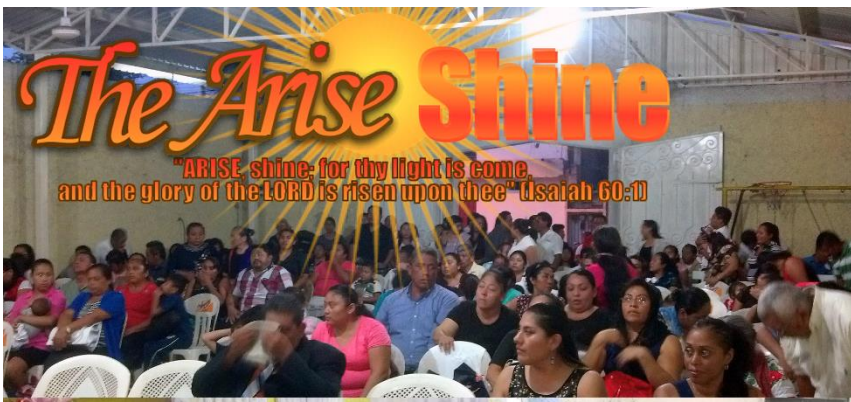


The Arise Shine

"ARISE-shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1)



From the Desk of...

James C. Nabors, General Overseer



A district convention was conducted on July 29-30, 2017, in Cancun Mexico. On Saturday morning, we conducted a ministers' seminar concerning the work of the Church. At the end of the seminar, there was a question and answer session that lasted several hours, covering a variety of subjects. The sisters of the church had prepared a wonderful meal consisting of chicken and rice with several vegetables in broth. It was delicious! The heat was extreme about 115 degrees Fahrenheit inside the building. Saturday evening service began with a wonderful song service. We were blessed to have a mariachi band with us who are members of the Church. A very spirited Victory Leaders march was followed by an altar call, with many being blessed of the Lord. Pastor Trinidad Lopez closed the evening with a wonderful message. Sunday Morning began with a wonderful music and song service. I was blessed to minister the Word in which glory came down; when the Spirit of the Lord moves, it is as if there are no language barriers. It was a wonderful blessing for brothers and sisters to worship together in Spirit and in Truth.

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The Arise Shine is an official publication of The Church of God with James. C. Nabors, General Overseer, Editor and Publisher; K. Scott Hatton, Assistant Editor and Publishing Committee Chairman. Those desiring information or wishing to submit articles or testimonies for publication may contact the Assistant Editor at the following E-mail address: kscotthatton@yahoo.com. All materials submitted are subject to editing without notification and become the property of The Church of God and will not be returned. Visit us on-line at www.the-churchofgod.net or at www.laiglesiadedios.net.

GENERAL OVERSEER'S ANNUAL ADDRESS

to the 110th General Assembly of The Church of God

“LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!”

INTRODUCTION

Once again we come together as The Church of God. Not going to be the Church, but as His Church. What a distinct honor that He has vested upon His people. It is not because of our goodness or grace that we are assembled here in this place, but rather we have come to continue to build upon the cherished foundations of our past. We are here to build upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets with Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone; to build a structure, a house, a dwelling place, an inner sanctum, a sanctuary if you please for the most High God.

Twelve months have passed since we were seated together, but it seems only as yesterday that we were in one another's presence. We take time to reflect on the past 12 months of service to the King. There have been disappointments, but also great Victories have been won. It seems that in every generation of time there have been men and women of God who have stood staunch with nerves of steel against the forces of evil and wrong doing. They could have been taken to jail, but they would not give in. Torture could come even to the point of death, but these saints of God would not give up their resolve and fidelity to Christ and His Church. For the Church,

this past year has been a time of labor, a time of toil, and a time of travail. The thousands of our precious brothers and sisters who are dedicated members of The Church of God have given wonderful service and labor of love. Every decade has produced its men filled with the fullness of Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost for times such as these. This present generation is certainly no exception to the rule. Thank God for The Church of God!

To understand that God has raised us up and placed you and me in His great plan is almost too good to be true. To read of men such as Abraham, Moses and Elijah as well as all of the Apostles that were in this same plan (this same Church) and to know that they kept their composure, perfect composure in each battle that they faced is wonderful, but it goes deeper or further than this. We at times take this acknowledgment of their stand as a given, or simply coincidence or we do not pay it much concern, but no my friend, the trying of our faith in any generation of The Church of God is fulfilling a great role or part in His ultimate plan. When we stop to think about this, that they had their part now we ours, it is simply overwhelming. A. J. Tomlinson once said: “Angles are our spectators, devils are our opposers, but this part has to be enacted as

well as any other.” (14th AA 1919). Some may have gone from our sides, but I would rather have His presence and approval than anything of this world. As my father often stated when things or circumstances were rough, “stay sweet in your soul”. It is imperative that we walk softly, keep a sweet attitude and have sweet fellowship and unity of the Spirit. Let us be mindful of the fact that every Victory given these past 12 months came from above. He has kept us thus far and He will gently lead us through to Victory! *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth*” (Psalms 124:8). **“LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!”**

THE ASSEMBLY

The 110th General Assembly of The Church of God has arrived. We have been in an atmosphere that has been so pleasant as well as Divine, the very presence of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. The fellowship one with another has been unbounded and the fellowship of the Spirit grander still. The Church of God is one. “The members are to be so closely united that it can be said of them that they are one heart and one soul. They are all to speak the same thing and have no divisions. They are to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in

the same judgment.” (8th AA 1917) We certainly can confirm these words for this 110th General Assembly.

The General Assembly gives us an opportunity to reflect and give thanks for all that He has done. Each of us have been moved by His presence, encouraged by the powerful preaching of His Word, the breath of the Holy Ghost so Divine; we have sang together, prayed together and been blessed in fellowship as one.

Surely it can be said by each of us “... *how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” (Psalm 133:1) We need these blessings. Amen! We need this encouragement! We need this fellowship! Though we are few in number, yet we are bound together as one. I am assured that Heaven’s angels are near! What great love binds us together in one accord, in one great Body, the Body of Christ, the great Church of God! Thank God for another year. Thank God for another General Assembly, the 110th General Assembly of The Church of God!! Thank God for the **Breath** of the Holy Ghost and the witness of the Spirit in and on His House! This should encourage each of us and cause us to thirst, and thirst and thirst and thirst to **“LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!”**

“THAT THE CHURCH MAY BE SUBJECT UNTO CHRIST”

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church

is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5: 23-27, 29, 30)

The only biblical conclusion concerning the Church is that it is His Body and He is definitely the Head of her. It is very evident that the Apostle Paul is stating to the Ephesian church: The Church is the Body of Christ and He, Jesus is the Head and that we are members of His Church and are to be totally submitted to His authority. This means that our allegiance is to Christ as the Head of the Body and to He alone. Christ is the Head, the Savior, the Sanctifier, the Purifier, the Nourisher, the Unifier, the Protector, the all unto The Church of God! Understanding this and acknowledging this, that Christ is Head, there is therefore no valid reason for us not to submit totally to His every control and authority, since He gave Himself for it. “...*which he hath purchased with his own blood.*” (Acts 20: 28) The destiny of the Church is for her to be presented unto Him spotless, faultless, blameless, holy, perfect and glorious. Amen! This is our destiny. However, the glorious part of this will not occur until the

membership completely surrenders their self-will, our ego, pride, talent, our abilities and all aspects of our being unto Him. Then the song “He is Lord” will not simply be a song but will be a reality. The religious world at large (the other sheep) must see the Body of Christ free from self-will and full of the Holy Ghost, one that is moved in the demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God. At times or might I say in our recent pass, we may have sang a good song, we give a beautiful testimony, we preach a good message, but too often we live a life of self-will instead of living in His Perfect Will! “...*that in all things he might have the preeminence.*” (Colossians 1:18) When we are truly subject unto Him, He will have the preeminence. But be assured saint of God, His Church will be subject to Him in all things. It may not be me or you, but some people will submit to Him in all things. Yes, it is true, it is not our human nature to be subject to others, (we rebel against that) but the scripture is clear: “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” (James 4:7) The nature of the old man that causes us to be rebellious, arrogant, disobedient and proud must be crucified. A bad attitude that causes a person to be constantly critical of all things in the Church and in the leadership of the Church, be it on a local, regional, or general level will destroy that individual. This bad attitude that is displayed in the rebellious, proud, and arrogant professor of religion must be eradicated. Paul said: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless*

I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” (Galatians 2:20, 21)

Surrendering to His will is the only path to victory for us individually. The flesh must be conquered, and it must be crucified. Be assured the Church will reach this place of submission and freedom in the Spirit and then the Breath of the Holy Ghost will have His complete freedom to work and move among us. It is impossible to be filled with the Holy Ghost and do nothing that the Spirit requires of us to do. That just will not work. However, we of the last days Church of God know the scripture well: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Revelation 19: 7, 8) Praise God that day is surely coming! **“LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!”**

THE 1st GENERATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD & BEYOND

Don't you believe we need somebody with us? Don't you believe we need to “LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE”? Of a surety we need a higher

POWER! We need the Father! We need the Son! We need the Holy Ghost! We have been trying to do this JOB alone for far too long. I do not believe that this was intentional on our part, or that it was a planned effort to operate without His perfect guidance, but simply it is the work of the enemy to hinder or halt the advancements of The Church of God. But we NEED HELP! We are in desperate need of help! How many will say with me? I need you sweet HOLY GHOST! This is exactly where the 1st generation of The Church of God found themselves to be. They were void of, or at the very least lacking in His Divine direction.

The Apostle Paul said it this way concerning the life that we are to live in Christ Jesus. He gave guidelines dealing with the aspects of suffering with Christ even to the point of dying with Him.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and

shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4: 7-18) If we were able or could take a trip in our hearts and our minds to a place called Bethany, several 100 years ago, and listen to our Lord speak to this 1st generation of the Church, we would hear Him say “...*These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*” (Luke 24:44)

What we take today as common Church of God doctrine and truth that we preach, teach and shout about in our churches today, in actuality the 1st generation Church was “terrified of” according to the Word of God. They were “frightened”. They thought that they “had seen a spirit”. They were “troubled”. I doubt, had we been in their shoes that we would have been in any better condition to receive what was being said and done. But we have got to understand that their world (the 1st generation Church's world) had clasped around them! Their

Messiah was dead. His body was gone from the tomb. Their minds were horrified because to the Jewish mind the word Messiah meant that there would be no defeat. It meant no death. In fact, Messiah to them was another term for being invincible. Their Messiah was to be a Conquering Hero. One that was able to call legions of Angels down from Heaven, not one that could be defeated! Can you understand and see their heartbreak? They were devastated. They were destitute. Concern gripped their hearts. Fear entered in. Seemingly they had no place to turn, no place to go. Jesus was gone. They felt as if all hope was lost. They were clinging to the only glimmer of hope or life available to them. The Word of God says: *“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.”* (Luke 24: 45-53)

Listen to what happened; they went to Jerusalem “with great joy”, joy of anticipation, joy of strength, joy of sanctification, joy of knowing that His breath had warmed their hearts again. The revelation of the Word changed their demeanor. Their whole attitude was changed.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is

that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:” (Acts 2: 1-8, 12-18)

I am still talking about “LETTING THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!” If there had been a newspaper in that day, the front-page headline would have read: “God-Hungry Men Find God”. What earnest zeal took hold of this new infant Church!!! *“...As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”* (Psalms 42:1) As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so the souls of the upper-room congregation panted for the living God. They had gone as far as they could go; spiritually naked they crawled before Him, to be clothed upon with the Spirit and Power of the Super-Natural! They were empty vessels that thirsted to be filled, yes they knew their limitations...power-less they tarried until they were endued with power from on high.

Jesus said, *“But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you”* (Acts 1: 8). We too, this generation for too long have been longing to be filled and filled and filled, to a bubbling over of the Spirit until we become beside ourselves in the Spirit, enraptured only by Him, the

Divine, to a place of majesty in Him. Without question, the greatest need of our generation is to move into a worship service with the Divine! A Holy Ghost submerging in the Spirit until we are so drenched (intoxicated) on this New Wine to the point of Spiritual intoxication! A revival in the Spirit of the Holy Ghost!!! Jesus said, "...but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with Power from on high." (Luke 24: 49) That word endued means to put on oneself, be clothed with. We are to be clothed with power. Except this power was not only to be on you but in you! What a powerful directive from the Head of the Church. Near His closing hours on earth, He issued to them (the Church) a directive, directive that has still been hand delivered to this last day's Church of God. I'm still talking about "LETTING THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!" I said we need a REVIVAL in the Spirit of the Holy Ghost! Relieving us of all preconceived ideas of how it is to be, and begin to walk in a newness of life by the Spirit, unlike anything that we have ever experienced before!!! Getting rid of all thoughts of how we are to act, how we are to move, how we are to look, how we are to enjoy this wave of the Spirit! We too often look to who's in charge and watch them, but greater is the need of our attention being on God.

"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." (Acts 2: 2) "And suddenly"-immediately, seemingly out of nowhere, all at

once, with a quick action. "There came a sound"- a noise, an echo, a roaring as of the sea that came down suddenly "from heaven". It was air encompassing all areas. 1 Peter 1:12 states that "*the Holy Ghost was sent down from Heaven*" "as of a rushing"-literally a violent, yet non-threatening wind blew in. It was "mighty", as a violent force; it was a powerful mighty strength, push of wind, filled with mighty works... wonderful works exercised for all to see and hear.

Wind is literally a blowing blast, a blowing Wind signifies the breath of God. Wind signifies the breath of life, to breathe out as with a force. The Word says in John 20: 22, "*that Jesus breathed on them, and said receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" No doubt this upper-room congregation never anticipated "*the rushing mighty wind*". They were staggered by the "*tongues of fire*" and were all amazed that they had "*utterance*" that could not be defined! But they looked to God! Why were they so intent? Why was this hunger so fierce within them? They were not only spiritually naked, they **knew** that they were spiritually naked. They **knew** that they were destitute. They were empty, longing to be filled, powerless, yet they tarried to be "endued". Church of God, if our experience in the Holy Ghost has become stale or stagnant, or He hasn't spoken through you in a while, we need a refilling, a refreshing with the Divine. What brought about this REVIVAL? What happened? What caused "The Wind of the Spirit To Blow Throughout the House?" The Bible says, "*they were all with one*

accord in one place." This was a praying Church. They were in one mind and one accord and the Spirit descended upon them. Amen! Still yet today the Spirit falls upon praying people. This was a concerned Church. In the upper room every known step they could take had been taken in accordance to Jesus command. We today want to see a super-infusion, but first we must individually as well as collectively do everything according to His command for this REVIVAL to take place.

They felt their inadequacies and reached out for Him to make them adequate to minister to the needs of their world. This was a contrite Church. They cried and prayed. They were sincere and broken hearted. Imagine what must have flooded their minds during these ten days. I believe that there was a spirit of confession. They had failed Him. No doubt some had lied about Him. Some had doubted Him, and all (without exception) had forsaken Him. Confessing, confessing, confessing- surely He was washing their eyes with tears! It's been said "there's only two places for the Christian man or woman to be in. One is in the dust. The other is in Heaven." Only in one or the other are we safe. This congregation was in the dust, seeking that power from on high. For that super blaze to set again within us, we must once again find ourselves in the dust crying out to God! I know this early Church was waiting for the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. But in parallel, aren't we waiting and seeking for a super outpouring of a depth of and in the Spirit? It must and will come the same way.

History has revealed that this upper room, Holy Ghost inflamed congregation turned their world up-side down. The Holy Ghost led them through persecutions, punishments, prisons, shipwrecks and hazards of all kinds. But the emphasis must be placed on the fact that He led them through! He didn't leave them alone. He was with them all way, and I am assured that He will be with us to the very end, AMEN! This was a confessing Church, a praying Church, and this prayer brought them into being of one accord. They were all in one accord, no criticism, no finger pointing, and no accusations toward any individual that might be hindering the promise of the coming power. All confessed that they were nothing but saved by grace, bankrupt of self while humbling themselves and seeking His Face! *"And they were all filled"* Acts 2: 4. They were all impacted with a force of air. It was of a Heavenly nature. It was Divine air. The Holy Ghost of God came in. The Holy **Guest** of God came in. God's breath impacted them with a force. He took up His residence; He took up His abode. *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."* (Mark 16: 15-18) That death grip of Satan must be broken from off the backs

of His Church as well as the Kingdom of God. Those shackles must be taken off. Freedom must come. That depth of His Spirit must be realized. He's calling us, THIS generation into that hidden chamber with HIM! Jesus did not only tell the early Church, but also you and I today to liberate the captives, lift the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free! Yes, even to the point of raising the dead! Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give". The promise still yet today rings out, "Ye Shall Receive POWER, HOLY GHOST POWER, HOLY GHOST AUTHORITY, HOLY GHOST ANNOINTING!" This freshness of Pentecostal POWER will make the demons of hell shake and tremble and cry out in fear, for they are no match against the Holy Power of God! The "WIND" is blowing. The CALL has gone forth. The SHAKING and TREMBLING is occurring! **"LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!"** Some have accepted the challenge. Some have been clothed in HIS majesty and power, but yet there is more, much more, that He desires to give. That word "baptized" as used in the New Testament means to dye a garment or to dip to change colors. That same imagery is being used here. When you are baptized in the Holy Ghost, you become a different color! Something different happens to you. You become impacted with power, empowered from God. The 1st generation of The Church of God were to stay in Jerusalem until they had been baptized, colored yet deeper in the power of the Holy Ghost. Sure you can tell a difference when you are

saved. Even more so when you have been sanctified wholly, but especially so when you're Holy Ghost filled! You're a different color altogether. You are changed because something new has happened to you! The GUEST with a force has come in and you have been changed!

Now remember, we have been traveling in our mind in this address. Travel with me again if you will. This infant CHURCH just a few weeks prior to this time were assembled behind closed doors, for fear of the Jews. But now a holy boldness is in them. They were empowered with the Holy Ghost, and now they speak with authority as Christ did. I say, **"LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!"** In our generation of time, as it was then, it was never intended by Jesus that His Church operate without the power that the Holy Ghost gives! It is still a commandment of the Lord to be filled with the Spirit. The key to our victories today is in us keeping the ministry of the SPIRIT in His rightful place. There is no doubt that we need Him and His ministry in The Church of God today. But to recognize the need is not enough. We must welcome HIM in! We must ask for Him to come in to take the lead! Giving Him the liberty that He deserves and relinquishing any self-accredited role that we may have or think that we have. Position, office, power, license, Bishop, Deacon, Evangelist means nothing, a big fat "O" without the Power of the Holy Ghost! You may hold a license or have a position in The Church of

God, but unless your office has been validated on the altar of God, purged with the precious blood of Jesus, baptized in the Holy Ghost and Fire, it means nothing or at the least very little. When the “WIND” of the Holy Ghost blows into our vessel or house, we become qualified. Never has it been more crucial than it is today for the Church to have holy, honest, God-fearing men and women of God, who keep His Word, men without spot, unrebukeable, men of honest report, FULL of the Holy Ghost and Fire. And let me add a warning. If Jesus, the Head of the Church, can add leadership to His Body, He can certainly remove or subtract leadership. He must lead us individually, and He alone must lead His Church! Do we want HIM? One writer said, “Spirit of God, descend upon my heart. Wean it from earth. Through all its pulses move. Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art, and make me to love Thee as I ought to love.” We must seek Him! To “LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!”

CONCLUSION

Great responsibilities have been placed upon this generation of The Church of God. We have been entrusted to carry the battle to the gate. To help make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery. We are to train leaders for the perfecting of the saints. However, in the natural, we are few in number, little money in our bank accounts, and seemly every time we stand strong for the Lord, devastation walks in. There are so many needs, challenges and

obstacles that we face, that in flesh we know that we are not able. But the theme of this General Assembly is what will ultimately allow us to complete the work. The Breath of the Holy Ghost is up to every task! We need men and women who are not looking for votes or riches, but who are about the Father’s business, men who are not just doing a job, but who are fulfilling their ministry and their calling. We need men and women who are persuaded in the cause of Christ and His Church and are willing to lay it all on the line to complete the task set before. We need men and women who are willing to join the ranks of those who are already in action and fulfilling the places of those who have already passed on and gone before. God will qualify such men and women who are not tied down to this world and who will be led by the Spirit! The hardships and burdens that one must endure will give vent to true faithfulness and untiring service unto Christ and His Church. Be assured that our Lord is aware and is alongside each of us leading the way. Church of God, how do you and I see it now? Some may be discouraged, seeing the Church as nothing as it once was or how it should be. Some may be discouraged by the small size of the army and the temple or by all that we have lost. He sees our tears concerning events that have not turned in our favor as yet. But let us look to what He has to say to each of us today. “...*be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my*

spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” (Haggai 2:4, 5) Despite our size, despite the way things may look, we are not to fear. In fact, we should not to be controlled by the circumstances of our past or held captive by what the enemy has done. Let us be careful not to associate numbers with blessings or finances with power. Riches or poverty should not blind us to the fact that we are His! The Glory of this HOUSE is not in the wisdom of men, bank accounts, or numbers, but it rests solely on the presence of Christ the solid ROCK! If you are good wheat, the Church is your garner, and if you are homeless, it is your HOUSE! “...*in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.*” (Haggai 2:9) To all the other sheep who are scattered abroad we of The Church of God want you to feel and know and see that we are determined to be gentle in our speech and kind in our demeanor. I take opportunity to thank each member of The Church of God for your courage, kindness and love that you have given to Christ and The Church of God this Assembly year. It is our prayer that all of God’s precious sheep will soon be in the safety of the one fold. Amen!

What God has been doing is truly wonderful. As we “LET THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT BLOW THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE!” All for Christ and The Church of God.

James C. Nabors,
General Overseer
The Church of God

Sometimes Life Stinks! (A Lazarus Story)

Amy R. Hatton, General ABM Coordinator

We do a lot of things to ensure that we don't stink. We shower. We use soap. "Aren't you glad you use Dial? Don't you wish everybody did?" We use deodorant. "Raise your hand if you're Sure." We spray perfume. We light a candle. We open air fresheners. We even spray Febreze "for the odors that we've gone noseblind to." I bought vanilla scented trash bags. We recently had a guest who stayed in our home. While in our kitchen he asked, "What smells so good?" To which I proudly answered, "My garbage!" Needless to say, he gave me a confused look.

Yet, sometimes, despite our best efforts and attempts to cover it up, life still stinks! Both literally and figuratively. I have come to find out that stinky trash, even masked by the scent of a vanilla scented trash bag, is still stinky trash on the inside.

Sometimes school stinks! Sometimes our job stinks! Sometimes our home life stinks! Sometimes our finances stink! Sometimes our health stinks! And no amount of trying to cover it up with candles, deodorant, or perfume will hide the stench. Every now and then, no matter how you look at it, life just stinks! Even for Christians. Just ask Joseph and Job. I am sure that they would tell you, "Yes, sometimes life just stinks."

John Chapter 11

1 Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

Mary and Martha's brother got sick so they did the obvious. They "sent" for Jesus. They "sent" for their Lord and Savior. They "sent" for the healer. What happens when we face a problem? We "send" for Jesus. We "send" for our Lord and Savior. We "send" for our healer. Although God already knows the desires of our hearts and He is fully aware of what we have need of, He wants us to "send for Him." He wants us to call upon Him and lay our problems before Him, casting our cares at His feet.

Mary and Martha were not strangers calling on Jesus. They had a personal relationship and friendship with Jesus. Sometimes prayers aren't answered in the fashion that we

want them to be because the person praying the prayer is a stranger to Jesus. People think that they will wait and establish a relationship with Jesus when they are in need or in trouble. They plan to call out to God on their death bed. But then they are just a stranger asking another stranger for help. Jesus isn't a Santa Clause that we ask for presents once a year. Jesus wants to be our everyday friend and companion.



Mary and Martha knew Jesus. He was their friend. Mary anointed the Lord with oil and wiped His feet with her hair. Martha had served Him. They had communed together. Jesus had stayed in their home. They had established a relationship. They were a friend to Jesus. They "loved" Jesus. And they knew that Jesus "loved" them back. Even bold enough to say, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." They knew Jesus "loved" their brother Lazarus. What a beautiful thing to know! I want to have a relationship with Jesus. I want to commune with Him. Worship Him. Invite Him into my home. Establish a relationship with Him. Be a friend to Jesus. "Love" Him. And be assured that He knows and "loves" me back!

4 When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." The purpose of Lazarus' sickness was "not" for "death," the purpose was "for the glory of God." The ending wasn't the "death" part, the ending was "God" getting the "glory." Yet when Lazarus actually died, if you told Mary and Martha, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." I think their response would have been, "Well, you could have fooled me. It looks like this sickness is "unto death." All Mary and Martha could see was the "death" part. They couldn't see further than the "death." And who could blame them? God had a plan that went beyond "death." But Mary and Martha could only see the small picture. Only God had access to the big picture.

The struggles that we face in this life have a purpose. The purpose isn't always to cause us heartache and pain. The purpose might just be "for the glory of God." The heartache and pain isn't the ending of our story, "God" getting the "glory" is the ending of our story. Yet, when the pain comes,

if Jesus tells us, **“This is not unto pain, but for the glory of God.”** I think our response would be, “Well, you could have fooled me. It looks like **“pain”** to me!” All we can see is the **“pain”** part. All we can focus on is the **“pain”** part. We can’t see any further than the **“pain.”** And who can blame us? God has a plan that goes beyond hurt and **“pain.”** But we can only see the small picture, the here and now. Only But God has access to the big picture.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)

If only we could **“rejoice”** in **“the fiery trial,”** instead of focusing on the suffering, believing that the purpose is **“for the glory of God.”** Lazarus’ sickness had a purpose. It was all part of God’s plan, **“for the glory of God.”** We can take comfort that *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”* (Psalms 37:23a). God has a purpose for us. When we endure **“trials”** and tribulations, it isn’t bad luck. It isn’t coincidence. It isn’t by chance. It isn’t by accident. God has a purpose. And the purpose goes beyond pain and suffering and death. The purpose is **“for the glory of God.”**

Mary and Martha came up with a plan. Call upon Jesus. Send for Jesus. Jesus will come and heal our brother. It sounds like a good plan to me. It was logical. They loved Jesus. Jesus loved them. Lazarus was sick. Jesus was the healer. Send for Jesus to heal Lazarus. Problem solved. A win/win situation. Everyone is happy. They had it all figured out. The only problem with Mary and Martha’s plan was that it didn’t match Jesus’ plan. Jesus had an alternate plan. His plan was to wait, **“for the glory of God.”**

We are good at coming up with plans. We are logical. Call upon Jesus. Tell Him what we need, how we need it, and when we need it. We give Jesus instructions on how to fix our problems. We figure it out. And if Jesus just follows our instructions, we’ll be happy. The only problem is that our plan doesn’t always match God’s plan. The bible says, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:9)

5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Jesus’ delay was not because of lack of **“love”** for Mary, Martha or Lazarus. When Jesus doesn’t answer us immediately we can start questioning His **“love”** for us. Maybe Mary and Martha did the same thing. They could have said, “I guess we don’t mean as much to Jesus as we

thought we did. If Jesus **“loved”** us, He would have dropped everything to come to us.” It’s easy to have a pity party and convince ourselves that we are unloved, even by God. But **“love”** had nothing to do with it. God’s plan took precedence over everything else

I’m sure that Jesus hurt, that Lazarus was suffering. I’m sure that Jesus hurt, that Mary and Martha were mourning. Yet Jesus knew the big picture. His **“ways”** were **“higher than”** Mary and Martha’s **“ways,”** and His **“thoughts than”** Mary and Martha’s **“thoughts.”** Jesus could see the outcome, the end of the story. Jesus knew that every tear would be dried, and every hurt would be healed.

Jesus doesn’t turn a blind eye to our suffering. I’m sure that He hurts when we hurt. The difference is that He knows the big picture. His **“ways”** are **“higher than”** our **“ways,”** and His **“thoughts than”** our **“thoughts.”** Jesus sees our outcome, the end of our story. He knows that one day every tear will be dried, and every hurt will be healed.

Despite his **“love,”** Jesus **“abode two days still.”** Jesus heard of their distress. Mary and Martha were in a hurry to call on Jesus. But Jesus wasn’t in a hurry to answer them. Mary and Martha’s time, and Jesus’ time, were not in synch. I can fully understand Mary and Martha’s time. They had a deadline. Lazarus was getting sicker and they needed Jesus to arrive, NOW. Sometimes we feel fully justified in our timeline. We give God a deadline because we need Him to arrive on the scene right NOW.

Mary and Martha went through three steps. First, they had a relationship with Jesus. Secondly, they called on Jesus when they had a need. Thirdly, they had faith that Jesus would come and heal their brother. Yet, Lazarus still died. This is where you start realizing in this story that at times life’s not fair and sometimes life stinks!

How many times have we went through the same three steps? First, we have a relationship with Jesus. Secondly, we call on Jesus when we have a need. Thirdly, we have faith that Jesus will come and meet our need. Yet, Jesus does not come. This is where we realize that at times life is not fair and sometimes life stinks!

17 Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.

Not only was Lazarus a little bit dead, he was very dead. He was dead as a doornail. He was graveyard dead. And for **“four days”** Mary and Martha had been grieving and mourning their brother without Jesus. At times you might feel like your circumstance isn’t a little bit dead, but it is very dead. **“Four days”** dead! Dead as a doornail. Graveyard dead.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, **if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.**

“If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Martha had so much faith in Jesus that she knew without a shadow of a doubt, if Jesus **“had just been there,”** Lazarus **“would not have died.”** I think she was saying this is how much I trust and believe in you! Martha didn’t say to Jesus, “Lazarus’s sickness got so bad that there was nothing that you could have done.” No, she had FAITH! She BELIEVED! She didn’t doubt. She sent for Jesus to fix everything! And still Jesus didn’t answer her on time! It sounds to me like she had complete faith in Jesus.

However, **“if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”** might have had a second meaning. Maybe Martha was blaming Jesus. “It’s your fault. You had the power. You could have saved him. You didn’t do your job.” It is easy to blame Jesus when things don’t turn out the way that we ask for them too. Especially when we have the faith! **“If thou hadst been here!”** “You could have spoken the word and fixed the situation!”

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

I think this was Martha’s way of saying, even though you let me down, I still believe in you. You are still my Savior. Next time, I’m still going to send for you. That’s a big thing. Many people lose faith in God when He doesn’t answered their prayer in their way. What a wonderful thing to be able to say, **“even now,”** (even after Lazarus died) **“whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”** **“Even now,”** I will still believe in you for next time.

“Even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” What a wonderful thing it is for us to be able to say, even when Jesus does not answer our prayers in our way. Even after losing everything, we should still be able to say, “I still believe in you. You are still my Savior. Next time, I’m still going to send for you.” In the words of Job, **“LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”** Job1:21b.

23 Jesus saith unto her, **Thy brother shall rise again.**

This was Jesus saying, “Martha, you can still believe in me **this time.**” Through this, Jesus was saying, **“so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”** Jesus wants us to know that even when our circumstances look impossible, even when our hope for an answer is dead, He is saying, **“Your dead shall rise again.”** Although it is dead and buried, I am going to restore it.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall **rise again in the resurrection** at the last day.

Martha was still stuck in **her ways.** Lazarus is dead. It’s too late this time. He will **“rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”** She believed that Jesus would come through for Lazarus next time. When Jesus says to us, **“Your dead shall rise again!”** We respond the same way that Martha did. The **“dead shall rise again at the last day.”** There are circumstances that we’ve given up hope on. It’s too late for us here and now. But when all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. We believe that Jesus will come through for us next time. But Jesus wasn’t interested in next time. He was getting ready to do something this time.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: **he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:**

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. **Believest thou this?**

27 She saith unto him, **Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.**

Jesus said, **“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”** **“Believest thou this?”** Martha’s response, **“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ.”** Martha answered “Yes.” Which was a step in the right direction. But she didn’t answer Jesus’ question. She deflected a little bit. Jesus said, **“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Believest thou this?”** And Martha answered, **“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ.”** Martha didn’t fully grasp what Jesus was about to do. There was no precedence for someone being risen from the dead after such a long time. It was impossible. So impossible that Martha didn’t even think to ask Jesus for it. Martha was still stuck in her ways, her thoughts, and her time.

What if Jesus is saying to us today, **“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Believest thou this?”** Our response is, **“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ.”** We answer “Yes.” Which is a step in the right direction. But we aren’t answering Jesus’ question. We deflect a little bit. Jesus is saying, **“He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Believest thou this?”** And we are answering, **“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ.”** It is easier to answer, “Yes you are Christ” than it is to answer the original question. Do we believe that Jesus can bring our dead hope back to life? That’s a harder question. **“Believest thou this?”**

We don’t fully grasp what Jesus is about to do in the Church and in our lives. There is no precedence for this, just like there was no precedence for Lazarus being raised from the dead after **“four days.”** We might believe that our problems aren’t just dead, they are dead as a doornail, graveyard dead.

They are impossible. So impossible that we don't even think to ask Jesus to raise our dead hope. We are still stuck in our ways, our thoughts, and our time. We are doing good just to say, "***Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ.***" But aren't you thankful that Jesus is not constrained to our ways, our thoughts, and our time? Jesus is saying to us, "so are ***my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***"

33 *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

Christ had sympathy and compassion. Just because He delayed his trip for "***the glory of God***" does not mean that he didn't share in the pain and suffering of his friends. He "***groaned***" and was "***troubled***" right along with them. Just because Jesus delays in answering our prayers "***for the glory of God,***" does not mean that He doesn't share in our pain and our suffering. He "***groans***" and is "***troubled***" right along with us.

34 *And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.*

35 *Jesus wept.*

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Psalms 30:5b.

38 *Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.*

39 *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.*

When Jesus told them to, "***Take ye away the stone,***" Martha made an excuse. "If you were here when it first happened, we could take away the stone. But you are '***four days***' too late!!! Not only is he dead, '***he stinks!***'" What do we say to Jesus, when he says, "***Take ye away the stone***"? "If you would have been here when everything first fell apart, we could roll '***away the stone***' and you could fix the situation. But you are too late. Our life isn't just messed up, it "***stinks!***"

You're "***four days***" too late! Like Mary and Martha, we pride ourselves in our relationship with Jesus. We have communed with Him. We have dined with Him. We have sat at His feet. We are His friend. We are His disciples. We don't believe in chance, bad luck, or coincidence. Therefore, we take what happens personally! We know that Jesus only had to speak the word, and our sickness would have been healed. We know that Jesus only had to speak the word and our home life would have been restored. We know that Jesus only had to speak the word and our finances would

have been restored. We know that Jesus only had to speak the word and our membership would have been restored. So when Jesus didn't show up when we "***sent for Him,***" we get offended.

Each day that Lazarus was sick, I bet Mary and Martha grew more and more impatient with Jesus. When Lazarus died, they must have lost hope. When Jesus finally showed up, I don't think they were saying better late than never. No. They must have been saying, "Why did you show up "***four days***" too late?" When Jesus shows up late for us, do we say, "Better late than never?" No. We say, "Why did you show up "***four days***" too late? You're a little late aren't you? We've already lost our congregation. We've already lost our finances. We've already lost our reputations. We've already lost everything. And where were you? All you would have had to do was speak the word, and you could have fixed everything. But now, Jesus, you're too late!"

Mary and Martha didn't think that Jesus was there to save the day. No. They were left with zero hope. It was over. It was finished. Lazarus was dead and buried and never coming back. "If only you'd been here '***four days***' ago, when we needed you, you could have fixed it. But now it's too late. Now he '***stinks!***'" Sometimes Jesus shows up in our lives so late, we aren't thinking that Jesus is here to save the day. No. We've been left with zero hope. It is over. It's finished. We've thrown in the towel. "If only you'd showed up earlier, when we needed you, you could have fixed it. Now our hope is dead. It '***stinks!***'"

I don't think Mary or Martha were happy to see Jesus. I don't think that they were relieved. I think that they were offended, hurt, and maybe mad. Why do I think that? Because that's the way I would have been. Because of the circumstances, it was human nature to have been hurt. But Jesus's "***ways were higher than***" Mary and Martha's "***ways.***"

There have been times that I have not been happy to see Jesus. I wasn't relived during all of the trials and tribulations, Jesus just stood by and let them happen. At times I've taken it personally. I've been offended. I've been hurt. Maybe mad. Because of the circumstances, it was human nature to be hurt. But God's "***ways are higher than our ways.***" On a personal note, I wasn't too happy to see Jesus eight hours in the waiting room during my son Alex's spine surgery and two days in intensive care. I had a personal relationship with my Savior. I "***sent for Him***" when Alex's spine continued to worsen. I had faith and believed that Jesus could heal Alex's spine. Yet, Jesus tarried. My plan was logical. I told God exactly what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. Yet my plan was not in synch with God's plan. It hurt me personally to see my son suffering, knowing that God could have spoken the word and

healed his body. Yet, God's "**ways are higher than**" my **ways.**"

It's not a great comfort when Jesus shows up "**four days**" late to your brother's funeral. And it's not a great comfort when Jesus shows up "**four days**" late, when your son is having major surgery. Yet I fully believe that God's "**ways are higher than**" our "**ways.**" God's time table is not our time table. God's "**thoughts**" are "**higher than**" our "**thoughts.**" God's plans are not our plans. If He delayed for Alex, it must be "**for the glory God.**" I may never understand it, but I trust that God will use Alex's spine surgery for His "**glory.**"

We spend a lifetime burying away things that "**stink.**" Hurt from our past, it "**stinks,**" so we bury it away. People that abandoned us, it "**stinks,**" so we bury it away. The financial mistakes that we make, it "**stinks,**" so we bury it away. When your good health fades away and you are only left with sickness, it "**stinks,**" so we bury it away. When bad things happen in our lives, we just bury them away. We do our best to seal them up. But behind closed doors, they still "**stink!**" The smell will eventually leak out; just like my vanilla scented trash bags could not contain the stench forever.

Although Jesus is saying, "**Take ye away the stone.**" Our response is much like Martha's, "**Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.**" We are ashamed for Jesus to look inside our tomb. "Jesus, you weren't here when I needed you. So why dig up the past now?" Now it's too late. It's unfixable

Before Martha could receive her miracle from Jesus, SHE had to roll "**away the stone.**" She had to physically remove what stood in the way between Jesus and her brother Lazarus. Before we can receive help from Jesus, before we can receive our miracle, we have to roll "**away the stone.**" We have to physically remove what is standing in the way between Jesus and things in our life that "**stink**" and we've buried away.

Martha was worried about Lazarus's smell. But Jesus smells the best when it "**stinks**" the worst!!! It is safe to say that, when Jesus arrived at Lazarus' tomb, many things "**stunk.**" The situation "**stunk.**" The attitudes "**stunk.**" The lack of faith "**stunk.**"

40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

When Lazarus, bound in his graveclothes, came forth out of the tomb, do you think the smell became better or worse? The situation "**stunk**" no more. The attitudes "**stunk**" no more. The belief certainly did not "**stink**" anymore. After Jesus' miracle, there was only the sweet smell and aroma of the Savior. Jesus waited, and He waited, and then He waited some more. Jesus waited for the situation to become as "**stinky**" as He wanted it to be. At that point, the sweet fragrance of His presence was perfectly clear. If the situation was not so "**stinky,**" the people would not have been as aware of His great work and sweet aroma.

When things get difficult and we start having a pity party, just remember, Jesus smells the best when it "**stinks**" the worst!!! When our life "**stinks,**" just remember, the "**stinkiest**" places are the best opportunities for the sweet smell of Jesus. Could it be that, to do His sweetest work, Jesus might have allowed a "**stinky**" situation in our lives? Before we get out the Fe-breeze to try to cover up the "**smelly**" circumstance, remember that Jesus smells the best when it **stinks** the worst!!!

Was Jesus too late? It depends on who you ask, and when you ask them. Ask Mary and Martha before the miracle and they would have without a doubt said, "Yes, Jesus was exactly "**four days**" too late. But after the miracle, they would have said that Jesus was right on time! God's time is always right on time. In God's time, Joseph waited 13 years. Abraham waited 25 years. Moses waited 40 years. Jesus waited 30 years. If God is making us wait, then we are in good company. "The best things come to those who wait" Heinz ketchup.

"Wait on the Lord. He makes all things beautiful in his time"
Is 60:22.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength" Isaiah 40:31a.

Women's Missionary Band

Teresa Metaxas, Women's Missionary Band



“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the

Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, [even] unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-20). “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:15-18). Our number one calling is to tell people about the Lord and His Church. People need to be told that they are not alone. People are searching for a higher purpose. People are looking. As Christians we need to remember that people are watching us. We cannot just slide by if we are having a bad day. God holds us to a high standard. One of the biggest hindrances of us being effective in our witness is our countenance. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). We need to live a life where people look at us and see something different in us. Sometimes people are more concerned with how they are dressed than about their countenance. It is important to dress and look holy, but it is more important to be holy. We live in a world where holiness is not very popular. It is not politically correct to stand up for anything. This world assumes that if we view something as sin, that we hate the person. But we are called to hate the sin and love the sinner. Although it is difficult to speak truth to this world, the Lord has given us the Holy Spirit to direct us on what we need to say, how we should say it, and who we need to say it to. We will never make everyone happy. But most of all, we need to make sure that are making God happy and pleasing unto Him. To reach this world, we cannot rely just on our intellect. “For as the heavens

are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). God’s thoughts are not limited to our thoughts. It does not matter what we think about it, it matters what God thinks about it. We need to listen to the Spirit. He will show us what to do. We need to follow the leading of the Lord. We can do little things every day that God wants us to. God gives us a discernment of Spirit. Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). We must listen and be guided by the voice of our Shepherd. The smallest good deed is better than the greatest good intention. God asks each one of us to be a servant of His. “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee...” (Jeremiah 1:5a). God has a plan for you. Before you were even born, He knew you. God wants you to have a life that is blessed by Him.



When God’s Spirit leads us, we need to yield to it. We need to make sure that we are doing everything that we can. If we cannot physically go to the nations, we need to be willing to do what God directs us to do right where we are. When we think about all the things God has done for us, sometimes we are almost ungrateful. We take His blessing for granted. Before too long, we can almost get bitter. If we are constantly complaining, nobody is going to want what we have. We want to let the Spirit blow over us until we are comforted by the Holy Spirit. God does not want us to be unhappy. The breeze of the Holy Spirit will make you comfortable again. Through this, we can reach the people that we are supposed to reach. God does not say, “I do not care how you do it, just get it done.” On the contrary, God says, “I am going to be there every step of the way.” Jesus knew that when He left this earth, those that He left behind were going to be devastated. So Jesus prayed for the Father to send us a Comforter. The world does not understand where we are coming from. But that does not mean that we do not strive to reach them.

People do not understand how we make it through such difficult times. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; [Even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall

be in you” (John 14:16-17). The difference between us and the world is that we have access to that Comforter. “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26-27). We can bear witness through the Spirit. The Spirit has to draw someone to God. It is not the words that we speak. It is the Holy Spirit in us that draws the person. We spend too much time trying to figure out a program to win this world to God, when all we need to do is get a hold of the Spirit. The more that people begin to see the Spirit, the more they are going to be willing to draw together. We want people to see something different about the Church when they come.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew [it] unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father” (John 16:7-16).

The Comforter is going to lead us the right direction. There is not going to be confusion. That Comforter had to come before the people could be endued with power. We do not start out knowing everything that we need to do. But as we grow in the Lord, God will lead us into spiritual maturity. He wants you to have something in you that will help you grow up. God sees the potential in every one of us. How do we grow up? We grow up through the Spirit. We have so much more potential than just salvation. The most important thing that you should want to excel in is your service to God. Seek the Lord with all your heart.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching [was] not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the

wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). Our power is not in beautiful words or enticing speech. Our strength is only through the power of God. “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). The Spirit of God has to draw the people in. We must be in the right mindset about working for Him. How did the apostles win so many people for the Lord? First of all, the people had to be in unity.

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all [ye] that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is [but] the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:1-18). The world does not truly understand the wisdom of God. “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness” (1 Corinthians 3:19). The wisdom of man is foolishness to God. There will always be people who will not accept miracles. But we have seen enough to know that miracles are real. The Spirit in us will cause us to do the right thing. It will take the Spirit to draw people to God and to the Church. We must pray that the wind will continue to blow!

Church of Prophecy Marker Association

Chris M. Metaxas, General Sunday School Coordinator



God has blessed the Sunday School Department of The Church of God this year.

We must hold up the doctrine and values of the Bible. We must let the wind of the Spirit blow through our lives. Sunday School is a very important part of The Church of God.

This auxiliary reaches out to many different age groups. The Sunday School Department gives us the opportunity to make our presentation interesting and exciting for everyone. The Church of God is the messenger. We have been entrusted with a message for the whole world. We are the messengers of the truth. Peter told us, *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall”* (2 Peter 1:10). God selected you for His service. The Church has a message to deliver to the whole world. What a great task to deliver the whole message to a world devoid of truth. Through Sunday School, we *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). Sunday School teaches us the Word of God and prepares us for our service to the Lord. Once we have studied the Bible, when we face situations that we do not know what to do, the Holy Ghost will guide us in what we have learned. *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26). We must remain hopeful. Even in an evil, hopeless world, our message must be that hope is on the way. The great commission was given to The Church of God. *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). Other churches are preaching a partial message. But the work cannot be finished by other churches. Only The Church of God was entrusted with the whole doctrine. Therefore, the work must be completed by the Church.

We must cultivate our relation with God. But we cannot fail to cultivate our relationship with one another. *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”*(1 John 4:7-8. Love one another. You cannot love God if you do not love man. *“For the love of Christ constraineth us...”* 2 Corinthians 5:14a. *“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee*

a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:35-40).

Evangelism is one of our highest priorities. We are ambassadors of Christ. To be an ambassador is to carry the message from one post to the other. *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). The Church must carry the doctrine to the uttermost part. *“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Corinthians 4:6). Knowledge of the Word brings us into the light. As we share that revelation of the Word with others, they too will enter into the light.

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my [sheep], and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:10-18). Jesus is the good shepherd. There are other sheep which are not of the fold. Jesus’ voice will bring the other sheep into one fold. Through Sunday School, we learn the words and voice of Jesus.

The mission of the Church is not complete yet. We still have a lot of work to do. *“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain”* (Psalms 127:1). Our help comes from the Lord. Sunday School is the teaching tool of the Church that prepares us for the great work ahead of us.

The Meaning of Life

K. Scott Hatton, Administrative Coordinator, Regional Overseer of the Southeast Central Region



You do not need great wisdom to be successful in this life. You just need enough wisdom to know that you should look at those that had great wisdom and learn from them. That is what the Bible is about.

Learn from other people's successes and failures and apply it to your life. The Bible is full of examples of people's success' and failures. It is our roadmap through the minefield of life. One of the greatest books for this is the book of Ecclesiastes. It is a book that we do not often preach from. There are a few familiar passages like:

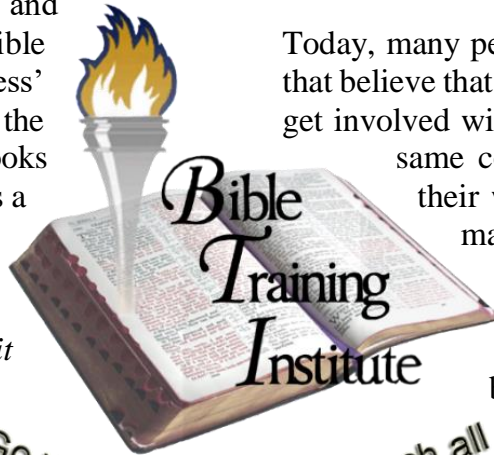
Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; (9:10) ...in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. (11:3) Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. (11:1) But for the most part, we stay away from this book and maybe it is because it takes us down a very dark and frightening road. Only at the very end of the book do we see light. At first impressions, the book of Ecclesiastes seems like it is saying that life is meaningless and everything we do is selfish and for nothing. But we have to understand that the book was written by Solomon, and for most of the book, Solomon described much of His adult life in which he had strayed from God.

"For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." (I Kings 11:4) "And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father." (11:6) "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice" (11:9) He wrote concerning how he viewed the world at that time without God. What makes this so fascinating is that Solomon retained the great gift of wisdom from God even though he sinned. So he looked at the world with a naturalistic, yet God given understanding. He

understood the ways of the world, and he used this understanding to gain the riches of the world. And during this time of his separation from God, he used wisdom to attempt to understand the meaning of life apart from God. What he saw with his naturalistic eyes was a bleak world devoid of purpose.

Today, many people are doing the same thing. Those that believe that God is either none existent or does not get involved with the affairs of man will come to the same conclusion as Solomon if they follow their worldview to the logical end. Or yet many will choose to not contemplate the meaning of life without God because deep down they know that what they will find will be a dark bottomless pit of emptiness. Have you ever not asked a question because you knew that you would not like the answer? Solomon was not like that. He asked the difficult questions. As we study this, understand that this is Solomon's journey of straying from God and then coming back.

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:2) Throughout Ecclesiastes, Solomon wrote about vanity, and from the very beginning, he lets us know what we are getting ready to read. From the very second verse he said all is vanity. Everything that he saw, experienced and accomplished was vanity. Every conclusion he came to was vanity. Vanity here means emptiness and futility. Everything that he saw was empty, useless, pointless, and in vain. All of his work was for nothing. *"I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven..." (Ecclesiastes 1:12-13)* Not only did God give him wisdom from a young age, but Solomon sought out wisdom, and he had the means to search out wisdom from every nation of the world. Young people, you are at this stage in your life. You are going to school to gain understanding and wisdom from professors that have studied all over the world. Gaining wisdom and



"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." Matthew 28:19

understanding is the focus of your life. Knowledge is highly valued and lifted up. Gaining wisdom is great. God said ask for wisdom and He will give it to you. *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* (James 1:5) However, Solomon sought wisdom of the world apart from God, and his conclusion to all of this knowledge is in verse 14. *“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:14) Solomon could not find the meaning of life through knowledge and wisdom apart from God so he decided to spend his time seeking the pleasures of life.

“I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.” (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3) Solomon was wise enough to know that it was not in the knowledge. That is not where the meaning of life is. He decided to try laughter after knowledge. I can imagine that he had court musicians, actors, acrobats, and comedians. I am sure that he brought in entertainers from all over the known world. I can envision that he threw the most lavish banquets. There are far too many in this world that have bypassed searching for wisdom to find the meaning of life and went straight to the search for every pleasure underneath the sun part. They go from one pleasure to another seeking something that gives them fulfillment and peace but to no avail. We live in a time like no other. We have far more access to pleasures than Solomon. With a few touches of a keyboard we can hear millions of different songs, movies, shows, games and stories. We can interact with anyone from anywhere in the world. We can access so much entertainment that most people will die still searching for the pleasure that will give them meaning in their life. With Solomon’s God given wisdom, he realized that there is no meaning in pleasure apart from God. Solomon also tried to find meaning of life through building great structures.

“I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of

fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 2:4-11) There is one big difference between Solomon and everyone else in this world. Everyone else is working hard to get all that he got, but for Solomon, he had the means to get it all, and he realized during this time of searching that it was all for nothing. Most people leave this life still trying to gain its wealth never realizing that the meaning of life is not in its wealth. There is nothing wrong in building a house or planting a garden or planting a tree. Solomon is not saying do not build, but he is saying that the meaning of life is not in the things that we have. Solomon had everything that a person could possibly want. He even looked back at it and rejoiced at what he had. It gave him brief happiness. It gave him an excitement that was temporary. Then he realized that it was all vanity. It was all empty and meaningless.

What is the meaning of life? The answer is found by answering four questions. Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going when I die? For those that deny the existence of God, the answer to each of these questions leads to hopelessness. I have come to the same conclusion that Solomon came to, that apart from God, there is no meaning. Apart from God, there is no great enlightenment or revelation of the secrets of life. Without God, right and wrong is only a made up concept of the human brain, that right wrong has no real meaning and is in a constant state of change. If you look at this world without including God in the picture, you will see every person out for their own selfish end, trying to please and gratify themselves with the end result being lowered into the ground never to exist

again. That is the worldview without God. Why do anything of lasting significance? Why should you care because later you will not care? You will not have a thought or a feeling at all so why better yourself or the world around you? Solomon came to this conclusion then he said, *“Therefore I hated life.”* How many people hate life? They hate their life. They despise their life and the life of others. *“Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. (Ecclesiastes 2:17-18)* If you think it could not get any darker then think again.

“So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.” (Ecclesiastes 4:1) The poor are miserable. The rich are miserable. *“Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. (Ecclesiastes 4:2)* We live in a day where death is glorified and obsessed over. *“Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 4:3)* He came to the conclusion that it is better to already be dead and even better to never have lived in the first place. Without God, human life has no more value than an animal or plant or even the natural elements. Going down this road leads to abortion, euthanasia, suicide, infanticide, and genocide.

Finally, after searching everything under the sun, Solomon figures it out. *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)* After much soul searching and reflection on the meaning of life from one of the most wise men that has ever lived, the book is concluded with the answer. And a relatively short conclusion it is compared to the amount of time that was spent leading up to it. But it does not have to be long because it is so simple. Solomon concluded that man has one purpose in life and that every action of man should be governed

by this purpose. He said Fear God, to respect God. We are here to please our Creator. There is an Almighty Creator of all who loves all. He desires your love in return. Our Creator is completely righteous and holy and He has created a place for us where no sin or death can enter in. Those that have sin in their heart cannot enter into heaven because it is a place where there is no sin. It would defeat the purpose of heaven. Who would want to spend eternity with sinners, those that hate, steal, and lie when you could spend eternity free from sin and its effects? People want to paint God as vengeful and hateful that receives great pleasure in tormenting the innocent. But God is righteous and His nature will not allow Himself to commune with unrighteousness. He wants you to be righteous because He desires to spend eternity with you. Our purpose is to fear God and keep His commandments. Or in other words, respect Him and do what He asks of you so that one day you will forever be with Him. Our only purpose is to please God, and what a wonderful purpose it is. This gives our life more than an overall direction. This gives every action, no matter how large or how small, meaning. Because it says that *“...God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”* We usually focus on that evil will be judged, but notice everything good will be judged. Talk about a purpose in life: God takes notice of everything, every kind word that you say, every time you give to someone else. Every sacrifice that you make has meaning. It has purpose, and for those things in our life that do not measure up, we must go to His Son Jesus to take our judgment instead of us.

Wisdom is good. Knowledge is good. Laughter is good. And life is good but only when God is a part of it. I charge each one of us with the same words that David gave his son Solomon before he died. *“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself” (I Kings 2:1-3).*