also has advice for his children about dressing well. His advice could be paraphrased in exactly the same way: Dress appropriately. Be clean. Be modest. Be neat. Be well-groomed.

Jesus told a story about a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. (Mat 22:1-14) Many of the people the king invited refused to come to his banquet, but the king found some who were willing. Still, among the guests, one man stood out.

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless." (Mat 22:11-12 ; NIV here and throughout)

The king had him thrown out. Jesus wasn't talking about a tuxedo made of luxurious fabric or a garment adorned with pearls, diamonds, and gold. Isaiah wrote about the garments God designed for his own to wear:

I delight greatly in the LORD; My soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10)

John wrote of the vision he saw and heard:

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (Rev 19:6-8)

From this passage we learn that God provides the garments, the bride makes herself ready, and the fine linen which is bright and clean represents the righteous acts of the saints.

The Apostle Paul illustrated how Christ gave himself for the church, in his instructions to husbands and wives. (Eph 6:22-33) Jesus makes those he loves holy, cleansing them "by the washing with water through the word." Because of Jesus, the church will have no stains, wrinkles, or any other blemish on her character. Our new garments provided through Jesus will be spotless. He provides the new clothes, but we have to put them on. Paul tells us, "Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27). To do that, we must love. (Rom 13:8-10) We must put aside doing evil and "put on the armor of light." (v. 12) We must "behave decently, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy." (v. 13)

Another part of God's clothing for us is humility. (I Peter 5:5-6) We must



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clothe ourselves with humility toward one another and toward God.

Our clothing is woven with “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Col 3:12) Forgiveness, love, peace, and gratitude provide a many-colored pattern of grace that honors our God. (Col 3:12-17)


There has to be an inner motivation for wearing these beautiful public garments. We need “the word of Christ” becoming a part of who we are and what we do.” (Col 3:12-17) Peter had some advice for women whose husbands were not Christians. This advice also works well for husbands who have wives who have not accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the

wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. (I Pet 3:1-4)

Humility, cooperation, purity, reverence, gentleness, and meekness are qualities God prizes in all of his children.

God’s garments aren’t too delicate for everyday wear. They are designed for a soldier’s work. God’s chosen people have a battle to fight. But our equipment and training does not resemble that of a nation’s military force. We are equipped with truth, righteousness, readiness provided by the good news of peace and reconciliation, faith, salvation, and the word of God. And besides all of that, we can call for reinforcements by prayer. (Eph 6:10-20)

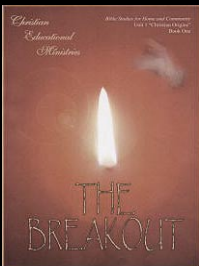
These garments are designed to fit well on everyone, male or female, old or young, short or tall, dark or light. God provides this beautiful wardrobe free of charge. All we have to do is put it on and follow our King into his kingdom. 

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Future history. The term sounds rather oxymoronic—two words that just don't go together. After all, history is in the past and the future is in—well, the *future*, of course. So how can you have something such as future history? Quite easily, it turns out, if you are willing to do a little speculating and stick your neck out by actually writing it down for others to read!

Robert Heinlein is widely considered to be one of the best science fiction writers of the 20th century. He constructed a detailed future history of the world which included a theocratic dictatorship in the United States. More recently, the various incarnations of *Star Trek* have constructed an outline of the future. In the *Star Trek* version, a devastating nuclear war in the middle of the 20th century almost wipes out the human race, but a few people do survive. A means for interstellar travel is invented, contact is made with extraterrestrials, and mankind unites to produce an era of unprecedented peace and prosperity on Earth.

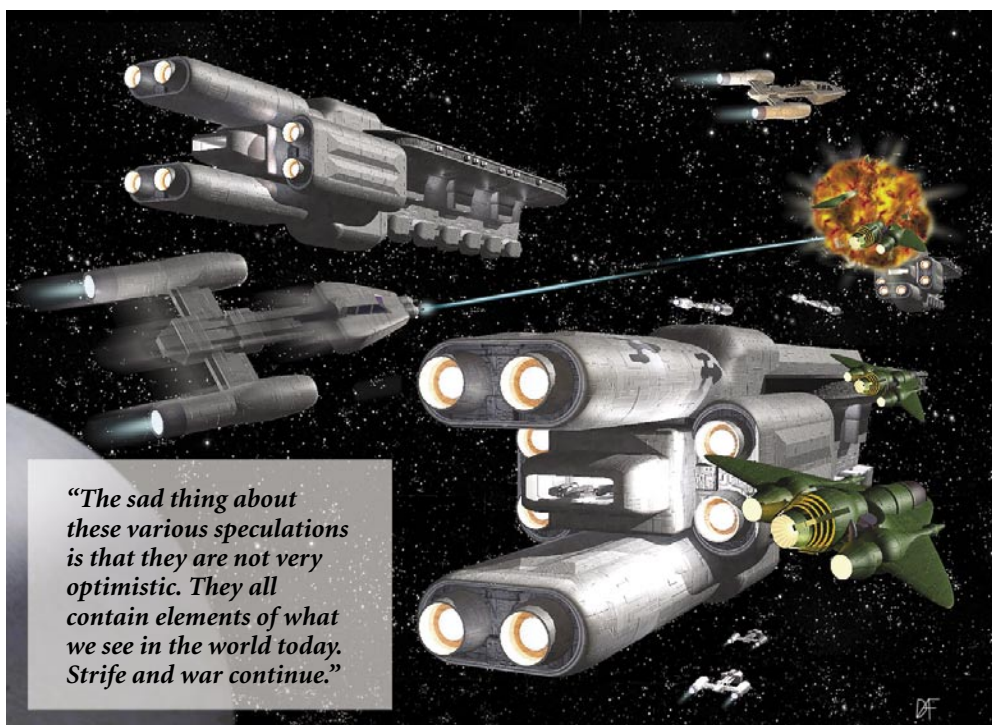
Arthur C. Clarke, another science fiction writer, outlined a darker vision of mankind's ultimate destiny. In 1953 he wrote a book entitled *Childhood's End*. In this story the world is taken over by a race of aliens called the Overlords. They outlaw war, and a utopian society is created on Earth. But it turns out that the Overlords are in service to an even greater cosmic intelligence which ultimately absorbs the human race, ending life as we know it and resulting in the destruction of the Earth.

Even scientists who have nothing to do with science fiction get into the act. Every now and then an article appears in

the media about the sun blowing up in five billion years. In reading such articles one cannot help but conclude that we have rather more immediate problems with which to deal. Five billion years is a long time. A more timely threat is the hypothetical asteroid that may slam into the Earth and wreak havoc. Such topics are for those who have nothing else to worry about.

The sad thing about these various speculations is that they are not very optimistic. They all contain elements of what we see in the world today. Strife and war continue. There may be peace on Earth, but humans still end up fighting the Klingons, the Romulans, the Borg, or whatever. All of that makes for entertaining fiction, but it is rather depressing to think that we are going to have largely the same problems with other planets and other civilizations that we have here now. And the thought that the human race may be absorbed into some mindless entity or perish when the sun blows up or when an asteroid hits the earth is not a particularly comforting one.

The real future of the human race is so wonderful, so stupendous, and so inspiring that most people would scarcely believe it. The real future of the human race is a dream, but a dream that is going to come true. It is a dream that has been placed in our hearts and minds by the spirit of God. It is a dream that we celebrate every week when we observe the Sabbath. It is a dream that we look forward to every year when we keep the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. It is a dream that sustains us when we endure our darkest trials and inspires us when things are going



well in our lives. It is the dream of not only the Kingdom of God on Earth for a thousand years but also what will come after that. And the details of that dream are so incredible that it can give you goose bumps when you stop to really consider them.

The real future of mankind is a world of peace and incredible prosperity for all. And beyond that is something even more fascinating: a time when the vast majority of the human race will have been born into the family of God and exist in a very different dimension than the one we inhabit now. It sounds like the wildest sort of science fiction, but God is going to bring it to reality. Someday we will break the bonds of

time and space that bind us to the earth and move out into the universe, traveling in an instant distances that are unfathomable to us now. We will not do this to do battle with aliens or to be part of some mindless entity, but to spread God's way throughout the entire creation. The Bible speaks of the creation groaning in anticipation of this effort. We see through a glass darkly now and we do not understand all of the details, but it will undoubtedly be the most amazing and fulfilling adventure that one could ever imagine. And it will last forever.

Now *that's* a future history worth getting excited about! [FN](#)

Stacey serves as a volunteer at Legacy Institute in Thailand. This is her second year there.

Well, the first semester is coming to an end, and I'm still standing. As with the previous year, this time is always insane. But, since no one had heard from me in a long time, I thought I'd try and hammer a letter out before the search party was sent.

The second week of August Erika and I took a trip to Laos for her visa run. We ran with our visas all over the city of Vientiane (capital of Laos) and the tiny town of Vieng Viang. While Vientiane had wonderful food (cafes and sandwiches and steaks and pizza, oh my!) for less than what fast food would cost back home, Vieng Viang was the more interesting of the two.

It is this itty bitty town tucked away by a clean, cool river next to these giant, mountainous rock formations. They are dark slate rocks that jut straight up out of the flat ground and have trees clinging to the sides of them. They also have caves! Erika and I went in search of a popular cave with a blue lagoon in it. After going so far into the cave we found that we were crawling army style, we figured out we had the wrong cave. But it was an exciting adventure nevertheless. We also went for a relaxing float down the river in giant tractor tire tubes. That turned into an adventure too when Erika got stuck among some reeds in the water. We found that was a good way to make friends, as the reeds ensnared another girl, and we ended spending the day with her and her friend.



I can't talk about Vieng Viang without mentioning one thing. One of the strangest of the town's quirks are the TV's in every restaurant, and most of these TV's are blaring episodes of "Friends" from the time they open to the time they close. Walking down the sidewalk all you hear is Joey, Rachel, or Phoebe causing a sudden blast of canned laughter that threatens to knock you over. And to prove that I'm not exaggerating, one restaurant chose to advertise the fact that it didn't play "Friends." You can find a picture of this advertisement, as well as other pictures from our trip, if you take this link: www.myspace.com/innobodywhoRu, and then click on "pics" and choose the "Loas 2007" album.



Being in Laos brought a strange realization to me. When I first arrived in Thailand I considered the people very happy and content. After living here for a year and then visiting Laos, a country not as wealthy, they seemed far less genuinely happy than their neighbor. Often in Thailand you get the feeling that the tourist workers are only interested in your money. In Laos it seemed they were still interested in the aspect of hospitality.

Back at the school, I have been setting fires both literally and figuratively. One day I managed to “pull a Stacey” and start a grease fire in the kitchen. It wasn’t until I had two pots in my hands on fire, and one on the stove, that I realized I wasn’t quite sure how to put out a grease fire. So I told God I was definitely going to need some help, and wouldn’t you know He’s a fireman! I turned around and the flames on the stove disappeared. I am no longer allowed to make french fries while checking e-mail though.



The figurative fire is the one I’ve been trying to stoke under my students. We have a rule that students can speak only English during school hours.



This seems to be extremely hard to remember, so one day I decided to make it more important to them. Instead of reminding them to speak English when I heard another language being spoken, I simply told them I would see them at five o’clock. Then I gave them a sentence to write fifty times before we could eat dinner.

Now, I thought for sure I was going to have some attitudes to deal with or at least a few cold shoulders. What I got instead shocked me. There were smiles and giggles and “Thank you’s.” Since when did punishment make you happy? It was a far better outcome than I’d hoped for. They are not perfect at it yet, but now they try harder, and that’s all I ask for. We have a really good group of students here.

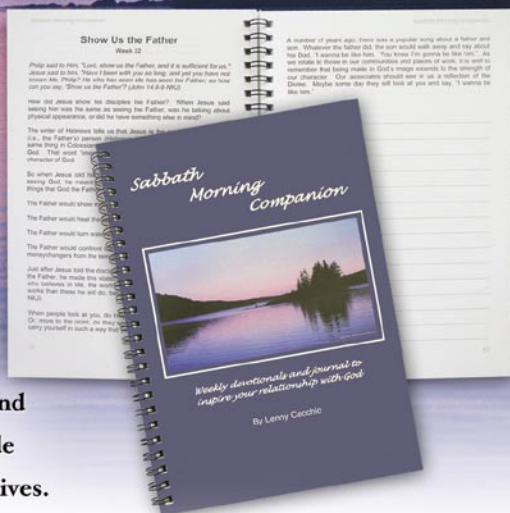
And I get to show them off soon! With September already here, the Feast of Tabernacles arrives and with it my parents and my aunt and some good friends. I can hardly wait. My own anticipation is spreading to the students... Another fire I suppose. [FN](#)

Sabbath Morning Companion

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It's All About ...

Fathom the mind of the devil, if you dare. Here is a being who stands in contradiction to all we call holy and good, one who gave himself fully to the dark side. C.S. Lewis once wrote, "Bad angels, like bad men, are entirely practical. ... Even in human life we have seen the passion to dominate, almost to digest, one's fellow; to make his whole intellectual and emotional life merely an extension of one's own—to hate one's hatreds and resent one's grievances and indulge one's egoism through him as well as through oneself. His own little store of passion must of course be suppressed to make room for ours. If he resists this suppression he is being very selfish." (Preface to The Screwtape Letters)

Lucifer in the space of two verses of Isaiah 14 uses the perpendicular pronoun five times.

In other words, it's all about him. Rick Warren begins his best selling book *The Purpose Driven Life* with a warning worthy of our age: "It's not about you."

And it's not. God did not grant us life for the purpose of exalting ourselves. We are mere specks of dirt on a tiny planet circling a middling star on the edge of a middling galaxy. When I gaze at the wonders of the night, I marvel along with the Psalmist: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:3-4 NKJV)

Indeed, what could an all-powerful Being possibly see in us that He would "make Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the

point of death, even the death of the cross"? (Phil 2:6-9 NKJV)

Frankly, folks, I'm not worth that much, and I am certainly not worthy of being a co-heir with Christ. Neither am I worthy of being called a child of God, but that's exactly how the Book refers to us who accept God's gift of eternal life (Romans 8). If the Book means what it says, then as co-heirs we are to inherit everything that Jesus inherits, which is "all things" (Hebrews 2:10), including those stars I gaze at on those dark, crisp evenings. It is right to dream about galaxies far, far away, for God has put that desire in our hearts.



Lenny Cacchio
Missouri
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What is man that You are mindful of him?

Even though He has the right to be called the I AM, He desires not to hoard power and position and control to Himself, but instead has created the universe to share. It could be all about Him, but the Great Center of the Universe has decreed otherwise. By doing so, He made it all about us, but that only works if we make it all about Him. That dilemma is the real meaning of love. [FN](#)

Schedule of Events

Friday, December 21st

7:00 pm	Young Adult/Teen Get Together	Marriott Dixiana
7:30 pm	Dr. Bacchiocchi	Marriott Ballroom
7:30 pm	PJ & Pals Story Time	Marriott Lane's End
7:30 pm	Young Adult/Teen Discussion	Marriott Dixiana
9:15 pm	Music Fest	Marriott Ballroom

Sabbath, December 22nd

9:00 am—9:45 am	1 st Session Seminars	Marriott Hotel
10:00 am—10:45 am	2 nd Session Seminars	Marriott Hotel
10:30 am—12:00 noon	Young Adult/Teen Seminar	Marriott Hotel
10:00 am—11:45 am	Children's Classes	Marriott Hotel
11:00 am—11:45 am	Dr. Bacchiocchi	Marriott Hotel
12:00 noon	Lunch	
2:30 pm	Sabbath Services	Marriott Hotel
	Dinner	
7:00 pm—11: pm	Family Activity/Music	Marriott Hotel
7:30 pm	Legacy Institute	Marriott Hotel

Sunday, December 23rd

9:00 am—7:00 pm	Basketball	KBA
9:00 am—7:00 pm	Volleyball	KBA
TBA	Gymnastics	Omni Center
TBA	Soccer/Flag Football	Kentucky Indoor
1:00 pm—5:30 pm	Children's Games	KBA
7:30 pm—11:00 pm	Youth Rally	Marriott Hotel

Monday, December 24th

9:00 am—6:00 pm	Basketball	KBA
9:00 am—6:00 pm	Volleyball	KBA
1:00 pm—5:30 pm	Children's Games	KBA
7:00 pm—1:00 am	Family Dance	Marriott Hotel

* Schedule subject to change—check Tournament Brochure on arrival

Housing at the Lexington Family Tournament

Housing for the Winter Family Tournament in Lexington, Kentucky is arranged at the beautiful Griffin Gate Marriott Resort & Spa. This four-star resort has recently gone through a complete renovation adding a brand new professional Spa. Rooms normally rent for \$179 per night but are available for the low flat rate of only \$50 per night at the Winter Tournament. Just mention the Church of God when you call the Marriott at **800-391-6690** to get the special rate. Free shuttle service is available from the Lexington airport.

The Marriott is located at 1800 Newtown Pike, just off exit #115 of I-75 in Lexington, Kentucky just minutes from the most beautiful and celebrated horse farms in the world.



The Spa at Griffin Gate

Members of the Church of God attending the Winter Family Tournament can take advantage of a brand new attraction. The Spa at Griffin Gate is a step up in luxury for those attending. You're welcome to come a day early and rejuvenate the body with an Aromatherapy Massage or maybe a tranquil facial to renew the skin. Or indulge yourself with a Hot Stone Massage, a wrap, scrub, or maybe a manicure or pedicure. Come a day early or stay an extra day at the same low rate and pamper yourself in the quiet atmosphere of professional manicurists and trained therapists. Spa appointments are required. To make an appointment, please call 859-288-6175 or email griffingatespa@marriott.com.

Dr. Bacchiocchi to Speak at Tournament

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi may be the most widely recognized scholar who has made a life's work of defending the Sabbath. He is the first non-Catholic to graduate at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome earning the distinction of *summa cum laude* and receiving a gold medal from Pope Paul VI. He has authored several books on the Sabbath that have received outstanding reviews. On Friday evening December 21st he will speak at the opening session of the Winter Family Tournament in Lexington, Kentucky. He will also conduct a seminar on Saturday morning at 11:00 am.





Winter Family Tournament 2007

Lexington

Come join us at the Winter Family Tournament in Lexington, Kentucky beginning Friday evening December 21st and running through late Monday night, December 24th.

You will have the opportunity to hear such outstanding speakers as Ron Dart, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, Bronson James, Guy Swenson, Bill Jacobs, Pam Dewey and Dave Havis.

To make reservations at the Four Star Griffin Gate Marriott Resort in Lexington call 1-800-391-6690. Be sure to mention the Church of God to get the specially discounted rate of only \$50 per night.

Check it out at www.cogcincinnati.com/tournament to register and get more information.

See you in Lexington!

Details on previous pages.>

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