

"So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Eze. 34:12 Jer. 32:39

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished." Rev. 10:7 Matt. 24:31

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 41 October 2011 No. 10



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

*"I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord."*

Psalm 122:1

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

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This monthly religious journal is published for the benefit of the Church of God universally. It is our supreme purpose to reach the world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to reveal the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error, war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding traditions of men that have no biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matt. 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21, Eph. 4)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matt. 28:19-20; John 13:1-5; 1 Cor. 11:23, 34)
- Eternal life (Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7, 8)

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
- Final rewards (Rev. 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- Bible name of the Church (Acts 20:28; Gal. 1:13; John 17:11)

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Fall 2011 Camp Meeting Report

Psalm 65:4 reads, "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." What a joy and a blessing it was to be together again with God's people during the Fall Camp Meeting. This meeting was well attended as we enjoyed sitting in a godly atmosphere, feasting on the heavenly manna that came down from above. Our souls were fully satisfied as we fed on the goodness of God. Nothing compares with dwelling in His courts and visiting with the saints who came in from near and far. We were as the Psalmist said, "Blessed . . . satisfied with the goodness of thy house."

Words always seem to fall short when explaining all that our hearts feel and our eyes witness during these times of refreshing. It was a fulfilling and rewarding time. God is always pleased when His people gather together for fellowship and to worship Him. As saints of God, we need our spirits renewed, our hearts encouraged, our minds stirred, and our souls challenged. It is necessary for everyone to keep pressing the battle onward and upward toward the goal in these troublesome days in which we live. Satan is diligently working to discourage and destroy souls. He wants to separate the saints from God and from one another, if possible.

Time after time, our hearts were blessed and our cups were made to overflow as the Lord moved in the services in miraculous ways. What an inspiration and uplift it was to be in the presence of God as He permeated the atmosphere! The camp meeting is past, yet the precious memories and the time spent together will not be forgotten. When the Spirit of God moves in the midst, it is

like the wind that blows. We cannot see the Spirit of God with the natural eye, but the mighty effects can surely be seen and felt as He moves through.

The Lord prepared a bountiful table for His people during this meeting. The table that the Lord spreads always provides adequately for the needs of the people. It is wonderful how gloriously God provides for the needs of those who trust Him. He gives milk to the newborn convert, which helps him to gain strength and become strong. He offers honey to encourage those who are going through bitter conditions of persecutions and trials. He sends strong meat to satisfy the hungry soul of the mature Christian. God most graciously sends conviction to the lost souls who are groping in sin, seeking a better way to live. Because of His wooing the lost hearts, we witnessed several individuals being delivered from the bondage of sin, for which we are most grateful.

In 1 Corinthians 1:21 Paul tells us that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." God has chosen a way to supply the spiritual needs of man, and that is through the preaching of the Gospel. When the Word of God is sounding forth with power, with clarity, and with anointing, it will produce a work in the hearts of all those who will believe it and obey it. The Word of God will save the soul and cleanse the inner man from all filthiness and corruption. His Word was not lacking during this camp meeting. Faithful men of God boldly proclaimed the wonderful Words of Life, telling us how to live a more perfect, productive, and pleasing life before the Lord. Hopefully, as we move forward in this life, we will allow God to draw us to a closer walk with Him and to be used of Him in a greater way.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

What the Bible Says About Halloween



Brother Roger L. Decker

"Try the Spirits"

One sure way to try a spirit, or to prove a spirit, is to use the Word of God. The Spirit of God and the Word of God operate together. What the Word publishes, the Holy Spirit backs up. Not everything that takes place is of God, whether it is in the church world or in the world, even though it may seem to be religious and even though it may seem to be innocent.

We want to look at what the

Bible has to say about Halloween, because the Bible is very explicit along certain lines. I want to reveal to you its origin and show you what is behind it, and then you can get direction from the Lord for your family.

Halloween is a holiday for the devil. As far as being a money-maker, many retailers call Halloween the second Christmas, because of the revenue it brings. Americans spent about two billion dollars on Halloween candy last year. Some

households spend nothing at all, while others spend more, but the average is about fifty-two dollars for Halloween. Some Halloween specialty stores open in the fall of the year, and they close after Halloween. In those stores, they sell all kinds of masks, costumes, scary things, and skeletons. Some of the restaurants have scary displays and skeletons. Retailers would not even consider Halloween specialty stores if there was no money in it. Halloween is getting more and more

recognition as time goes on. It may seem innocent enough, but we should not want to celebrate anything that exalts the devil. Halloween is devilish. Nothing about it is Christian or Christian based.

The early Christians stood against Halloween. It is supposedly a time of witches, ghosts, and goblins. It is also a night of merrymaking, superstitious spells, games, and pranks. In some countries it is a strict religious occasion with extra masses and prayers at the graves of departed relatives and loved ones.

Halloween's origin is a combination of druid practices and Roman religious beliefs. The customary foods are nuts and apples. Other important parts of Halloween are black cats, witches, skeletons, brooms, and ghosts. It is a gathering time for all evil. It finds its outlet in witchcraft cults, devoted to the worship of Satan. Supposedly, they say witches fly on broomsticks. There are pictures of witches flying through the sky on broomsticks. It is a time when the world of evil is closer than any other time of the year.

Someone may say: "What difference does it make? The children love to dress up and be trick-or-treaters." It is a matter of Truth against error, light against darkness. It is also a matter of what God approves of and disapproves of. We need to know what God thinks about it. Never mind what little children think. Little children usually follow their parents.

Abominations to the Lord

Let us look in the Bible. To see what God thinks about divination. Exodus 22:18 reads, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In Deuteronomy 18:9-14 we read: "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that

useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do."

Second Chronicles 33:1-6 states: "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen [it is the heathens who become diviners and magicians], whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.



"Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used

witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger."

Second Kings 23:24 says, "Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilki-ah the priest found in the house of the LORD."

In the Old Testament we can also read of King Saul. Saul got away from the Lord and wanted to get some council. He could not get council from Samuel anymore, so he went to a witch. We read in 1 Chronicles 10:13-14: "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

Satan's Devices

It has been estimated that there are at least four hundred fifty identifiable satanic groups in the United States alone. No doubt, that has increased by now, perhaps even doubled. What are some of Satan's devices? Have you ever heard of the game *Dungeons and Dragons*? You need to stay away from it. I once read a book about it, and it was a true story by the author who investigated it. She had a son who was graduating from high school. She never realized that anything was going on in his life. He was a good student, and he was very well-behaved.

One night the woman and her husband came home and found him dead in the driveway. At the funeral, she thought: "What in the world is going on? Why are all the young people so quiet?" She started

asking the young people questions, but they would not tell her anything. Finally, she found out about this game that they played called *Dungeons and Dragons*. She entered a college and learned this game really well.

By studying this game and talking to people, she found that rape, murder, and extreme violence resulted from participating in this game. In the game there is a master involved, and you have to carry out whatever the master says. The young man who died turned to suicide. His mother had no inkling of anything wrong in his life. She did not know that he was even involved in such a game until she investigated it after his death. Of course, the young people wanted to keep their little network going, so they refused to say anything; finally, she found out about it.

What else is involved with Satan? Heavy metal music and rock music are breeding grounds for satanic groups and all kinds of evil. Those who are involved in and listen to that kind of music do not care how these groups are dressed. We know about John Lennon and the Beatles. In a statement that was controversial, he supposedly said that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus Christ; but on December 8, 1980, Mark David Chapman murdered John Lennon, the ex-Beatle and rock superstar. What did he do? He waited several hours outside John Lennon's apartment in the Dakota building and emptied a revolver into him.

There is a lot of evil in rock music. People get worked up in a frenzy, and there are no bounds as to what could happen next. Years ago in Upstate New York, I witnessed a concert there. It was at a Grand Prix road race track, and they had such rock groups as the Living Dead. They played rock music all night long.

My brother-in-law worked there, and one of his jobs was to clean up after the events held there. He said you would not believe what

he saw when he went there to clean up after that concert. He said that horrible and disgusting debris was left all over those grounds. During the concert there was looting and stealing, and people were getting wasted on alcohol and drugs. Some farmers near there lost livestock. Some concert goers went into the farmers' fields and butchered livestock and roasted them. There are no boundaries when people get worked up in a frenzy.

There is a rock band named Kiss. They look devilish in their appearance. Mixed in with these rock groups are drugs. Then there are Ouija boards, Tarot cards, palmistry, the reading of tea leaves, astrology, and horoscopes. Have you ever wondered what your horoscope was? A person takes the month in which he is born, looks up his particular astrological sign, and reads about things that are supposed to happen for that sign.

The movie industry is going full speed ahead to put on the screen the most violent, disgusting, absurd movies. They have produced movies such as *Friday the 13th*, *Seven Doors of Death*, *The Evil Dead*, *Prom Night*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *Madman*, *Halloween*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

The Origins of Halloween

How did the Halloween holiday get introduced into the United States? It has its roots in an annual festival that takes place on October 31. Everything has its root in something, and Halloween has its root in pagan customs. The name Halloween comes from the Catholic tradition derived from All Hallows' Eve. October 31 is the eve of All Hallows' Day, better known as All Saints' Day. This is the day when the church celebrates and remembers the lives of the saints, and that takes place in some third-world countries. Those who practice voodoo have their festivities one day, and the Roman Catholics have theirs the next day. It is actually a national holiday to Haiti. The stores and

other businesses are closed.

All Hallows' Eve is a secular celebration based on ancient druid customs, dating back to B.C. 700 The Druids, a Celtic religious order on an ancient British island, believed that the souls of the dead returned to mingle with the living on All Hallows' Eve, October 31. Each year on that night the Druids built bonfires and sacrificed their crops and animals. Individuals dressed in costumes to disguise themselves from spirits.

Halloween was first celebrated in the United States in the 1840's when some Irish Catholics who were fleeing a potato famine brought Halloween customs with them to America. The tradition of carving jack-o'-lanterns originated with the Irish children who first carved out the centers of rutabagas, turnips, and potatoes and placed candles inside. This symbolized a mythical ghost, said to be doomed to walk the earth forever because he had angered both God and the devil. The new Americans found that pumpkins made better jack-o'-lanterns than the other items they had used in Ireland.

Let us talk about our schools a minute. The public schools have abandoned prayer, but they have elevated Halloween parties. Why? That is what the people want. The schools go along with what the people want. Also, coming across our borders are Islamic religious people, and the schools are making a place for the Islamic religion. I am not saying that against the people, but I am saying that against the system of religion. The city of New York shuts down traffic on certain streets while Islamic people pray at a certain hour of the day. On the other hand, if Christians were to lift up their voices in a public place, they would be arrested. This is actually happening.

People once stood against Halloween as pagan, but in time people became accustomed to it and accepted it. I am sure that today many innocent people take part in Halloween. Not everybody who is

involved in that celebration is satanic, but there are places that are satanic. The spirit of Halloween is not Christian. Halloween is the devil's night, and in Haiti it is considered to be one of the most prominent holidays.

One day when we were driving through the city of Port au Prince, Haiti, the voodoo were out marching. They had their boom boxes with music playing, they were drinking wine, and lewd dancing was going on. They were marching straight to the cemetery. At the cemetery, they cleaned up the cemetery and cooked food there to try to appease the spirits of the dead.

When speaking of Halloween, you may say, "What about the children?" My answer to that is, "What about the Word of God?" When you have to deal with tough things, God always makes a way so that you can deal with it. I bring the

message as informative. This message is for the church. This is for people who have the Spirit of God, because others may not receive it. People need the Spirit of God to receive these things.

When I was a young man growing up, I knew of a man who was killed because someone laid a straw dummy in the road on Halloween. Before the pranksters could jerk it out of the way, the man swerved, thinking it was a real person lying in the road, and he was killed.

What does God say about your celebrating a day dedicated to the worst foe in the Bible? Halloween is Satanic. Satan has fought against that which is right since Adam and Eve. The devil will tempt you and get you into trouble. Would you then turn around and celebrate his day? Are *you* going to celebrate him? The devil is the one who is getting

you into trouble, running evil thoughts through your mind, and pumping up the flesh. You need to think about it.

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Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no

whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Will Your Marriage Vows Last in the Cyber Age?



Brother Richard Talbot

Living in a Dangerous Age

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the presence of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God." In a wedding ceremony, a father is not discharged from his duties until after he hears the groom say, "I will" to the charge that he is given. "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together after God's holy ordinance, in the holiest state of matri-

mony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto her so long as you both shall live?" The bride's father is still standing there as the guardian of his daughter, waiting to hear the groom say, "I will."

When the groom says "I will," then the preacher asks, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" There is a charge to the woman as well. "Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together [that means to live together after

God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony], wilt thou love him, comfort him, keep him in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him so long as ye both shall live?" The bride replies, "I will."

Next are the vows to the groom: "I _____, take you _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish forever and always according to God's holy ordinance. And to this I promise you." These are precious words.

Then come the vows to the bride: "I _____, take you _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish forever and always according to God's holy ordinance. And to this I promise you." What powerful words!

We have come through many eras of time. We have come through the era of rock 'n' roll, hard rock, and heavy metal. This crazy music that has swamped the world has affected many people's ideas of marriage. Sad to say, what goes on out in the world too often has a way of filtering in to the saints. Some people have been raised without television in the home. I was raised that way, and we raised our children that way as well. Today we are facing something in this age that pales in comparison to television. We are living in a very dangerous age. Our marriages are under attack, and Satan is on the move to separate a man from his wife. We need God in a great way.

I do not see any way to avoid the Internet. It is going to be with us until Jesus returns or until something else takes its place. Therefore, we must learn how to deal with it. The Internet is fast becoming the newest threat to successful marriages. It opens the door to private pursuing of temptations that one would never think of considering in the open. Society is concerned with the effect that the Internet is having on the sanctity of marriage. I want to quote an article written by a journalist, whose insight surprised me. The article states:

Infidelity has been around as long as civilization has existed, and the Internet is still but a tiny blip in the long, jaded history of adultery. But the Internet is also arguably the biggest threat to relationships that has come along since the birth of marriage, and it's here to stay. . . .

These days, cheating and engaging in other secretive behaviors that could lead to infidelity have become

easier than setting up a Wii.

Technology is not just enabling secretive behavior, but it is accelerating it at a record pace: Flirtatious friendships, emotional affairs, the return of the ex, sexting, online porn, and cyber sex—with each new advance in technology comes a new way to deceive, and more and more of us are increasingly leading "digitally double lives"

You may not agree, but in my opinion too many people wait far too long to follow their instincts, and relationships that could have been saved had issues been nipped in the bud are instead decimated to bits and bytes.

With the Internet too many people hide behind their "right to privacy," when what they're really trying to protect is their right to *secrecy*. But nobody should have that liberty.

The moment you have something to hide—the moment you write an email that you don't want your partner [your wife or your husband] to see, the moment you're uncomfortable talking on the phone in front of your partner, the moment you have to delete your Internet history before getting off your computer, the moment you have to set up a special email address for certain correspondences, the moment you're uncomfortable sharing your passwords—that's when the trouble begins.

In a healthy relationship there should be *nothing* to hide. If someone is hiding something, then they should be found out, not because they need to be penalized or humiliated, but because transparency and honesty are central to a healthy relationship.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't respect your partner's privacy, but respect first and foremost demands a foundation of trust. For example, I have one password for all of my various email accounts and my wife knows what it is. Does she ever use it? I doubt it, but I can't say for sure. And she's welcome to sift through my emails anytime she likes.

When I read that article, it really got hold of me. This was a man of the world sensing such

a terrible danger affecting marriages. I do not want to focus so much on the negative aspects of the Internet and forget the positive. Jesus is still the answer to every problem. He is the answer for marriages in trouble. Where love is lost, Jesus Christ has been known to revive and restore that love. Where He can find repentance and forgiveness, He can do a great work in the home.

Keeping Love a Powerful Force in Marriage

I want you to let me reason with you during this message and let the Spirit of God help to insure that the holiness of marriage is not broken or sacrificed on the altar of self-indulgence. Ephesians 5:3-5 reads: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Some very powerful Scriptures in the Word of God warn of the dangers of being lured into evil, lustful temptations of the flesh. The Word of God is filled with warnings to protect us. If you will use God's "GPS system," He will protect you if you want to be protected.

In dealing with these thoughts, you must remember that you answer to a just God who knows every thought and every feeling and who understands the motives and the intents of the heart and mind. I am thankful for that. We face a just God who knows us inside and out. We need to learn to cultivate love and to keep love a really powerful and vital force in marriage. You need to work to keep love alive and strong in your home. You must keep your eyes, your mind, your heart, and your remarks entirely for the one to whom you made your marriage

vows. No one is justified to feel that since no actual act was committed that he or she is home free, so to speak. No, you are not. When there has been playing around in the mind and in meditation, and when those thoughts have prepared the body for pleasurable fulfillment, you are guilty before God.

No husband or wife should ever be made to feel that he or she has to compete with someone else for his or her spouse's attention. No husband or wife should ever be put into a situation wherein he or she feels competition with somebody else. If a wife thinks: "My husband really talks nicely to her. I wish he would talk to me like that," trouble is brewing. You should not put your spouse in that position.

When I read about Lot's daughters and sons-in-law mocking him and laughing at him when he tried to warn them and about his wife looking back and becoming a pillar of salt, I think of how Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. I cannot help but believe that when Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, in effect, he told his family, "Do not be affected by it," but his tent was already pitched in that direction. It was double talk, as if he was saying, "Do not go there or get involved with anything there, but it sure looks nice over there." Husband, you need to be very careful as the head of the home. You need to keep your home centered on Jesus Christ.

A Spanish proverb says, "He who does not honor his wife dishonors himself." If you do not honor your wife, you are dishonoring yourself. The true love you should feel toward your spouse is never selfish, but it is always seeking for the things that please him or her. True love for your spouse is not selfish or self-centered all the time. A true spouse is always looking to see how he or she can please the other. First Corinthians 7:33 reads, "But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. . . . but she that is married careth for the things of

the world, how she may please her husband." When the husband and the wife are pleasing each other perfectly with all their hearts, it is difficult to have a lack of love.

"The Ways of Man Are Before the Eyes of the Lord"

Our Scripture text states in verses 3-4: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." According to *Strong's Concordance*, the word *fornication* refers to the thought of harlotry, including adultery and incest. *Uncleanness* refers to the thought of impurity, physically or morally. *Covetousness* refers to greediness that is fraudulent extortion. *Filthiness* refers to shamefulness; that is, obscenity. *Foolish talking* refers to silly talk and making fun, usually making light of situations at other people's expense. *Jesting* means well turned, that is, ready at priority, witticism, always having a quick comeback or answer, to joke your way around unfavorable situations.

The Apostle Paul was not meaning that Christian men should always be grave and serious. The mind needs to rest as well as the body. There is a time to play and a time to work. Amusement has its legitimate place in the intellectual life. The mind is subject to strain; it will strain its strength and can be broken down. The bright flashes of wit and pleasant gems of a kindly humor may be as meaningful and harmless as the play of the sunlight among the trees. The Apostle Paul described jesting as not befitting. It is a kind of conversation that reaches perfection in a civilized society that has no faith in God and no reverence for moral law. This is what the Apostle Paul was talking about.

Verse 5 of our Scripture text reads, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idola-

ter, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." The word *whoremonger* refers to prostitution. Such a person is addicted to excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures. An *unclean person* is impure, ceremonially, morally lured or specifically demonic, foul, and unclean. A *covetous man* is one who holds desire more than being eager for gain; a defrauder.

In Proverbs 5:18-23 Solomon wrote: "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. [No matter how old you are, you should rejoice with the wife of your youth. He did not say to rejoice with your wife while she is young. He was saying that you ought to rejoice with the person whom you married many years ago. You should rejoice with the one whom you married when you were both young.]

"Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. [The word *ravished* means to be overwhelmed with deep and pleasurable feelings or emotions. Whose love should you be ravished with? It ought to be with the wife of your youth. It is not some fantasy of the mind, something you read in a magazine, or something you may see. You should be satisfied, pleased, and overwhelmed with emotion and pleasurable feelings for the wife of your youth.]

"And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? [Why would you do that? When an individual takes another into his arms and whispers sweet things in her ear, physically or mentally, kisses, embraces, and speaks of love, then the holy vows have been violated; he is in violation of the Word of God. Whether an actual act has taken place or not, he has crossed the line.] For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with

the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."

You should keep yourself from yielding to Satan's vast armed arsenal of fleshly temptations. When you said your marriage vows, you made a promise before God, before people, and to each other that you would love, honor, and cherish each other until you part in death. Have you faithfully kept your marriage vows? Have you kept yourself only to her or to him as you move through the daily trials and temptations that come your way? You may be very conscious of keeping the body pure so that you can feel good about saying, "I have never violated my marriage vows." Have you kept your mind, your meditations, your heart's feelings, and your emotions as they should be before God and your companion?

Showing Honor and Respect to Each Other

We read in Ecclesiastes 9:9, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun."

Colossians 3:19 tells us, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Ephesians 5:33 states, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." The word *reverence* means "to regard or to treat with reverence, or respect." The synonyms of this word are honor, esteem, and adore. The opposite of this is contempt. You have either one or the other working. Do you honor your spouse or do you hold him or her in contempt?

Again, Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." In this Scripture the Apostle Paul lets you know that a husband can get upset

with the wife, and Paul instructs the husband not to get bitter against her. No matter how the wife treats you, husband, you have to keep loving her. I am talking about Christian homes where both the husband and the wife are saved. I realize there are all kinds of marriages where people are not saved, and many marriages are in trouble. However, when two people are saved, these things should not be.

I have been pastoring long enough to know that not every home is as it should be. What may seem to be beautiful and rosy is not always that way. There is a process that leads to adultery. There are things that help push, tempt, and draw a person across the line. You need to be spiritually alert and sharp enough to realize what is taking place and stop it. If you need help, you can get help from God. If you need to talk to somebody, you should talk to your pastor. You need to get help for yourself. Do not persist in trying to handle it by yourself. If you do not get the help you need, it is going to take you across the line; then you will have more trouble and more problems to deal with.

One thing that you need to be cautious of is too much familiarity with the opposite sex, which can occur when families spend too much time together in close quarters or in camping together. This can be a seedbed for trouble. You may laugh and say, "That cannot happen to us," but things can get out of hand with too much closeness. In a home where love has grown stale and the husband does not feel anything for his wife or the wife does not feel anything for her husband, these are signs of trouble. The loss of appreciation for each other or the loss of feeling a need for each other are also signs of trouble. A spirit of independence can come in, especially in this day and age when many wives are getting educations and working outside the home. The Bible still teaches that the wife is to be a keeper at home. That is the rule, and there is a reason for it. Some couples

say, "We could obtain so much more if both of us work." If you break the rule, you need to make sure that it is due to need and not greed.

Established Principles of God's Word

God established the principles of His Word for a reason. Trouble begins when one fails to hear the other when he or she speaks of having emotional needs or feelings. The husband may try to express something to his wife, and she may brush it off, thinking, "Oh, that isn't important." Something can happen inside that man. He needs his wife; he needs her to have feelings for him. The wife may try to talk to the husband about her emotional needs or her weaknesses. Remember, the wife is the weaker vessel. There are things with which the wife may struggle that the husband does not understand. If he shuns or pushes her away, they are not going to have that feeling of pulling together, as real love must do to keep a home and a marriage functioning well.

Mark 10:6-9 tells us: "But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female [God did not make them male and male or female and female, but He made them male and female for a reason]. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Man has invented many things in this Internet age, and these are the things with which we are dealing. These things are putting asunder many homes and marriages. Do not let it happen to you! If Satan can detect a little weakness in your life, you can be sure that he is going to do everything he can to drive a wedge in between you and your spouse to break apart your home. Jesus sanctioned a wedding ceremony with His presence and honored it with His first miracle. He

thought very highly of the marriage of a man and a woman.

First Peter 3:1-7 reads: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise [in the same manner of principle], ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge. . . ."

As a husband, you should not become disgusted with your wife, browbeat her, or verbally abuse her. You may never lay your hand on your wife, but if you chop her down with your words, that is just as abusive, and that is sad. Now, the wife should be obedient to her husband; that is a Bible teaching. A wife seldom has a problem with a husband who really loves her. When he respects her and labors to keep her, she respects him, and there is perfect togetherness.

Sometimes the husband may get upset or the wife may get upset about something that the husband decides, but that is a part of life. It is not a reason to dissolve the marriage. They need to settle down, work it out, and then go right on loving each other and not become bitter with each other. The husband and the wife should be able to go to bed at night with good feelings toward each other. You would be surprised at how many times

a husband and wife cannot lie down together because of bitterness and hurt feelings. This should not be.

Our Daily Living

The latter part of 1 Peter 3:7 says to give "honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, [Remember, her emotional makeup is different than a man's. She needs a husband who will try to understand her.] . . . that your prayers be not hindered." How important it is to have a godly marriage, to have a home where God is, and to have a husband and a wife who know the value of prayer! How important prayer is to keep the avenues clear so that nothing interferes with your prayer life and your contact with God. We have a tremendous responsibility. Satan wants to interfere with your prayer life. He will work any kind of trickery that he can to get you to stop praying or to cause you to feel that you are not worthy to pray because of how you have treated your spouse.

First Peter 3:9-12 reads: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." How often in life is a wife hammered into submission? She most likely would have no trouble if she had the proper kind of husband. Husband, you should not fail in this great responsibility.

Peter covered much in these few verses. The respect necessary for a husband and a wife to show toward each other is a must in any healthy relationship. Concerning daily living and how to deal with problems and disagreements and financial pressures and how to treat each other,

verses 8-11 let you know that the reason is to keep your prayers from being ineffective. The effects of ill in your marriage will be felt in everything dear and precious to you. Trouble in the home disrupts everything, especially the work of God. You are no better in a church building than you are in your home. When you allow problems in your home life, soon it will affect your entire life. You will not stray from your wedding vows if you will faithfully follow the advice of Peter. He let us know that the adding of virtues is good for the church and good for an individual's Christian life. Also, it works in the home. The adding of virtues will build you up in the good things of God.

If the joy and the excitement experienced in the engagement before marriage and after marriage continues, a married couple will never have a fear of unfaithfulness taking place in the marriage. Too often this is not the way it is. If the joy and deep fulfillment is to continue, the couple must work at it daily, just as a fire must be tended continually to keep it from dying.

Avoiding Temptation

We are living in a different society and culture than when I was young. Men and women are thrown together in ways that were once strongly preached against, such as married men and married women working together in factories, on a police force, in the military, in hospitals, and on ambulance crews. These jobs require men and women to travel in the same vehicle and to be in close contact with one another. Spending hours together every day is dangerous. It is going to require a lot of spiritual strength and determination to keep yourself pure.

We have many temptations today, and the most common one is the Internet. If you happen to be surfing the web in the privacy of your office or in your home and your spouse walks in unannounced

and sees you quickly closing a window, and then she sees a strange look on your face, you know that you have been caught. If she should ask what you were looking at, she has as much right to ask you as you have to ask her. You may find yourself scrambling to come up with some spin on what you had been doing. This is where the warning about jesting comes in. The word *witticism* means being quick with a comeback answer, to joke your way around unfavorable situations. Many people think they are good spin artists, but do not think that the matter is settled, because the question in her mind is not really satisfied. She is going to be watching a little closer, so you may start locking your door. There should be no secret passwords for the Internet. Everybody in my family knows my password.

Rationalization is what a person does when he substitutes false explanations for true reasons. Once you cloud your true motives with a smoke screen of nice sounding excuses, and think that you have fooled your companion, things will not be the same. You have entered into the realm of secrecy and deception. If you do not get hold of things and turn yourself around, you may be on the road to adultery, if not physically, then mentally.

The best way to avoid trouble is this: do not get involved with anything on the job, in the home, or on the Internet that you have to hide from your spouse. Things are looking bad if you suddenly come up with the idea, "I have a right to my privacy." The wife may say: "Wait a minute! You have never said anything like that to me before. What's going on? What is behind this idea of your privacy?" You are heading for trouble.

One good and proven way that will help you to avoid temptation is to get into the habit every day of keeping God in your mind. God is watching everything you do. You may hide something from your spouse and those whom you love,

but you cannot hide one little thing from God. You can be sure that your sin will find you out. Eventually it will come to the surface, so if you feel a tendency to do wrong, it is best to get help for yourself. You should call upon God immediately, and if that is not enough, you need to confide in your pastor. You may need somebody else to pray with you about the problem. That is not a thing to be shameful of. The shame comes in knowing that you need help but failing to seek it.

Beware of Satan's Tricks

You should never violate your wedding vows. Sins of this nature are very dangerous because they appeal to the pleasure of the flesh. The Word of God is not silent when it comes to the warnings against this kind of conduct. These types of sins carry the same power as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. It is the power of addiction and possession. Once an individual is overtaken in this kind of snare, he often seeks to hide his deed as soon as he pursues it. One thing leads to another, and he gets involved in something he cannot stop. It draws him like a magnet and he is powerless to resist. This can overtake you, friend, so you need to stop it in the very beginning. You should not let any of these things build in your mind, your emotions, or your feelings. You need to keep your love for the one whom you promised to cherish forever.

Many times things begin outside the Internet with flirting, catching someone's eye, brushing up close to another, or speaking more personally than you should to the opposite sex. Satan tricks people into feeling this can be covered up and no one will be the wiser. You might have the thought, "We will just ask forgiveness of each other and God, and then we will be as good as new." Oh, how twisted the minds of people get when they fall into sin! You cannot get over some things that easily.

Many people try to hide their wrongs under a cloak of spiritual

deepening. Some people have gotten into things and then began to sing in the choir or take part in some other way at church when they never had done this before, trying to cover up sin in their lives.

Sins of the flesh are the hardest to conquer for both the guilty party and the faithful spouse. Adultery is mentioned thirty-three times in the Bible. First, it is mentioned in Exodus 20:14, the seventh of the Ten Commandments. In the Old Testament the death of both people was the result for those caught in the act of adultery. How serious this is!

Proverbs 6:32-35 states: "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts."

When Jesus came, He stated it a little stronger. Matthew 5:27-28 reads: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Romans 2:21-23 says: "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"

James 2:10-11 reads: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

Keep Yourself Pure

Galatians 5:19 says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness." The word *lasciviousness* means "indicating sexual interest or expression of lust or lewdness." Second Peter 2:14 states, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children."

If a person sins openly, then he must repent openly. I have never believed in secret repentance. If a person is guilty of these things, restitution should be made. It is still a Bible doctrine. Dirty tracks need to be made right. The best thing is not to commit sin. You need to keep yourself pure. Allowing feelings to grow in your heart and mind for someone other than your spouse is sinful.

Your marriage vows were to love your wife until you part in death. If your wife is in the nursing home, you should not step out on her while she is there. That would be sin. This can happen by viewing pornography or by deliberately and knowingly flirting. Some older people may do this to try to prove they

can still attract someone, but that is dangerous.

If you have fallen into sin, you cannot truly be forgiven by God until you have godly sorrow working in your heart. Unless you are truly sorrowful, you will never get free from that sin. You may try to cover it over, cry, and say you are sorry; but you need to get right with God and willingly pay the price.

When godly sorrow hits your heart, you will want to clear yourself. You will want to make restitution no matter what the cost may be, because you know your soul must be clear. You cannot blame anyone else for the sins you have done. Do not try to say, "If my wife had treated me better, I would not have done this." You should not blame your sin on anybody else. Just look at your own self and deal with that. There might have been contributing factors, but you cannot blame your actions on anyone else. The ultimate decision was yours.

Do not fall into the devil's trap. You need to heed the warning and sharpen your mental understanding and your relationship with God and with your spouse. You must work to safeguard your marriage and protect it. You must keep yourself always and only for each other. If you are

tempted with adultery or the idea of a new and fresh beginning, consider the value and the worth of your own time-tested and proven relationship. Neither of you may be as attractive as you were when you first got married. This is another reason that it is good to grow old together. You may look at your wife now and see an old person, but the same holds true when she looks at you. When I got married I was slim, but now I am overweight and walking slower than I ever did before. Nevertheless, we have a love that has never been broken. Our love for each other is strong and rich, and it is a reward. We are enjoying the rewards of a good marriage. It has not always been easy. At times it has been difficult, but we worked through it together because we are committed to each other. You need to think of the value of your own proven relationship. Look at what you have. Have you put quality into your marriage? After years of being married, there is a quality built in that you can never get if you throw it away. If your love has grown cold, you need to get help from God.

(Compact Disc TR-742E)

Annual Thanksgiving Meeting

Church of God

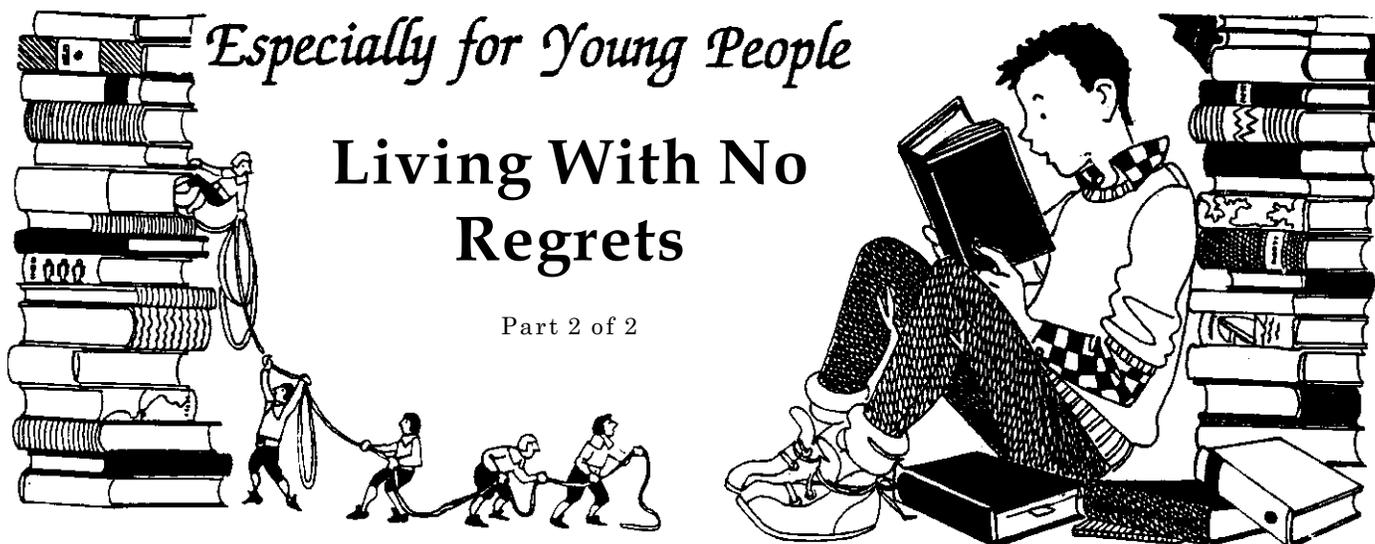
Canby, Oregon

November 22-27, 2011



**Service Times: Tuesday - Wednesday 7:30 p.m.
Thursday - Saturday 10:30 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.
Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.**

**For further information contact:
Pastor David Stegmeier @ Telephone: 503-266-9297**



Another example of failure that I want to speak about is King David, who was considered to be Israel's greatest king. If you look through the Word of God, you can read of David's many successes. You can read of his being a shepherd and taking care of his father's sheep. You can read of how he killed the bear and the lion. You can read of how he defeated the giant Goliath. Another chapter of greatness in his life was when he was anointed as a young man and how he avoided touching the Lord's anointed. Every step along the way, David made great decisions, but often David is remembered as a king who fell into temptation. He committed adultery and murder, and then he lied to try to cover it up.

Speaking with regret in Psalm 41:1-5, David said: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?" What is the "bed of languishing"? It is lying on your bed and saying, "I

wish I had not done that."

Verse 5 tells us what David's enemies were saying about him. David had repented, yet his enemies spoke evil against him, hoping that he would go away. Verses 6-7 continue to speak about those enemies: "And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt." That is what some people thought of David. They whispered against him and talked about his failures. Young person, people are going to talk about your failures, so you need to keep them to a minimum.

Psalm 41:8-13 says: "An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen."

David had a great failure, but that was not the end of him. David's life was beautiful up to the point

where he failed, but he repented and went on. The New Testament tells us in the latter part of Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." Why did God call David a man after His own heart? It was not because he slayed the lion and the bear, because he slayed Goliath, because he was anointed king as a youth, because he defeated all the enemies of Israel, because he was a great warrior, or because of his own strength. The reason God said David was a man after His own heart was that David got back up after he fell. It is rare to see somebody fail and get back up.

Many people have made good starts for God and have fallen, but very few have gotten back up. If you want to be a man or a woman after God's own heart, you have to rise above your failures. It is not easy. It has not been easy for me. It would be easier never to work for the Lord again, not because I do not want to work for God, but because of the way the enemy suppresses me with the images of my failures.

David was a man after God's own heart because he rose up and went on. Despite the hatred that others had against him and the whispering, David went on and, as a result, God blessed him. It is hard to believe that David recovered all. That seems impossible to me sometimes, and it might seem impossible

to you. How could he possibly recover all? The answer is, with God it is possible.

I have lived in my home for nearly twenty years. The first year we were there, we bought lots of fruit trees. We planted apple trees, peach trees, and a pear tree, thinking that we would have an orchard by the time the children got old enough to want fruit. We worked hard on those trees, pruning and shaping them. After a while they looked really good. All around our yard we have a wire fence. We had some problems with the fence. It was run down in some spots, and I had planned to work on it, but I had not gotten around to it. I kept saying to myself, "I've got to fix that fence," but I never got around to it.

One day I came home to find the cows in the backyard, and they were destroying my trees. They ate the limbs and the leaves. They stripped them down, and some of the trees were broken off. I was very upset about it. You may wonder what that has to do with anything. It took years to get those trees to the place where they were just about ready to bear fruit. It was hard work spraying and pruning them.

A little letting down of the fence destroyed them. Out of the ten trees that we had originally, we have only one left that bears fruit. It was supposed to be a Red Delicious apple tree, but it turned out to be a Granny Smith. They are sour apples, but I love that tree. We had two for a while (and this is a good lesson in life), but one of them was so bruised and damaged by the cows that it never bore fruit. It seemed like it tried to hang on, but it was just a matter of time before it died.

That is exactly how it happens in some people's lives. Just about the time they are in a place in their experience where God is ready to launch them into a great work where they could really develop fruit, where they could be used to help people get saved, they let down their guard and they are destroyed. All those trees except one were destroyed,

although some of them hung on for a while. This is a good picture of how it works in real life. Some people let down and let things in, and although they may try to fight back and hang on for a little while, it is just a matter of time before all of that bruising does them in.

The bruising on those fruit trees is like the regrets of one who had let down and then carries those bruises for years. I recently cut down the next to the last tree. It had a huge bruise on one side for years. Although the bark had peeled back, it looked as if it was going to bear some fruit, but then it just buckled under. That is what the bruising did to it. That tree was never able to recover from the damage, and it eventually destroyed it. Today that tree is cut up and in a brush pile in the back yard, ready to burn. That is how many people's lives end up. Young person, this is the reason you need to avoid the bruises, the failings, and the regrets. You need to keep good, happy, clean, godly images in your mind. Good, clean memories in your mind will not hinder you.

You can spend one moment being too close to your boyfriend or girlfriend and put a bruise on your life. You may think, "Well, I will get married and then I will come back and live for God for the rest of my life." The devil is never going to let you forget it. There is a chance that you will end up just like those trees—cut down. You should not take a chance at hopefully surviving, like that one sour apple tree. Instead of taking your chances, how much better to be all that God would have you to be. In spite of it all, this is what I am endeavoring to do. It is much harder now than it used to be. You can take it from someone who has a little experience. If you keep your life free from the scars and the blemishes, it will be so much easier to live for God.

One brother spoke of how no cigarette or alcohol has ever touched his mouth. I find that fantastic! Because of that, his Christian walk is a

little easier than that of the person who has bruises to deal with for the rest of his life. It is hard to keep working for God when you are trying to nurse your wounds all the time. That is the reality of it.

Maybe you cannot wait until you can get away from your parents telling you what to do and how to live. You will find out very quickly that sin is a life of bondage. You may say, "I am not going to go out and drink and smoke or any of those things." Whether you do all those things or not, you will find that some things in life still bring bondage. You are going to be bound to a job and to certain responsibilities. You do not have to go into deep sin. You can go deep into debt and have to work so much that you never have time to think about God or to be happy in your marriage. Some people are so caught up with expenses that they cannot enjoy life. When we live for God, we are blessed beyond that, because we have God to help us temper things, to do everything in moderation and to enjoy life at the same time. Living for God is definitely a good way to live! Who does not want to pass up all the "if only's"?

Sometime back I read a quote that said, "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." I like that saying because it really encourages me. No matter what you have done and no matter how bad it has been, you cannot go back and change it. Have you ever said, "I wish I could go back and change what I did" or "I wish I had never said that"? We all have been there. We have hurt people, said things that we wished we had never said, showed the wrong attitude, acted the wrong way, or even done something dreadfully sinful. I do not know where you are in your Christian experience, but the good news is, though you cannot go back and start life over again, you can start today to make a new ending for your life.

I read a true story years ago

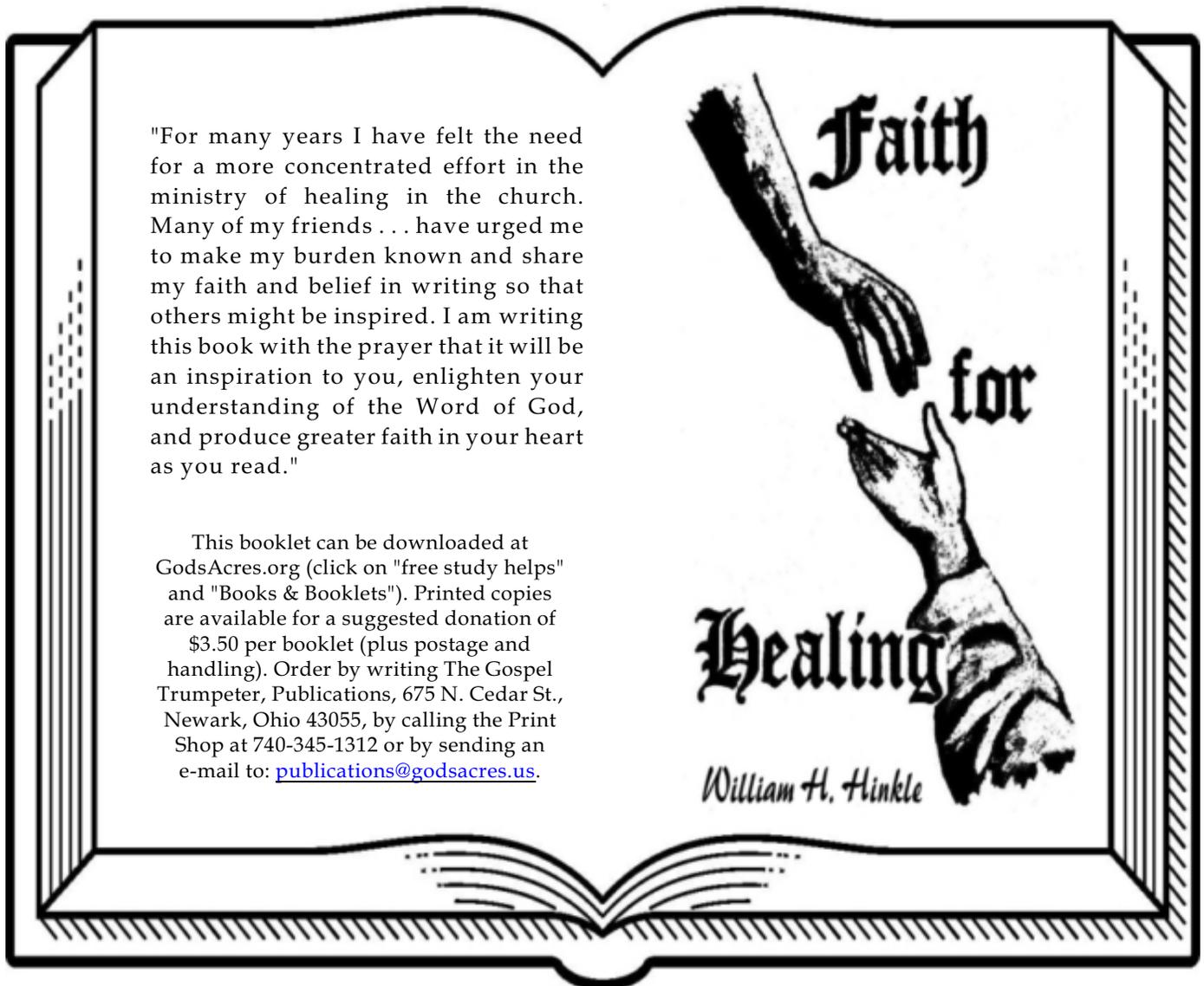
about a man who was a sheep thief. He lived in a small community and had been stealing sheep from the neighbors. He got caught, and they took him to the local courthouse where he was tried and found guilty. His punishment was to have the letters "ST" branded on his forehead. (I am glad we do not have punishment like that now.) He had to live with that brand for the rest of his life. This man decided that he did not want to live that way anymore. He had learned his lesson, so he changed the way he lived. He began helping people, doing good, being a good citizen, and living a good life, trying to be a Christian.

Forty or fifty years later, when this man was sitting on a park bench, a little boy was walking with his dad. When he saw the man with the letters "ST" on his forehead, the little boy said, "What is that on his forehead, Daddy?" His daddy said, "I'm not really sure, but I think it means *saint*." Now, that was taking a bad life, one in which he could not change the beginning, and making a new ending to the story. No matter what bad things you might have done, you can make a good ending to your life. You can make a valuable impact on society. You can change people's lives.

I am thankful for God's mercy and His love to me. I pray that God

will use you to change people's lives. You need to be merciful, be patient, and be helpful to others. Do not bruise and beat up others. We are the family of God. We need to be there for one another. You should not be a whisperer. You ought uplift and encourage others. When people are down, they do not need someone to push them down even more! They need somebody to lift them up. Young person, if you have failures in your life, you cannot change what has already happened. The only thing you can change is the ending. I challenge you to make a good ending for your life.

Brother Jeremy Hupp



Matthew 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.

19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and

said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have

faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

"If Ye Have Faith"



Brother E. David Stegmeier

The Spirit of Unbelief

We are living in a faith-killing age. In a *TIME Magazine* article entitled "What Makes Us Good/Evil?" the writer said: "Humans are the planet's most noble creatures—and its most savage. Science is discovering why." The writer continued: "What makes us moral? Morality and empathy are writ deep in our genes. Alas, so is savagery and

bloodlust. Science is now learning what makes us both noble and terrible—and perhaps what can make us better."

I will say this: Science will never find the answer. The answer is contained in the writ of God's Holy Word. In general, the church of our day is not doing its job. There is a tremendous amount of unbelief in our world. Sometimes it comes to visit God's people. Years ago

Brother Emerson Wilson said, "Our greatest enemy is the spirit of unbelief." The first enemy that the early church fought against was the red dragon and the red horse. The spirit that perpetuated those two beasts was the spirit of unbelief, and it is still warring against the church today. That spirit is still alive. Spirits do not die. In this scientific age, we must be careful not to lose sight of our marvelous God-given privileges.

God still has the best way. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." This verse of Scripture is as true as any other Scripture in the Word of God.

In Numbers 23:19-20, Moses wrote: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it." What God has said is still in force today.

Psalms 78:40-41 says this: "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness [speaking about the children of Israel], and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel." If you are not careful, unbelief will cause you to limit the power of God. The explanation for sin and its results cannot be found in scientific annals or books. It is found in the Word of God. Often the Word is relegated to the level of the ridiculous and the unreasonable. Many people feel that you are uneducated and ignorant if you believe the Word of God. I believe it implicitly!

There is no greater book in the world than the Word of God. Many people say the Bible is a book of myths, legends, and fairy tales. In California (and it is spreading to other states as well) atheist parents are sending their children to an atheist Sunday school. They have come to realize that their children need something to support them in their lives. One atheist parent said (and this was also in *TIME Magazine*): "When you have kids, you start to notice that your co-workers or friends have church groups to help teach their kids values and to be able to lean on."

Atheists say that they are fearful that if their children are taught biblical truths and principles, that will effect them to where they will begin to believe in God. I thank God for the Truth! The devil is at work today

as never before. He has stored up all kinds of tricks. As one man of God said, "We are not ignorant of Satan's devices." I am not against sending children to public schools; but as a parent, you must be involved and know what they are being taught. You need to do your homework, and do it very diligently. You need to go to the school and express to the teachers your value system; it is reasonable. You should not be ashamed of God. You can be a light to others. The darker the world, the brighter the light will shine. I thank God for the Truth and for the Church of God!

"Beware Lest Any Man Spoil You"

What does the Bible say about the source of evil? Ecclesiastes 7:29 reads, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; [God made man holy, righteous, moral, clean, and of high integrity. That is how God made man, and that is how He makes a child as well.] but they have sought out many inventions." Evil has come because of the choices that men have made down through the annals of history. Men have become evil, savage, vile, and brutal because of the wrong choices. Many of those people are a product of their rearing.

You should raise every child that you have to want to serve God, to want to work in the Kingdom of God. Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Genesis 1:31a says, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." There is nothing wrong with a child.

I like a song that we sing in our Evening Light Hymnal, which says, "Purer light is coming fast." That is exactly what I have seen in my own life. Since the answers to all of life's problems can be found in the Word of God, we need to get back to the foundation—the Word of God. I believe this was undoubtedly the burden of the sixth-seal brethren

when they wrote the wonderful hymn entitled "Back to the Blessed Old Bible." The chorus reads, "*Back to the blessed old Bible, Back to the light of its word: Be on our banners forever, 'Holiness unto the Lord.'*"

The Church of God studies and holds very tenaciously to "Thus saith Almighty God!" If God said it, that settles it for me. The blessed old Bible is still the watchword of the Church of God. We carefully base all our beliefs on God's Word.

Paul wrote in Colossians 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men [we have to be a willing people, a progressive people, serving God with an open mind and a willing heart], after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Philosophies and false teachings of men can carry you away from the Truth. There are worldly systems of all kinds and all kinds of false religion. The Church of God is a separate, distinct people. How can you walk with someone with whom you disagree? In 2 Corinthians 6:17 Paul said, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

In Revelation 18:4 Jesus said, "Come out of her, my people." False religion is a worldly system that is destroying the people's faith. There is so much entertainment out in false religion. We have to be careful of worldly systems of all kinds—false religion, schools of learning, and even the government. Worldly systems of all kinds are working to destroy faith in God and in His Eternal Word. God has the answers. The Bible is true, and it has all the answers to life's problems if you will search it out. We do not question God's Word. What He said is the way it is.

Having Faith in God

In Matthew 21:17-22 we read: "And he [speaking of Christ] left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now

in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. [He was talking about the nation of Israel, but we can bring it down to a personal level. God wants each of us to bear fruit.] And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Those verses of Scripture are very positive. I love a positive Gospel, and I enjoy being with positive people. I struggle being with people who are always negative. According to some people, the glass is always half-empty instead of being half full. They emphasize the negative. Again, verses 21-22 read: "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Those are strong verses.

In 3 John, verse 2, John wrote to Gaius, his very close friend, and said, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." John was concerned about the physical health as well as the spiritual well being of his friend. God wants us to prosper physically and spiritually. There are lots of sick people today. Divine healing is part of the comprehensive Gospel of Jesus Christ. I preach an all-inclusive and comprehensive message, and it touches every facet of our lives. We do not have to go outside the pages

of the Gospel to find satisfaction for the needs of our lives. It is all in the Word of God.

You cannot be your best for God if you are not feeling well. Before the old ministers prayed for you, they used to ask, "What have you been eating?" If you have been eating a steady diet of Twinkies, you are not going to feel very well after a while. They say cancer feeds on sugar. You need to be careful of what you eat. God is concerned that you are of a sound mind and a well body. I repeat, you cannot be your best for God unless you are feeling well. The old-fashioned ministers were concerned about people's eating habits as well as what they thought upon and read.

I remember in 2004 in the Winter Camp Meeting when Brother Serra was very, very ill. We were concerned about him. After that, he was diagnosed as having lung cancer. On April 12, 2006, he received a medical report from his radiologist stating that his lungs were clear and that all the medical complications had been resolved. That is something to be very thankful for!

How to Build Your Faith

We ought to be concerned about one another's marriages. We ought to be concerned about one another's health, and we need to pray for one another. Our Scripture text states, "If ye have faith. . . ." I am going to speak to you a little about how you can build your faith. Maybe you are not interested in building your faith, but I want to have more faith. I want to see greater things accomplished for the glory of God. We have the Truth, and I am interested in growing in my faith. I want greater faith. One way that you can increase your faith is by listening to positive reports of what God has done for others. He is no respecter of persons. He will do the same for you! By hearing positive reports, your faith will be inspired and it will grow.

Again, Hebrews 13:8 tells us,

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Christ's healing virtue is presently and permanently available to whoever believes. Some ministers do not believe there is any divine healing today. They believe that divine healing went out in the first century. I know that is not true, because I have been healed miraculously. If divine healing had gone out in the first century, it would abrogate much of God's Word. There is so much about divine healing in the Word of God.

Salvation and healing go side by side, and I still think they are important. How can you divide one from the other? When a person gets saved, God even blesses his body. The Christian lifestyle contributes to good health. Romans 11:29 says, "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Another translation says, "For God's gifts and His call can never be withdrawn. He never goes back on His promises."

I will tell you how my faith has been increasing. Also, I will give you some points that will help your faith. Many times we come to the crossroads, and we need to know God's will. I have had lots of very difficult places in life. Building a congregation takes much work and much sacrifice, but it is a beautiful work. God has never failed us. Whenever I have come to a very difficult place in life, whether it was financial, physical, or whatever, I said, "God, You have never failed me." God can open doors and close doors, so that is another way that faith can be increased. You can recall past problems and think about how God has helped you to work through them. *Everything* you get from God comes by faith.

We sing a song that says, "*From wells of everlasting joy Our strength by faith we bring.*" Paul wrote to the Church of God at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 12:28, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings. . . ." We just read that God

does not take those gifts back. They still operate in the body.

You may inquire, "Is there a need for a message like this?" I have seen more sickness among people today than I have ever seen. I believe that God can help us. I am a very, very positive person, because I know that God will answer prayer and take care of our needs. He has never failed us. Some things can destroy your faith, but you need to hold on to God, and He will see you through.

"The Lord That Heals"

James said this in James 5:13-16: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Failing to confess your faults could be a hindrance to faith. I am talking about building faith. Maybe you have a fault that you need to confess and work on. Some people have a problem with confessing their faults. It is easier to confess another person's faults.

In the Old Testament there is a name for God, and it is Jehovah Rapha, which means "the Lord that heals." In Exodus 15:26 Moses wrote, "If thou wilt diligently hearken, [God's people are very diligent. When you go to church, you need to be careful that you do not allow your mind to wander.] to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee."

I believe that if I will be really careful to be obedient to God and apply His Word to my life, God will help me to have good health. When I need Him in an emergency, He will be there. If I will walk carefully and take the words that the ministers have preached and not say, "That is for somebody else" or "That is not really important," God will help me. I do not think there are any non-essentials in God's Word. D. S. Warner wrote a song that says, "*Ev'ry word thy mouth hath spoken is essential to our life.*"

Again, Moses said, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee." You must walk circumspectly and be diligent. When the Word of God is preached, you must obey it. God demands an obedient people. The bottom line is obedience.

He Is Just the Same Today

You can read of many healings in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, you can read of many fulfillments of prophecies in the Old Testament. Isaiah 53:3-5 says: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

This prophecy was fulfilled in the life of Christ. Matthew 8:14-17 states: "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and minis-

tered unto them. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Faith is a powerful force. Faith must have a foundation, and it has a strong foundation. There is no stronger foundation than God's Eternal Word. Romans 10:17 reads, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." God uses His Word as an instrument through which He inspires faith. We have something to base our faith upon.

Often people war against the church because we teach strongly that we can live without sin. Well, it speaks of that in the Bible. It is supported throughout the Word of God. Romans 6:1-2 says: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" That is one of many Scriptures that teaches living free from sin.

How else can your faith be increased? As I said previously, your faith can be increased by hearing the testimonies of others and by accepting the fact that through faith Christ is touched with compassion with the feeling of our infirmities. We sing a song that says:

*Oh, that precious, loving Jesus!
His compassion still the same,
T'ward poor sinful, suffering mortals
Who seek refuge in his name.*

*Heed the present invitation,
Oh, you need not stay away!
Just receive his healing favor,
For he's just the same today.*

Another song says, "*Just to know that He knows, that my Lord understands, And His look of compassion to see; Soothes the pain in my heart, is a balm for my wounds, Bringing comfort and peace unto me.*"

Fervent prayer increases faith.

Also, you must use the faith that you have. If you use the faith that you have, your faith will grow. Jesus said in Luke 5:23, "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?" They are both easy to God. Man cannot do either one of those, but Jesus can do both of them.

Jeremiah 17:14 says, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise."

One time a pastor asked a little boy, "Son, what do you think faith is?"

The little boy replied, "Believing God and asking no questions."

Do you have a need in your life? When our second son was about five years of age, he contracted polio. He had a very high temperature, and he was confined to bed. He could not walk anymore. We were very, very concerned. We called the congregation at God's Acres to ask for prayer, and we prayed. Finally, the fever broke, and he got strong enough that he could crawl.

I like for our children to recognize God's moving, so I called all of them in and said, "Ronnie rolled over this morning." We gathered around his bed and began to thank God that he rolled over. Then my wife put him on the floor, and he crawled a little. We were thrilled! Not long after that, Brother Emerson Wilson came to hold a revival meeting, and our son walked with a decided limp.

Brother Wilson said: "That little boy doesn't have to limp for the rest of his life. Bring him here." He laid his hand on him and prayed, and God took away his limp. Since that day, he has walked as straight as an

arrow. However, that is not the end of the story. Sometimes he would say, "Dad, my legs hurt like a toothache." We kept praying, and that, too, went away. I have not heard him say that for approximately thirty years, and he has a hard job.

Seeking God for Your Need

We are serving a compassionate God. Your children do not have to suffer such things, and you do not have to suffer such things either. Again, I want to reiterate, you must be careful of how you live. You must walk very circumspectly. You should never make light of the Church of God standard. There is nothing difficult about the standard. It is very beautiful. If you quibble and fuss and give the pastor a hard time, when an emergency comes, you are going to have a problem believing God.

Our oldest daughter had pneumonia once during camp meeting. The night before she was healed, someone told us that she would not last through the night. The church prayed, and God touched her.

Our son Reggie had a dislocated hip when he was born, and God healed him. When I was a boy, one sister from our congregation had a running sore on her leg ever since I could remember. One day she asked if we would anoint a handkerchief and send it to her. We sent the handkerchief to her, she placed it on her leg, and God healed her.

The late Sister Faye Green showed us the handkerchief that Brother E. E. Byrum sent to her parents for her healing when she was a baby. God is still the same! God healed Brother George Gordon of

cancer many years ago. One older Christian man had a heart attack and was in the Intensive Care Unit. His wife called me and said, "Brother Stegmeier, do you believe in divine healing?"

I said, "Yes."

She said: "I have to ask you another question. Do you practice it?"

I said, "Yes."

She said, "Will you go to the hospital and pray for my husband? He is in intensive care."

I said, "Sister, your neighbor already called me, and I have just returned from the hospital." God healed him. The doctor called him "the miracle man."

In Matthew, Chapter 9, and Mark, Chapter 5, you can read about the woman with the issue of blood. She believed that if she could just touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed. Mark 5:26 tells us that she "suffered many things of many physicians."

Dear one, if you have faith, even a little faith, God will meet your needs. I recommend God. I was brought up on divine healing. I am not teaching something that I do not practice. I practice it 100 percent. God will heal you if you will meet His conditions. My children were raised on divine healing.

You may say, "That is antiquated." Well, it is the same as salvation. Do we say there is no salvation today? Do we say that God is not saving souls today? Absolutely not! It is all one and the same. God still saves souls, and He still heals bodies. Won't you seek Him for your need?

(Compact Disc TR-193M)

How will you ever know whether your faith is weak or strong unless it is tried and tested?

Matthew 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bring forth

evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me,

ye that work iniquity.

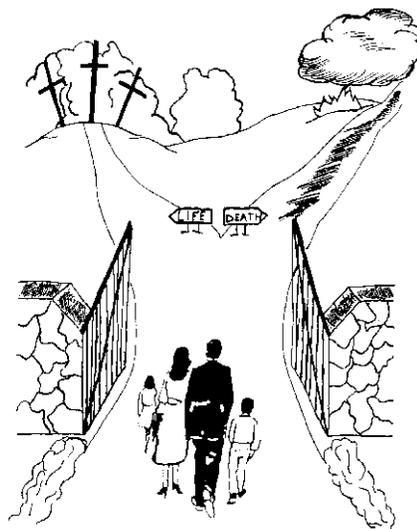
24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The Two Ways Leading to Eternity



Brother Larry Dishman

The Journey of Life

Verse 13 of our Scripture text shows quite a contrast. Matthew spoke of the strait gate and the wide gate that leads to destruction. The strait gate leads to life. Verse 13 talks about the broad way, and verse 14 speaks of the narrow way. Verse 17 speaks of a good tree and a corrupt tree and of good fruit and evil fruit. Verse 24 speaks of a wise man who built his house upon a rock. Verse 26 speaks of a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Verse 25 talks about the house that did not

fall, and verse 27 speaks about the house that fell.

As we study the two ways that lead to eternity, we need to understand that God has created man with the liberty to choose good or evil. He can choose to travel the narrow road and be saved or he can choose to travel the broad way that leads to destruction. In the beginning of time, Adam and Eve were endued with the power of choice to obey and live or to disobey and die spiritually. They made the choice to eat of the fruit of the tree that God had forbidden them to eat.

The two highways that the Bible talks about are going in opposite directions, and that is a sobering thought. Each of us is traveling either the broad way that leads to destruction or the narrow way that leads to eternal life. In other words, you are either on your way to Heaven or hell. You are going in one direction or the other. There is no mention of an in between of these two ways. Life is like a journey, and this journey of life has two roads and two destinations. The choice of where you will end up is up to you. Your mommy and daddy cannot

make that choice for you; family members who love you cannot make that choice for you; and as much as your pastor loves you, he cannot make that choice for you.

When a baby is born into a family, this baby starts on the journey of life. God, who lives in Heaven, has prepared a special road for little babies, and this road is the road of innocence. At one time, each of us was on that road. While we were traveling that road, we were safe and secure because we did not have the knowledge of wrong and right, but eventually we came to the age of accountability.

As little babies grow, the road of innocence comes to an end for them. Until that time, the parents are their guide and largely make the decisions for them. As a child comes to the crossroads of life, the decision is up to him as to which road he is going to take. For the first time, he has felt a tug on his heart's door and has felt the urge to get right with God.

The Importance of Choosing the Right Way

As you stand at the crossroads, what do you see? I want you to really think about these two roads that lead to eternity. You need to take a good look at these two roads, because your decision is very important. In fact, you will never make a more important decision than choosing which road you will travel. Both roads may look inviting. The broad way that leads to destruction looks like a good road to travel at first. If this was not the case, the prodigal son never would have left his father's house. He had a good life there, but the broad way looked very exciting to him. He started on the broad way, and for a while he enjoyed himself. I am not going to tell you that you cannot enjoy sin. You can enjoy sin, but it is only for a season. The prodigal son found that to be true after sowing his wild oats.

One day while working in that far country in the hogen, he came

to himself and realized that he had made the wrong choice; he had taken the wrong road. When he came to himself and began to think about his father's house, he thought about his father's many servants who had bread enough and to spare, yet he was in a far country and had spent all that he had. He spent his inheritance and did not have anything left. He did not have proper clothing, he did not have shoes for his feet, and he had nothing to eat. In essence, he said to himself, "I am going back to my father's house, and when I get there, I am going to own the fact that I have sinned and that I am unworthy to be called his son."

When the prodigal son was a great way off, his father ran to him and fell on his neck and kissed him. The prodigal son did not have time to say all the things that he had rehearsed in his mind. That is just the way God is when He sees the sinner make his way to an altar of prayer. As he begins to pour out his heart to God, God gives him the kiss of forgiveness.

The road to sin looks inviting. Both roads have a master guide: God or Satan. They both extend an invitation for you to come and walk with them. As you observe more closely, you will see that the wide road is smooth and easily traveled. The road that leads to Heaven is narrow, it has ruts, and it is hilly. Many people are walking on the wide road.

The narrow road has only a few scattered saints of God walking on it. You may be confused and unsure of which road to take, but you need to observe the Guide, and He will help you to make the right decision. It is important to search the map (the Bible), and pay close attention to the guideposts along the way.

The New Birth

The road to Heaven begins with receiving the new birth and a new nature. The new birth is divinely brought about by the Holy Spirit as one meets the conditions for salva-

tion and assumes the responsibilities of a new life devoted to God. As you travel the narrow road toward Heaven, you will find hills and valleys. This narrow road is much different from the wide road. The wide road is downhill, is well traveled, and is easy to tread. The narrow road is more like a path through the countryside. There are obstacles and hard places; but if you will stay on the path, you will come to refreshing, cool streams where you can rest and take a cool drink. Those rippling waters will soothe your tired feet that are weary from the journey. After you rest for a while, you will be refreshed and ready to continue your journey.

You will encounter mountains, and some of the mountains that you climb will be rough. You need to thank God for the rough mountains. You had better be glad that God did not give you smooth mountains. If the mountains were smooth, there would be no outcropping to plant your feet on and to hold on with your hands. God gives rough mountains so that we can climb them. As you continue, you will come to the mountaintop, and then go back into the valley, lush and green.

All travelers on this road are Christians. They are your brothers and your sisters, and they really do love you and care for you. When you trip or stumble on the path, your brothers and your sisters are there to help you to get back on your feet. They are understanding, they are kind, and they think more of you than they think of themselves. Most of all, thank God, you have a Guide, a very personal Friend. He is the Lord, and He is a kind Shepherd who loves you very much. He walks right beside you on the narrow road. Sometimes the path may seem dark and hard to travel, but in those times He will hold your hand and lead you until you can see more clearly. I am thankful for a God like that!

When the road seems dark (and sometimes it will seem very dark), God will not abandon you. He will take hold of your hand and lead

you. The saint of God can get weary, and the path may seem dangerous, but the Shepherd will pick you up in His arms and carry you until you have the strength to walk on your own. The heavenly road is paved with rich rewards. The peace of having your sins forgiven is a rich reward, and the joy of God's blessing is so comforting. Being conscious of the blessings of Heaven instead of the torments of hell provides a tremendous inspiration. I am really happy serving God. How about you? You can be happy in the Lord.

Which Road Are You Traveling?

Obedience to the Bible is an inescapable part of the highway to Heaven. Some people are duped into believing that folks can slip and slide and coast along to Heaven. That cannot happen. In Luke 13:24 we read, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." If the traveler does not resist the tide, he will mercilessly be swept away onto the broad way. You are traveling to eternity, and you are well on your way.

Both the wide gate and the narrow gate invite your entrance. A broad smooth avenue gives promise of leading to ease, worldliness and pleasure. The broad way is only paved near the entrance. As you travel it for a few years, you are going to discover that the way of the transgressor is hard. Every inducement is made to get you started on the broad way. Once you get started on this broad way and begin to partake in the things that the devil offers, you will find that it leads to destruction. You will find, as so many others have, that sin has taken you further than you want to go, it will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay.

Every person is traveling one of these roads. Life is pictured as a journey, a journey that every one of us is making. Every day you live, even while you are sleeping, you are

traveling toward eternity. You are on one of these roads, whether you think so or not. The Bible says to enter at the strait gate. God knows that it is easier to start right than to get right after you have started wrong. It is easy to keep going right once you have started right.

The broad road accommodates its travelers, and many people go that way. It is easier to find, it is broad, it is inducing, and its promises immediately fulfill the desires of the flesh. As you step closer to the wide, well-traveled road, you will hear the guide asking you to walk with him. The people traveling on this road have good intentions. Those who start on the broad way may be able to refrain from the side shows for a stretch, but the guide's story sounds very enticing.

Satan will offer you many friends, but no one seems to be really happy, and no one on this road that leads to destruction has a deep, settled peace down in their hearts. The entertainments on this road are limitless. Along the way, people are drinking, smoking, dancing, partying, taking drugs, and indulging in all kinds of amusements. There are no moral codes and no standard. Lying, stealing, and cheating are common practices.

You can pick your lifestyle on this broad way that leads to destruction. You can indulge or refrain and call it freedom. This road takes you so fast and so smoothly that you are hardly aware of the fact that time is running out. Many people on this road become so involved in many deep troubles and see no way out. They despair on the broad way that leads to destruction—drugs, murder, and suicide are their companions. Is that what you want out of life? Do you really want to travel the broad way?

The devil does not mention the awful reward for traveling the broad way. He would not dare talk to you about the reaping. He would not betray himself that way. He is like a wolf in sheep's clothing. The wages of sin is death, and that is the re-

ward for walking the broad way. Going to the Judgment unprepared to meet God will send you to hell at the end of life's journey. This place was prepared for the devil and his angels. In hell there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth for endless ages.

Are you going to walk with the devil down the road that leads to destruction? If you choose to do so, you will end up with the reward of sin. The way to hell is more heavily traveled than the highway to Heaven. Satan's chief activity is to keep you off the road that leads to Heaven. The road that leads to destruction is broad, with much company. Why not consider the narrow way that leads to life? The difference is the destination. The broad way is easy to travel, but it ends in hell.

"Choose You This Day"

Today sin is abounding on every hand. You may say that you will not do certain things, but you do not know what you will do once you start on the downward way. The broad way holds the greatest disappointments. Sinners are allured by the fancies, blinded by the charms, and paralyzed by the power of sin. This broad way that leads to destruction causes a wasted life, makes a broken heart, and destroys a happy home. It sends a lost soul down to hell.

The narrow way is the highway of holiness. Isaiah 35:8 states, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." It is a strait gate, which means "strict, rigorous, constricted, and narrow." The gate leading to the Kingdom of God is not a crooked way. It is a strait way, and no crooked person can enter this narrow way. You may ask, "How do I get on this road?" You must enter the gate through repentance and faith, where sins are repented of and forgiveness takes place, where resti-

tution is made and a promise to God is made to live right. This gate for sinners parts with sin forever.

Moses, a man of God, chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Joshua, a servant of God, challenged Israel, when he said in Joshua 24:15, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." Israel had to make a choice. In the Book of Genesis, you can read about Joseph, a young man, who chose to be morally pure and honest, and he was awarded the highest honor in the Egyptian kingdom.

In the Book of Daniel, you can read about Daniel, a young captive in the land of Babylon. He purposed in his heart, or chose, not to defile himself with the portion of the king's meat and the king's wine. Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son who started out on the good road but left it. He traveled the broad road for a while, but finally he came to himself and returned to that narrow road.

How is it with your life? These two roads, the wide and the narrow, both come to an end at the close of life. At the end of these roads, there is a river, and it is called Death. There is no turning around once you face this river. All must cross this river of death; then comes the Judgment, and God Himself will judge you according to which road you chose to travel. Many people who travel the wide road with Satan as their guide will find this river very, very frightening. Why? They have no one with whom to cross the river. Their friends are afraid of death. The devil laughs at their fears, and they must cross death's river alone.

I have stood at the bedside of dying individuals who were so fearful of crossing death's river. Nobody was there to take them by the hand and lead them across death's river. I remember standing by the bedside of a man who was lost and getting ready to cross this river, and he was saying, "Lord, don't let me die! O God, don't let me die! Don't let me die!" That river seemed so fearful to this

man that he was pleading in agony with God, asking Him not to let him die. He was fearful of crossing death's river; but regardless of the fear, that individual had to cross it, and then he woke up to the reality of facing the Judgment in a lost condition.

Hell is an everlasting pit of fire that will never be quenched. Eventually everyone will come to the end of the road and face death's river, if Jesus tarries. I am going to face it. I have been traveling this narrow road, and I have sense enough to know that the road that I am traveling will not last forever. I am going to come to the end of this road someday. So it is with everyone, whether young or old. This road that you are traveling will come to an end. Then what will become of your soul? If you are lost, there will be no more grace then. There will be no more time to repent. It will be too late to make the right choice.

Have You Made the Right Choice?

Where will you be throughout the ceaseless age of eternity? The doom of many has been sealed by neglecting to do what they knew they needed to do. Are you where you ought to be with God? I thought about the sadness of coming to the end of life, facing death, facing the Judgment, and facing hell, when you have traveled the wrong road. You will think, "Had I only gotten on that narrow road and entered that strait gate!"

If you are unsaved, I plead with you to stop and consider your hasty course. Where will you spend a never-ending eternity? Can you afford to be careless? Maybe you had a Christian mother and a Christian father and you have been privileged to hear godly pastors. Are you going to go on and be deluded with the fatal thought that somehow things will work out? Neglect will not be an excuse on Judgment morning.

The Bible says in Isaiah 55:6, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be

found, call ye upon him while he is near." Luke 19:10 says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Dear sinner friend, in sober consideration, you would definitely be wise to choose the narrow road. God can help you to choose the right way. You dare not halt between two opinions. No man can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. The supreme affection can only be fixed on one object. There are but two masters, and every man must serve one or the other. Every man faces the question, "Who will be my master?" Friend, who will be your guide? Your answer determines all the issues for time and eternity.

Preaching that fails to confront the hearer with the person and the claims of Jesus Christ, in such a manner that decision becomes mandatory, is altogether vain and will not accomplish the purpose of Him who is pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. O sinner friend, there is no middle road, and the decision of every man is *no* until he makes it *yes*. There is a song that says, "*There is a road that leads to Heaven above, Where all is joy and peace and love.*" Do not make a mistake and take the wrong road. One leads to Heaven, and it is strait; the other leads to destruction. Do not take the wrong road.

Moses led the children of God from Pharaoh's chastening rod to the Promised Land, a blessed abode. Pharaoh's army drowned because they wandered too far in the path of sin. They took the wrong road.

In Luke, Chapter 16, you can read about Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate. The rich man died and awoke in hell. It was too late for him. He made a mistake and took the wrong road. Which road will you take? Will you take the one that leads to the blessed abode, the one that leads to Heaven? Can you imagine coming to the end of life's journey and realizing that the road you have been traveling leads to eternal doom? Imagine seeing your-

self thin and pale upon a deathbed, gasping for breath, surrounded by weeping relatives and friends, feeling that cold dew as it makes its way down your feverish brow.

As you feel the death rattle in your throat, the physician is summoned, and he declares that your case is hopeless. While you are lying there, the furniture in the room begins to fade from your vision, and all the sounds and the voices in the room begin to fade away like the chime of evening bells. The intense gloom of eternal night is settling in. Suddenly a strange sensation begins to creep over your meager frame, and the dart of death flies through your fainting heart. One sob, one faint struggle, and your spirit takes its flight to the great beyond.

"I'd Never Miss Seeing Jesus"

One day your name will appear in the obituary column. The news will travel like lightning that you have passed away. The undertaker will be called, and you will be laid quietly in a casket. Your family and loved ones will stand with tear-bathed eyes around the breathless body. You are gone, to return no

more. Where will your spirit be then? Which road are you going to choose? Remember, your choice is very, very important. It means Heaven or hell. No one can sidestep his or her own responsibility or the result of that choice, because that choice has eternal consequences. Have you made the choice to follow Jesus? Is He dearer and nearer to you than anything in this world? The consequences of choosing the wrong master and living after the flesh means eternal death.

When that broad road finally discharges its travelers into hell, those very indulgences that were too hard to give up will be craved, but they will be unattainable. Someone may say, "I would get saved if it were not for these cigarettes. I don't think I can give them up. Alcohol and drugs are my lifestyle." All those things are going to be missing when you come to the end of life's journey. Why not give them up now while you have the opportunity to do something about your soul's condition?

I want to encourage you, saint of God, as a traveler on the narrow road. You can look forward to crossing the river, because just

beyond the river is your reward. It will be a beautiful, peaceful time. The kind Shepherd will guide you through the swelling river. Yes, you will be home at last, home to receive your reward for faithfully traveling the narrow road. Heaven is a beautiful place where the angels are singing! No words can describe it. You will not have any more hills or mountains to climb, and no more valleys to pass through. You will experience peace and happiness forever in the presence of the Lord your God. If you will live godly every day, you will enjoy endless blessings for all eternity. An old song says: "*I'd never miss seeing Jesus, I'd never miss seeing loved ones, Who've gone on before. I'd never trade forever, for a few days down here. I'd never miss Heaven for the world.*"

Which road are you traveling? I wonder if you would be honest enough to say, "I am not on the strait and narrow road," and then pray and ask God to save you. It would be a move that you would never regret.

(Compact Disc TR-485E)

Meeting Announcements

Mt. Pleasant, PA

October 7-9

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Evangelist: Brother Allen Polston, New Castle, Indiana
Service times: Fri. 7:00 p.m., Sat. 4:00 p.m., and Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Paul Prinkey, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666. Telephone: 724-547-2151

Summersville, WV

October 24-30

REVIVAL: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd., Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Brother Calvin L. Foster, Kensett, Arkansas
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Sat. 6:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders at telephone: 304-872-4047
Visit our website @ www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com

Mt. Pleasant, PA

October 28-30

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Evangelist: Brother Mike Hufford, Springfield, Ohio
Service times: Fri. 7:00 p.m., Sat. 4:00 p.m., and Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Paul Prinkey, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666. Telephone: 724-547-2151

Fall 2011 Camp Meeting Recordings

Recrd. No.	Date	Message Title	Minister
TR-840	7-31-11	How Spiritual Is the Atmosphere in Your Home?	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-841		The Remedy for Sin	Bro. Roger L. Decker
TR-842	8-01-11	Why Are So Many People Dying in Their Sins?	Bro. Allen Polston
TR-843		The Beatitudes, Part 1—"Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit"	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-844		Money	Bro. Calvin Foster
TR-845	8-02-11	God Stands up for the Underdog	Bro. Paul Prinkey
TR-846		The Beatitudes, Part 2—"Blessed Are They That Mourn"	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-847		"It Is Written"	Bro. Larry Dishman
TR-848	8-03-11	How Are You Using Your Testimony?	Bro. Leamon Whitehead
TR-849		The Beatitudes, Part 3—"Blessed Are the Meek"	
TR-850		<i>(Due to a recording error, this message is not completely understandable.)</i> The Pride of Life	Bro. E. David Stegmeier Bro. Calvin Foster
TR-851	8-04-11	Opinions	Bro. Richard Talbot
TR-852		The Beatitudes, Part 4—"Blessed Are They Which Do Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness"	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-853		Are You Listening?	Bro. Calvin Foster
TR-854	8-05-11	The Peril of Prosperity	Bro. Mike Hufford
TR-855		The Beatitudes, Part 5—"Blessed Are the Merciful"	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-856		Self-Righteousness	Bro. Calvin Foster
TR-857	8-06-11	The Beatitudes, Part 6—"Blessed Are the Pure in Heart"	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-858		Help in Overcoming Sin	Bro. Larry Dishman
TR-859	8-07-11	Buying Your Own Ticket to Hell	Bro. Larry Dishman
TR-860		The Beatitudes, Part 7—"Blessed Are the Peacemakers," "Blessed Are They Which Are Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake," and "Blessed Are Ye, When Men Shall Revile You . . . for My Sake"	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-861		The God of the Mountain Is Still God of the Valley	Bro. Larry Dishman
TM-260	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #1	
TM-261	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #2	
TM-262	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #3	
TM-263	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #4	
TM-264	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #5	
TM-265	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #6	
TM-266	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Songs #7	
	2011	Children's Program, Children's Choir Songs, & Dramatized Story	
	2011	Fall Camp Meeting Choir Songs # 1 (1 CD) & Choir Songs # 2 (1 CD)	
	2011	All the Morning Fall Camp Meeting Messages in MP3 Format (1 CD)	
	2011	All the Evening Fall Camp Meeting Messages in MP3 Format (1 CD)	
	2011	All the Afternoon Teaching Messages & Youth Services in MP3 Format (1 CD)	
	2011	All the Songs for the Fall Camp Meeting in MP3 Format (1 CD)	

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