

THE Apostolic Faith

EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH—JUDE 3

JANUARY – MARCH 2024



*The
Reality
of the Rapture*

INSIDE

THE
Apostolic Faith

JANUARY – MARCH 2024

VOLUME 117.1

DEPARTMENTS

4 VIEWPOINT | 5 FROM THE WORD | 19 WITNESS | 31 WORLD REPORT | 36 OUR CLASSICS
26 WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? | 39 A STATEMENT OF BIBLE DOCTRINE



FROM THE WORD
**EPI-EIK-ES: GENTLE,
MODERATE, PATIENT**

Paul's epistle to the Philippians helps us understand the quality of life that Christians should exemplify.



FROM THE WORD
THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE

The Parable of the Ten Virgins illustrates that we must be ready when Jesus returns.



FROM THE WORD
SERMON EXCERPTS

Short messages that have a long-lasting impact.



WITNESS

A HOME BUILT BY GOD

God helped Toyin and Funke start a new pattern of honoring Him as a family.



WITNESS

MY PROVIDER, HEALER, PROTECTOR, AND FRIEND

God sustained Maruita through serious illness, a head-on collision, and a catastrophic hurricane.



WITNESS

THE BENEFITS OF PROXIMITY

Not everyone can live next door to family, but all of us can dwell near God.



WORLD REPORT

SHORT TAKES

SOULS SAVED AT THE FIRST DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CAMP MEETING



FORMER WESLEYAN CHAPEL IS DEDICATED AS CRANFIELD CHURCH IN THE UK



75TH ANNIVERSARY & GROUNDBREAKING IN BENIN



OUR CLASSICS

THE WAY OUT

Gretchen wanted freedom from the anger and bitterness that she felt in her heart, but she did not know how to find the way out.

Wonderful Great

VIEWPOINT

By Darrel Lee

SUPERINTENDENT GENERAL

A couple of months ago, Debbie and I returned from Cranfield, United Kingdom, where we attended the dedication of an Apostolic Faith Church that was purchased earlier this year (see page 34). We were reminded there of Solomon's declaration that "the house which I am about to build shall be wonderful great" (2 Chronicles 2:9). This was his description of the Temple of God. For many of us, "wonderful" and "great" are redundant as adjectives. However, Solomon was a wise man of understanding and would not have chosen his words idly.

What about the Temple did Solomon consider "great"? It was not particularly great in size; when finished, it was about 90 feet long and 30 feet wide, which is just 2700 square feet (see 1 Kings 6:2). The churches that many of our magazine readers attend are larger than that. Solomon's own palace was four times as big (see 1 Kings 7:2). Perhaps beyond the size, he viewed the Temple as "great" because it was to be a dwelling place for a great God. Solomon acknowledged that Heaven itself could not contain God. In view of that, His house would have to be very great indeed.

One could make a case that the Temple was "wonderful" because of the value and appearance of its components. The beams and roof were made of cedar imported from Lebanon, as were the interior walls that featured carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. The floor was made of juniper and was overlaid with gold. Two sets of gold-covered doors led into the sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. There, all the walls were overlaid with pure gold, and the Ark of the Covenant sat under the two golden cherubim. The final product was certainly beautiful. In that sense, it was wonderful. Yet, without the presence of God, it was

just a large collection of expensive and ornate materials.

After seven years of construction, the day came when the Temple was finished. However, it was not complete. How can anything be finished but not complete? Ordinarily, those descriptions are synonymous. Concerning the Temple, however, while it was finished, it was not complete until God came. At the end of Solomon's dedicatory prayer, fire consumed the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the house (2 Chronicles 7:1-2). At that moment, the description of "wonderful great" took on a meaning that far exceeded the special qualities of this or any other building. This was the singular place on earth where mankind could approach the one, true God. Nothing could be greater or more wonderful than that.

Without God's presence, any building is just a space for gatherings. Like the Temple, our churches are exceptional because they are hallowed, dedicated specifically as places where people can meet with God. At the Cranfield church dedication, attendees were encouraged to dedicate themselves as well, because our bodies are temples of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Without Him, we are similarly just empty shells. However successful our lives may appear to be, we are incomplete until God has taken His rightful place in our hearts. Colossians 2:10 says, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, yet we need God dwelling within us to lead the life He intended. God's desire is to reside in us and use us in the manner that He deems best. As you read the testimonies and articles in this magazine, may you be inspired to dedicate yourself more fully as a "wonderful great" dwelling place of God. ♦

Darrel D Lee



FROM THE WORD

06

EPI-EIK-ES (*adj. Greek*): Gentle, Moderate, Patient

Paul's epistle to the Philippians helps us understand the quality of life that Christians should exemplify.

10

THE REALITY OF THE RAPTURE

The Parable of the Ten Virgins illustrates that we must be ready when Jesus returns.

14

SERMON EXCERPTS

Short messages that have a long-lasting impact.



Epi-eik-es (*adj. Greek*): Gentle, Moderate, Patient

Paul's epistle to the Philippians helps us understand the quality of life that Christians should exemplify.

In Philippians 4:5, we find the instruction “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.” These words are part of a letter written by Paul the Apostle to believers in Philippi, a Roman colony on the Greek mainland in the province of Macedonia. Paul had visited this city on his second missionary journey. It was there he met Lydia, a wealthy woman of faith. It was also in Philippi that the imprisonment of Paul and Silas led to the conversion of a jailer and his family. These individuals were the basis of a small group of believers in this mostly Gentile city. In his epistle, Paul was explaining how to live in a manner pleasing to the God they had begun serving, and this verse about moderation was one of the instructions he gave.

Moderation defined

The word translated as *moderation* in Philippians is the Greek word *epieikes*. It is derived from a couple of root words whose meanings suggest “to point toward, resemble, or to be like.” The same word is translated as *gentle* and *patient* elsewhere in God's Word. Putting these thoughts together, we get an idea of the quality of life that the Apostle said a Christian should exemplify. In essence, he was telling these early believers, “The life you

live should point toward the Lord Jesus and resemble Him.”

Some have suggested that the word *moderation* in this text could also be understood to mean “sweet reasonableness.” I like that! When we become Christians, a change happens that begins to make us sweet and reasonable. We live in a world where tension and extremism are common, but Christians live differently. God has transformed us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son, so our lives are filled with moderation, gentleness, and patience.

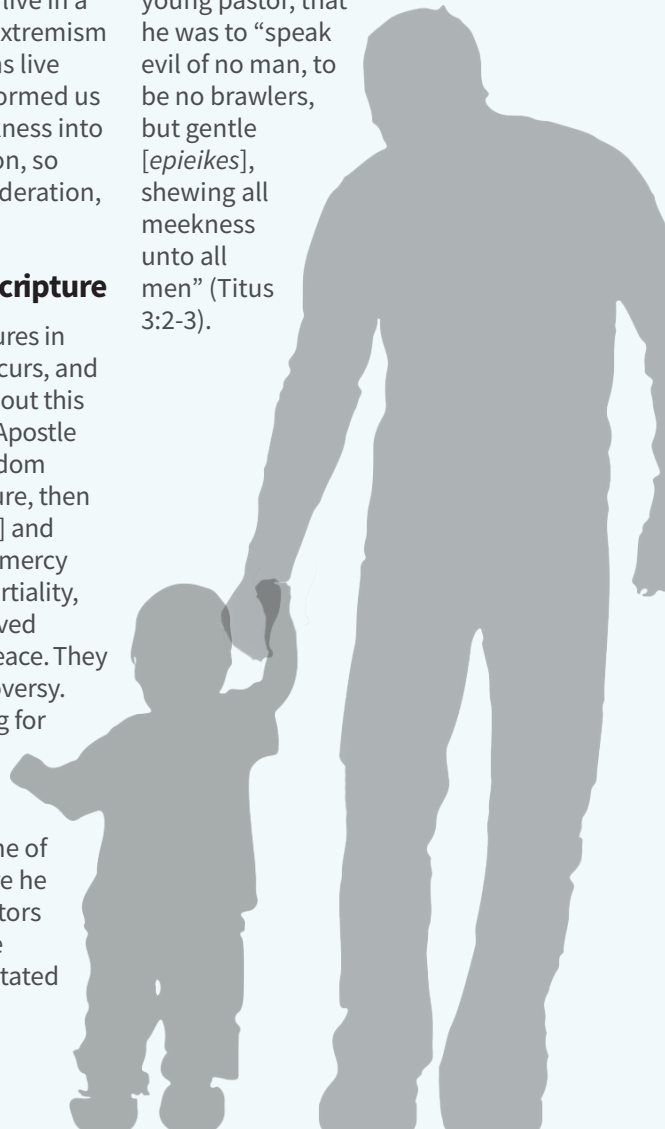
The word *epieikes* in Scripture

There are four other Scriptures in which the word *epieikes* occurs, and each offers more insight about this quality. In James 3:17, the Apostle James stated, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle [*epieikes*] and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” Saved individuals are people of peace. They are not the center of controversy. They are not always looking for challenges. They are living lives of gentleness, day in and day out.

Another example is in one of Paul's other writings, where he outlined to two young pastors the qualifications for those called to the ministry. He stated

in 1 Timothy 3:3 that church leaders should not be given to wine, not strikers, not greedy, but “patient” [*epieikes*]. He was telling the younger man, “This is what your life as a leader needs to embody.”

The third instance of *epieikes* was when Paul told Titus, another young pastor, that he was to “speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle [*epieikes*], shewing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2-3).



Why? Paul explained, “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” Paul was telling Titus, “You are different than you used to be, so be patient with others.”

With the fourth occurrence, the Apostle Peter was admonishing servants specifically, but his words have a broader application. He said, “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle [*epieikes*], but also to the froward” (1 Peter 2:18). Notice that he told the servants how they should respond when they are treated properly, but also when they are *not* treated properly. Then he added, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:19-20). Moderation suffers injustice patiently. This is a challenging concept in cultures like ours in America that deeply value justice, freedom, and personal rights. However, we must be careful not to get so fixated on our rights that we forget that our rights are not the most important thing. God’s will is the most important thing!

We know this from the example of Jesus, who said, as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels to deliver Him from death on the Cross, but He said, “Not my will, but thine be done.” No wonder in this same epistle to the Philippians, Paul said, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8). When we think about rights, let’s remember that Jesus gave up His rights so that we could enter Glory! Our lives as Christians need to embody the example of Christ.

It is evident that Paul, Peter, and James all understood that believers should live in a way that points to Christ and resembles Him. In our day as well, moderation should be infused into every part of our existence: our homes, our families, our church, our schooling, our employment, our entertainment, our friendships. There should be no area of life in which God’s influence and authority is excluded.



Moderation in the *home*

Let us consider first how moderation—a gentle, patient spirit—is exemplified in the family. In 1 Peter 3:7, we read that husbands are to give honor to their wives, remembering that their wives are heirs together with them of the grace of life. In the same chapter, Peter stated that wives should cooperate voluntarily with their

husbands, working together in unity with them.

Together, the two of them are to teach their children the ways of God. In Deuteronomy 11:18-19, God told the people of Israel, “Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets

between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

As parents, we want to live for the Lord and teach our children to value what God values. Living moderately means understanding that not every activity, form of entertainment, or media choice is beneficial. There are options available that certainly would not point toward Christ nor help us resemble His loving, gentle, and sacrificial character.

My wife’s father, who has gone to be with the Lord, had a saying that our family still rehearses. When our children were young teens and facing choices about actions and activities, Grandpa would say, “Well, where does it lead?” He said that so often that they began to repeat the same words to each other! And while they said them a little humorously, Grandpa’s saying had taught them that choices matter. They learned that the question is not always just, “Is what you are doing okay?” It actually is, “What is the trajectory? What direction is it headed?”

Family members, business associates, classmates, and all with whom we associate should see our moderate, godly lifestyle and

notice the difference.



Moderation in the *church*

Moderation in church and worship is based on commitment to Christ and each other.

While our relationship with Christ is individual, we live in community with our fellow believers, and gentle, moderate behavior will help maintain harmony. We are not striving for uniformity but unity, and that comes about through a decision to subject our wills, rights, and purposes to one another for the good of the body of Christ.

Paul told two sisters in the church at Philippi, “Be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2). It did not matter which one of those two sisters was right. What mattered was that they served God in unity! If there is friction in the church, why would any observer want to be a part of the church? They would rightly assess that the church has the same problems that exist everywhere else! When unbelievers come into the church, we want them to feel the oneness of spirit

and gentleness of Christ that draws them to salvation.

Moderation should be exemplified by faithfulness in worship and in God’s service. We do not come to church out of duty. We are debtors to God. We owe Him everything! That fact alone should instill in us a desire to worship and inspire us to be faithfully in our places in God’s house.

It is true that we can worship anywhere, and we also know that because of age, disability, and school or employment requirements, we cannot always be present in church services. However, we can be sure that if we miss one, we will miss something of value. Thomas, one of the Lord’s disciples, was not present when Jesus first appeared to His followers after His resurrection. We have no explanation as to why he was not there, and it does not matter. What we do know is that he missed seeing his risen Lord! And when we

are not in the house of God during a service, we too miss something.

Someone asked me once why we should come to church. My spontaneous answer was that we ought to come to worship and have fellowship and learn from God’s Word. Also, we come because there are children and fellow believers who are depending on us. Finally, we come because the Word of God instructs us to. In Hebrews 10:24-25 we read, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Notice that the writer did not say to consider *yourself*, but to consider *one another*! God says to be in church, so let’s be there when possible.



Moderation in the *workplace & classroom*

How do we live moderately in the workplace? If we are employees, we are to perform our duties in an honorable, ethical way, with a purpose to serve diligently. We are to obey those in authority over us. Jesus told the Roman soldiers to be content with their wages (see Luke 3:14). In the same discourse, He told the Publicans to be honest in their dealings and not collect more taxes than were due.

Employers are instructed to give just wages (Colossians 4:1) and treat those they employ with impartiality and without harshness (see Ephesians 6:9). The point is, contentment, honesty, fairness, and integrity are part of moderate living in the workplace.

Many of these concepts apply to the classroom as well. If you are a student, you should tend to your studies with diligence and integrity. Is that just so you can earn a degree or receive acclaim for graduating at the top of your class? No! You live that way so God will be glorified by your life.

Colossians 3:17 sums up our responsibility, whatever our role in life: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” Our faith should not only be evident in church; it should be obvious to the world around us. Family members, business associates, classmates, and all with whom we associate

should see our moderate, godly lifestyle and notice the difference.

There are two other reasons why we should live this kind of moderate life. The first is that the Lord is coming; our opening text in Philippians stated, “The Lord is at hand.” But perhaps even more importantly, the Lord is *here!* He is at work in the world around us and He wants to work through us. He has placed us in the environment we find ourselves in, and He wants us to shine as lights for Him.



Moderation in a *challenging culture*

Throughout the Word of God, we find that God’s people were taught to live moderate lives in challenging cultures. In the Book of Jeremiah, God told the Israelites who were to be taken into captivity that once they were in Babylon, they should build houses, raise their children, and pray for the peace of the city where they resided. They were to live moderate, peaceable lives even in the land of their enemies.

Daniel and the three Hebrew children are shining examples in their stand against the culture of Babylon. Typically, we honor Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego for refusing to bow to

Nebuchadnezzar’s idol on the plain of Dura. However, the three of them were living faithful lives long before that event. When they were new arrivals in Babylon, they purposed not to defile themselves by eating of the king’s meat. When it was offered to them, they did not argue or make demands. They simply requested to eat pulse instead. And God blessed them and gave them the favor of the officials over them. Daniel stood true to God while serving in four political administrations in Babylon. The presidents and princes he worked with saw the difference and knew the only way they could trip him up was by the fact that he

prayed all the time. The king also knew Daniel’s character, and when Daniel faced the lion’s den for his stand, the king told him, “Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee” (Daniel 6:16). Daniel’s eighty years of consistent, moderate, godly living had paid off.

May God help each one of us to consistently and faithfully embrace the gentleness and meekness exemplified by Christ, and live lives of moderation that point unbelievers toward Him. ♦

Bill McKibben is the Apostolic Faith Director of East Asia Work and pastor of our church in Seattle, Washington.



The Reality of the Rapture

The Parable of the Ten Virgins illustrates that we must be ready when Jesus returns.

When Jesus was here on earth, He told His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you

What a thrill it is to know that one day, Jesus will return to earth and take those who are redeemed to be

with the Father.

unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3). What a thrill it is to know that one day, Jesus will return to earth and take those who are redeemed to be with the Father. This promise of the Lord’s Second Coming is wonderful news for believers. What a hope we have!

When we speak of the Lord’s return, a question that often comes up is: “When will the Rapture happen?” The Bible does not tell us exactly when Jesus will return. In fact, Scripture says that no man knows the day or the hour. Only God knows the exact moment of the Rapture. However, the Bible does tell us the signs that will indicate when His coming is near, and we see those signs happening now.

That unanswered question has troubled many people. Because no firm date is given, to some the Rapture does not seem like a real event, or not likely to happen anytime soon. This can lead them to neglect God’s instructions, or to believe there will be time to obey the Lord later. That way of thinking is dangerous. Christ’s return is a real event, and it will have real consequences in each of our lives.

There is a much better question to ask ourselves today: “Am I ready?” We cannot know when Jesus will return, but we can know that we are ready for that event. Being ready for the Rapture means that our sins have been forgiven and we are serving God faithfully.

Being ready for the Rapture means that our sins have been forgiven and we are serving God

faithfully.

That is where our focus must be. If we embrace the reality of the Rapture and diligently prepare for it, we can look forward to that day with great expectation.

Living in expectation

When we have a definite plan to go somewhere, we take action accordingly. For example, we may take time to research the place we are going, request time off work, purchase tickets, and make many other arrangements. In short, we behave and speak as though the trip will really happen because we fully expect that it will.

Having that type of certainty is how we should approach going to Heaven. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about Christ's promise to return, and we can tell by the words he chose that he knew this promise was sure. Paul wrote, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). I love that Paul said "we" which are alive and remain, rather than a more general term such as "some" or "they." This promise was clearly personal to Paul. And he did not say that he "hoped" to go with the Lord, but that we "shall" be caught up! Paul had a firm hold on the promises of God, and we can too.

In Matthew 24, Jesus revealed what the world would be like before His return. One of His comments compared the time of His return to the days of Noah. He said, "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark" (Matthew 24:38). Noah preached about the coming destruction for about 120 years, and then one day, he entered the ark and the prophecy became reality. That is what it will be like when the Rapture happens. Many of the prophecies Jesus gave have already been fulfilled—those have become reality, and soon the Rapture will as well. When we see the end times signs continue to unfold, they are a reminder to us that it is almost time for our trip to Heaven.

Preparing diligently

After Jesus spoke about the signs of His return, He told the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The ten virgins were waiting to be called to a wedding. They all knew the bridegroom was coming for them soon, though his arrival was delayed. They also knew they needed to have their lamps ready so they could leave during the night.

The ten continued to wait until at last there was a cry in the night, "The bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him!" The virgins all stood up and trimmed

spiritual preparations.



The wise virgins told the foolish,
“No; go to those who sell oil and buy
for yourselves,” but by then it was

too late.

their lamps. However, five of them had no oil. There was no flame in their lamps, so they were not ready to go with the bridegroom.

In this parable, the virgins represent believers, the bridegroom is Christ, and the bridegroom’s arrival is the Rapture. The fact that all ten virgins had lamps indicates that they all wanted to go to the wedding, and at one point, they were ready. However, five of the virgins were foolish and through carelessness allowed their lamps to run out of oil. We could compare them to people who receive salvation, but afterward neglect to live as God has instructed. They want to go to Heaven, but they have not stayed ready. The lesson for us is that spiritual carelessness is foolish and dangerous. We must each examine ourselves and make sure we are not neglecting the Lord’s instructions. The Rapture is a real event that will happen one day, and spiritual laziness could cause us to miss it.

At one point in the parable, the foolish virgins asked the wise for help saying, “Give us some of your oil.” Imagine someone saying to a saved friend, “Give me some of the Spirit of God in you. Give me some of your salvation.” Of course, it is not possible to grant that request; we can only receive those things from God,

and the time to seek them is now, not at Christ’s return. In the parable, the wise virgins told the foolish, “No; go to those who sell oil and buy for yourselves,” but by then it was too late. The five foolish virgins missed the wedding. May we learn from their mistake and choose to be diligent in our spiritual preparations.

A reality check

In our humanity, we can forget many things, including the nearness of eternity. Thank God, He gives us reality checks from time to time. He did that for me last February when I suffered a major stroke. Some people would say, “You don’t need to worry about dying; you’re young and healthy,” or, “You’re too young for a stroke.” Such statements are not from God’s Word. When God wants to take us, He will take us.

On the day I had my stroke, when it became evident that I was experiencing a major health crisis, I was taken to a hospital. There, at one point I tried to get on my knees to pray, but my legs did not work. I could tell that my body was dying. I called for nurses but they did not answer, so I just started to pray. However, I was not



In an hour when we think
not, this life will be over.

We need to

be ready!

I saw that Heaven was near and I
wanted to go! My cry to Jesus in that
moment was, “On this last step,

hold my hand!”

praying to be healed; I saw that Heaven was near and I
wanted to go! My cry to Jesus in that moment was, “On
this last step, hold my hand!”

I am glad I knew in that moment that my soul was
ready to meet the Lord. That was not the time to try to
take care of unfinished business with God. Right now we
have time to pray. But one day, and it may be soon, that
time will be over.

When my wife arrived to see me at the hospital, I told
her, “I am not afraid; I want to see Jesus.” I thank God for
a godly wife because she looked at me and said, “You are
not going anywhere yet. The people of God are praying.”
The Lord answered prayer; He brought me back and gave
me additional time to live for Him. The use of my legs
and everything in my body was restored. The Lord healed
me completely!

This was a reality check for me. If the Lord’s promise of
healing is this real, then so is His promise to return for His
people. Even before that happens, any one of us could

enter eternity by death. In an hour when we think not,
this life will be over. We need to be ready!

It is time to decide

When Christ returns and the saints are caught up
together, what a grand fellowship we will have in the
sky! At the same time, many unsaved will immediately
go to prayer. They will show up at churches without an
invitation and rush to the altars, but they will find that it
is too late. They will face a time of great tribulation, and
there is no promise of a way of escape at that point.

It is our choice whether or not we will spend eternity
with the Lord in Heaven, and the time to decide is
now. Jesus will forgive anyone who comes to Him in
repentance, and that simple prayer is all it takes to
become ready for His return. After we have settled that
most important question of “Am I ready?” we can look
forward with great hope to our imminent journey to
Heaven. ◆

***Joshua Idowu is the pastor of the Apostolic Faith Church in
St. Louis, Missouri.***

Sermon Excerpts

Short messages that have a long-lasting impact.

Give God Your Burden!

WHEN JESUS WAS ON EARTH, He gave an invitation. He said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Jesus knew that people bear burdens in life. There is the burden of decision making such as choosing a career or a spouse. There are burdens that are challenges: broken relationships, unforgiveness, loneliness, illness, and many other difficulties.

The greatest of all burdens is the burden of sin. Jesus would like

to lift that burden, and then He can solve the remaining problems too. He is in the business of bearing people’s burdens. Logically, we should be the ones seeking for Him, but He initiates action by looking for us, even when we are not searching for Him. His Spirit urges us to do something about the burdens we carry.

Satan is a wicked taskmaster. He burdens sinners until their loads become unbearable, yet he keeps reassuring them that there is no problem. For all the labor and toiling and the heavy weight he puts on the sinner, all he offers at the end of the day is Hell. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. That is what the devil has to offer.

The irony of life is that although people go about with burdens, they often ignore the main burden and only try to relieve the smaller ones. I did that some years back. I was deep in sin and suffering the repercussions of my actions. But rather than seeking the right solution, I was just trying to reduce the consequences of my deeds. We have the freedom to determine our actions, but we cannot determine the consequences; that is left to God to determine. In 1978, the Lord helped me to know that all my efforts were futile, because sin was the cause of my problem. When I went to Him in prayer and confessed my sins, asking for forgiveness, God forgave me and gave me victory.

God is a God of mercy. Even when we are not seeking Him, He is seeking us. Jesus paid the price for every soul’s salvation, and His invitation to “Come unto me” is open today. If you will come to the Lord with your burden of sin and tell Him you are sorry for all the sins you have committed, God will have mercy upon you. ♦

Francis Odudu is a minister at the Bexley Apostolic Faith Church in London, England, as well as a United Kingdom Board Member and Regional Director.



God is a God of mercy. Even when we are not seeking Him,

He is seeking us.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28

Ingredients for Revival

IF YOU HAVE EVER BAKED ANYTHING, you know that the right ingredients are important. Years ago, my wife and I owned a bakery, and we worked night and day. Some days I would go in about 1:30 or 2:00 in the morning to make donuts. After doing this so many times, I could almost make them in my sleep. We had a big mixer, and we used specialty flours to produce different kinds of mixes. Next, warm water had to be added, and at first, we were very careful of the water temperature. But after a while, I knew by just running my finger under the faucet what temperature the water needed to be. The last but most important item was yeast. After all the ingredients were combined, the mixer would stir the dough for about twenty minutes. Then the dough was put in the proofer, where it would start to rise. Eventually, if everything had been done according to the directions, we would have perfection! People lined up to buy the donuts.

However, there were times when I was so tired that I forgot an important step. That batch of forty or fifty pounds of dough was worthless! There was a hog farmer who came around once a week. He would pick up all the mistakes from the back of our shop and feed them to the hogs.

When making donuts, we had to use the right ingredients and follow the directions carefully to achieve the desired result. That's the way it is with following God. His Word gives the "ingredients" for revival, but we must follow the directions. We find a "recipe" in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Four ingredients are given here. The first is that people must "humble themselves." We need to realize that

we are coming before the Almighty God who spoke everything into existence. We cannot receive anything from God unless we humble ourselves before Him.

The second ingredient is to "pray." If we have children or neighbors who are not saved, we need to pray for them. I was raised by my grandparents, and I'm so thankful for a grandmother who would kneel beside my brother's and my bed and pray for us. That did not save me, but it gave me an example of prayer. Also, we must remember that communication with God goes two ways. We pray to God, but we need to listen to what He says. Often we bring a list before God, but perhaps we do not stay long enough for Him to bring His list to us.

Third, God said to "seek my face." This is an intense desire to know God and to know Him better and better. Those who are seeking God want to be one-on-one with Him; they are focused on seeking His face.

Fourth, it is necessary to "turn from" wicked ways. Those who are not saved need to turn from their sins. And once we are saved, we need to retreat from anything that displeases God. If we start to veer away, God will prick our hearts. He will let us know that there is a straight way ahead.

We have to be willing to follow God's directions. We cannot skimp or cut corners. The recipe has to be executed exactly the way God wants. And then, He has promised that He will hear from Heaven! God can give each one of us revival. ♦

Donald Fittin is a minister of the Apostolic Faith Church in Van Buren, Arkansas.



BY DONALD FITTIN

Those who are seeking God want to be one-on-one with Him; they are focused on

seeking His face.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14





BY ROQUE FIEGALAN

If we apply our strength
and resources, God will give

the increase.

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability.”

Matthew 25:14-15

Use Your Talents!

ONE OF THE LESSONS THAT JESUS GAVE is known as the Parable of the Talents. This parable was not only for the disciples at that time, but it has a lesson for us today. It will encourage us to be faithful servants of our Master, Jesus Christ.

The parable states, “For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability” (Matthew 25:14-15).

The master in this parable was passing his goods to his servants, but there was an uneven distribution. In our present lives also, we do not receive the same amount of “talents” as others. Each of us has our own opportunities and responsibilities, according to our abilities. Because of that, it is not healthy for us to compare ourselves with others. Rather, we should work with what we have been given.

“Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two” (Matthew 25:16-17). Despite having a different number of talents, the first two servants responded the same way. They went to trade what they had received. They gave their all and did their best to work it out. In the end, they both produced a one-hundred-percent return. This shows that it does not matter how much we have; what matters is how we handle what we have been given.

In the Philippines, this is the planting season, and most of our farmers are buying expensive seeds. They buy good seeds, and then they really need to take care of those seeds. For them to germinate, they must be irrigated and then transplanted. If a farmer takes good care of expensive seeds, he can expect to produce a plentiful harvest. This is what God wants us to do. Despite how little we may have, if we apply our strength and resources, God will give the increase.

We do not want to be like the third servant in the parable. “But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money” (Matthew 25:18). He did not handle what he was given in the proper way. Instead of using it, he hid it. We don’t want to waste the blessings that God has given us. Rather, we want to work to produce more.

Eventually, there will be a reckoning day. The two servants who had traded what they had been given were told, “Well done thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21, 23). If we will be faithful to do our best for the Lord who entrusted us with what we have, we will hear these words, “Well done.” I do not know your situation, and you do not know mine. But all of us need to be faithful to take advantage of the opportunities that are given to us, for the glory and honor of the Lord. ♦

Roque Fiegalan is the Apostolic Faith District Superintendent of the Philippines, and pastor of the headquarters church in Bagong Sikat.

Keep Moving

STAYING IN ONE PLACE FOR TOO long can cause problems. I grew up on a farm in Nigeria, and during the rainy season we had lots of rain. In our area there were ponds, but they didn't flow. They were just stagnant, and that gave an opportunity for many things to breed in them. At times, when you got close, you could tell how stinky

We want to come to pray and
get ahold of God!

that pond was, and you didn't want to get any nearer to it.

In Deuteronomy, Moses recounted for the Children of Israel some instructions that God had given them. "The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and until all the places nigh thereunto, . . . behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers" (Deuteronomy 1:6-8).

This exhortation was given in the fortieth year of the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land. Their journey could have been made in a much shorter time, but they had been in the wilderness because of their unbelief. At this time, God commanded Moses to encourage them to move forward.

God wants to encourage us as well. If you have been too long where you are spiritually, it's time to do something significant. To dwell too long can cause dormancy and stagnation. No good will come from remaining in such a condition.

If any of us find ourselves in a state of stagnancy or inactiveness spiritually, it's high time to turn to God and ask Him to help us leave such a condition. It's time to move forward. We do not want to come around the altars of prayer and leave without it having any impact. We want to come to pray and get ahold of God!

If you are not saved, the Lord will save. He will sanctify, and He will baptize with the Holy Ghost. Come before God and pray, "This is enough of my stagnancy. It's high time. I want to get the blessing You have for me." God will do it for you! ♦

Samson Jimaza is the leader of the Apostolic Faith group in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.



BY SAMSON JIMAZA

"The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and until all the places nigh thereunto, . . . behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers."

Deuteronomy 1:6-8



BY HARLAN LEE

God has chosen to call us to salvation,
but we must choose to answer and

follow Him.

“He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him.”

2 Kings 2:13

Pick Up the Mantle!

GOD CALLS EVERY PERSON, first to salvation and then to some area of service. When Elijah was taken into Heaven, the Bible says of Elisha, “He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him” (2 Kings 2:13). There is a “mantle” that falls to each one of us—a role we are to fill. We are

all a royal priesthood, a chosen people with a calling from God (see 1 Peter 2:9).

Previous chapters in 2 Kings indicate that Elisha had been a farmer, plowing in a field. He

was industrious and hard-working, busy in agriculture. I can identify with that because as youngsters in Garden Valley, my brothers and I worked on a farm. We didn’t have oxen, but I’ve spent time on a tractor. We were just working people when God called us.

Then one day, Elijah came by Elisha’s field and threw his mantle upon Elisha. And Elisha answered immediately! His only request was that he could kiss his mother and father goodbye, before following the prophet and becoming his servant. At one point when someone asked who Elisha was, the reply was that he poured water on the hands of Elijah.

Apparently he helped and served in that role for several years. We do not read much about him during that period of time, but there came a day when it was known that Elijah would be taken away. Though Elijah told Elisha to tarry at various points, the younger man determined to stay with him. Finally, Elijah

asked what he wanted, and Elisha said, “Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9).

Elijah said that he had asked a hard thing, “nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee” (2 Kings 2:10). Elisha paid attention and when a whirlwind took Elijah to Heaven, he saw it. And down came that mantle.

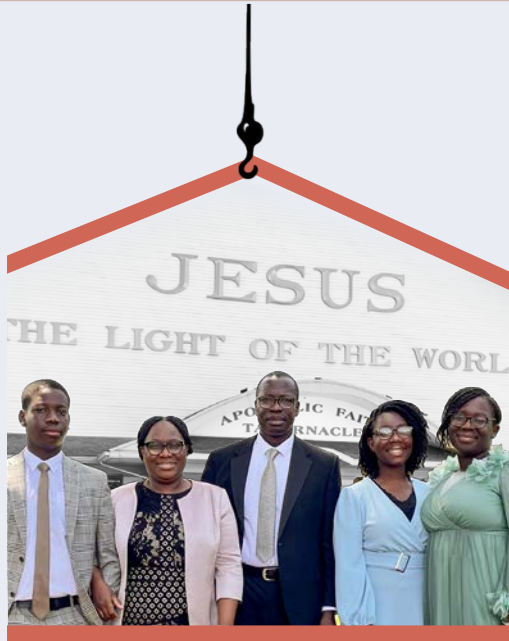
It seems to me that when Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha at their initial meeting in the field, it was not Elisha’s choice—the mantle was cast upon him. But when it fell on him by the banks of the Jordan, Elisha took it up by choice.

Today, it is up to each one of us to take up the mantle that falls. God has chosen to call us to salvation, but we must choose to answer and follow Him. Then He calls us to serve Him. Because of His love for us and the price He paid for our salvation, we should pick up the mantle He places upon us out of thanksgiving.

Where should a person serve? Wherever you are! If you are a young person and go to school, that is where you serve. If you are a young mother, your children are where you serve. If you work at a job, that is where you serve God.

The mantle will not be thrust upon us. It falls from above, and it is up to us to reach down and pick it up. God has saved us for a purpose. He has called us, and His love constrains us to answer. Won’t you reach out and take up the mantle to follow the call that God has on your life? ♦

Harlan Lee is a minister of the Apostolic Faith Church in Roseburg, Oregon.



WITNESS

20

A HOME BUILT BY GOD

God helped Toyin and Funke start a new pattern of honoring Him as a family.

24

MY PROVIDER, HEALER, PROTECTOR, AND FRIEND

God sustained Maruita through serious illness, a head-on collision, and a catastrophic hurricane.

27

THE BENEFITS OF PROXIMITY

Not everyone can live next door to family, but all of us can dwell near God.

A Home Built by God

God helped Toyin and Funke start a new pattern of honoring Him as a family.



TOYIN'S STORY

My mother told me that when I was a baby, I was very sick. She took me to several doctors in Nigeria, but they were not able to help me. She gave up and told God, “If You want him to live, let him live, and if not, take him away.” The fact that I am alive today is because God spared my life.

My father was not around, so I was raised by my mother alone. When I was twelve, a friend invited me to his church one day. I asked him why I should go, and he told me about confessing my sins and receiving forgiveness and salvation. I didn’t think I needed forgiveness because I was very mild by nature and was considered one of the best boys in the community. Still, I decided to go.

At the service, I was instructed to pray. As I did, the Lord began to point out some of my sins to me. He reminded me of times I had taken money from under my grandma’s pillow to buy bean cake and other treats. I prayed, “Oh God, You saw me do that?” He brought up lies I had told. I was so surprised! Personally, I had forgotten those things, but God reminded me. I had to agree that what I had done was wrong, and I told God, “I’m sorry, and I don’t want to do things like that again,” and He forgave me. That was how I was saved.

Not many people in my community were Christians, and after I was saved, they noticed a difference in me. I had been so quiet before, but God gave me boldness to tell everybody about Jesus. Many did not know who Jesus was and they thought something was wrong with me. Some told me that church was for old people, and I would be miserable there, but I knew God had done something real in my life and I took a stand for the Gospel.

My mother also did not understand what had happened to me, and that caused a big problem in my life. She thought I had joined some misguided group and was going astray, so she persecuted me severely for my faith. She would tell me that I had to choose between eating or going to church—if I went to church, I had to forfeit my food. But the salvation of my soul was so satisfying that I didn’t care if I lacked food, so I would attend church and go to bed hungry. Sometimes she would also beat me after I got home, but God helped me to still be respectful to her.

After about two years, a woman came from seemingly out of nowhere and told my mother, “This boy is the best boy in the community. He doesn’t smoke, he doesn’t fight, he doesn’t go about with troublemakers. Who knows, but maybe that church made him what he is. Why are you beating that out of him?” It was the work of my Savior to send that woman to defend me. After that, my mother stopped mistreating me. In fact, many years later she was also saved, and then she deeply regretted all she had put me through. When she experienced the joy of salvation herself,

A

a
H h m e a B
A O M A H U m l e B
T

with tears she asked me, “Is this what you had, what I was beating you for?” She was so grateful that she couldn’t drive Christ out of me, and I am so grateful God gave me the grace to keep my testimony during that time.

I moved to Lagos, Nigeria, when I was seventeen, and there I attended an Apostolic Faith service for the first time. After the meeting, a brother came to talk to me. I told him how I had been saved, and then he asked if I had been sanctified. I had never even heard of sanctification, so he explained it to me. From what he said, I realized that I was still struggling against a sinful nature in my heart. I went to the altar determined to receive sanctification and prayed through that afternoon. Immediately, I was encouraged by the brothers at the altar to move forward and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They joined with me in prayer, and that same day God filled me with His Spirit.

From that time on, everything in my life became centered on God. As a student, I was what we called a “church rat”—the church was my second home. Anytime I did not have lectures, I would be at church washing vehicles, cleaning dishes, driving workers somewhere, or helping with something else, and I was happy doing it. I loved to work for the Lord.

On completion of my studies, I was posted to the city of Jos in Plateau State, where I was required to serve the government for a period of one year. God opened a way for me to serve the government in our branch church in Jos, living on the premises as a caretaker and carrying out administrative and other duties. All my desire was to work for God in every capacity

possible. I always remembered how He had spared my life as a baby and was thankful for the privileges He gave me to serve Him.

When my government assignment ended, God provided a job for me in Jos. In time, He led me to take Funke as my wife who also attended the church in Jos. Initially, I thought the marriage process was going to be a roller coaster. However, it became a battle. I took the matter to God in prayer. Funke also had an assurance from God about the marriage, so she took a stand with her family, and they finally agreed for us to marry.

When we married, we asked God to put us in the palm of His hand. Our prayer has been, “God, anywhere it pleases You, and whatsoever You want to do with us, we want to always be at the center of Your will.” That approach has worked for us for over twenty years now. God gave us three children and He has been everything to us. He has proved in all areas of life that His will is perfect and so sweet.

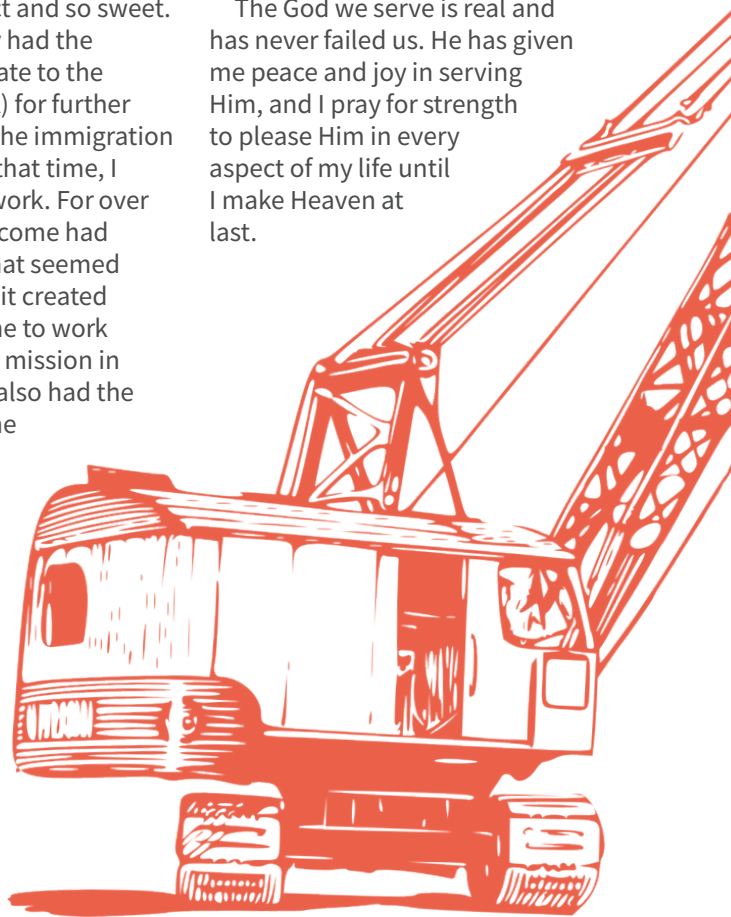
In 2012, our family had the opportunity to relocate to the United Kingdom (UK) for further studies. Because of the immigration laws for students at that time, I was not allowed to work. For over six years, our only income had to be from Funke. That seemed like an obstacle, but it created an opportunity for me to work voluntarily at the UK mission in various capacities. I also had the privilege to stay home with our children and help them transition to the new environment. During those years, we became tightly bonded as

a family, and I really thank God for that.

While we depended on Funke’s income, God showed us favor in many ways. She was never sick during that period, and somehow, our budget seemed to stretch further than it had before. We would look at our bank account and wonder where the money had come from. When we wanted the children to learn musical instruments, in a miraculous way God granted them music scholarships. They were given free instruments and private lessons for over five years. We owe God so much! We could never repay what He has done for us.

On January 7, 2018, I was appointed pastor of our church in Manchester. A year later, I obtained my British passport and was able to apply for a paid position, and soon God provided one. We could not have guessed how God’s plan would unfold, but by trusting in Him, things worked out better than we could have imagined.

The God we serve is real and has never failed us. He has given me peace and joy in serving Him, and I pray for strength to please Him in every aspect of my life until I make Heaven at last.





I was born the fourth of five siblings, and my parents started going to church when I was about three years old. We attended church faithfully and our home looked okay from the outside, but it was very unsettled behind closed doors. Ours was a polygamous home, and that environment affected me a lot. As I grew older, I had many sleepless nights due intense arguing in our home, to the point that I wanted to run away. However, God helped me to know that I shouldn't do that. Thankfully, through it all, my parents always ensured that we went to church, where we regularly heard the Word of God.

Though I prayed to be saved several times as a child, I lacked the commitment to hold onto salvation for any length of time. Then, when I was seventeen years old, I reached a point where I knew I wanted to serve God for the rest of my life. At a Sunday evening service, I told God that I wasn't leaving until I was saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost. When the sermon finished, I rushed to the altar to plead for forgiveness of my sins. The Spirit of God began pointing out my sins to me—things I had stolen from my stepmother, malice I had kept in my heart for my stepsiblings, and so on. It was as though I was watching a

video of my life, and at each scene I acknowledged that yes, I had committed that sin, and asked God to forgive me. He did forgive me, and gave me peace in my heart that has never left.

As soon as God saved me, I told Him I needed my sinful nature to be uprooted. I needed to be sanctified, and God did that for me too. Then I started praying for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I told God, "I need power and boldness to stand for You." As I poured out my heart to Him, in a miraculous way He came down and filled me, and I started speaking in a language unknown to me. I was so happy! I felt as light as

As I poured out my heart to Him, in a miraculous way He came down and filled me, and I started speaking in a language unknown to me.

I was so happy!

a feather, and at home that night, I slept like a baby.

Right away, God laid it on my heart to make restitution to my dad and my stepmother. I'd always had negative feelings toward her, but when God saved me, He replaced those feelings with peace. I prayed for God's help and then confessed to her what I had stolen and told her that I was so sorry. She said it was no problem and forgave me. When I went to my father, he forgave me too.

God also helped me at school. Because of all the stress in our home, I had not been doing well in my classes and even had to repeat one of them. With God's help, from then on I did excellent in my studies and was accepted to a

higher institution after graduation. I knew that some students give up their salvation while attending university, but my prayer was, "Lord, I want to leave university as a stronger Christian than I am now." That is exactly what God did for me. He helped me to stand for Him against many pressures and to grow in my faith, as well as succeed in my classes.

Due to my upbringing, I had many concerns about marriage. I told God that I wanted to have a godly and peaceful home, the type where we could come together and talk, laugh, share the Word of God, and pray as a family. I specifically prayed for a husband that my children could play with.

Toyin was a minister at my church and well known by everyone. After God gave him a confirmation that we should marry, I sought God's direction too. I felt the heavy burden of that decision; I really did not want to make a mistake. One night, I was so troubled that I couldn't sleep, so I poured out my heart to God in prayer. There, the Holy Spirit let me know in a definite way that I should marry Toyin. My burden disappeared and I felt so happy—the same way I had felt the night I was saved.

That clear leading from God proved to be very important because when I told my parents about it, they completely objected to the marriage. Despite that resistance, I did not question what God had told me. With prayers and trust in God who intervened, we finally married.

God knew my desire was to have a godly home, and He did that for me. He blessed our marriage with three children—two girls and a boy. When they were still young, God led us to move to the UK. We did not know all that was in store for us there, but His plan has been



(Top) The Emitolas at camp meeting in Portland, Oregon, in 2022.
 (Bottom) The Emitola family in Nigeria in 2010.

perfect. While Toyin was home with the children, he was exactly the type of father that I had prayed my children would have.

Around the time we moved to the UK, our oldest child started having severe stomach pain. We rushed her to the hospital multiple times because of it, but the doctors did not find anything wrong with her. Having come from Nigeria, we were of high expectation that any medical challenge would be sorted easily through the UK

healthcare system. However, the doctors couldn't find a solution to our daughter's stomach pain. Her treatment dragged on for months and then years with no diagnosis. Some of their prescriptions actually made her feel worse. She regularly missed school when the pain was too much, and in those times all we could do was try to make her comfortable and plead for her in prayer.

Eventually, our daughter decided that she didn't want to go to the

hospital anymore. She had heard testimonies of healing at church and in the church magazine, and she decided that it would be better to trust God than to keep trying new medications. We supported her in that decision and continued to pray.

Before camp meeting every year, our family always discusses the prayer requests that we will bring to God together. At the 2019 UK camp, our daughter's healing was our top priority. She did not feel well on the opening day and the pain only increased from there. In fact, she had never been so sick at a camp meeting before. Despite that, we tried to encourage her, reminding her that God knew about her pain and that camp meeting was a good place to be when she needed a touch from the Lord.

Near the end of camp, the congregation observed the Lord's Supper and Foot Washing. Our daughter was still not feeling well but she took part in the ordinances. Afterward, there was a barbecue lunch, and during the meal she came rushing up to me and said, "Mummy, God healed me! My stomach doesn't have any pain!" There were so many foods that she normally would not dare to eat, but she ate everything at the barbecue and had no pain. She was so happy, and we were shouting, "Praise God! Praise God!" Since then, the stomach pain of seven years has never come back. God healed her completely!

I could tell many other times when we have proved God over the years. He has been delivering, providing, protecting, and healing our family all along our journey, and I thank Him for all He has done. ♦

Toyin and Funke Emitola worship at the Apostolic Faith Church in Manchester, United Kingdom, where he serves as the pastor and as a United Kingdom Board Member and Regional Director.



By Maruita Kupoluyi

My Provider, Healer, Protector and Friend

God sustained Maruita through serious illness, a head-on collision, and a catastrophic hurricane.

I grew up in East End, Tortola, British Virgin Islands, and was the sixth of seventeen children. My siblings and I were brought up under the sound of the Gospel. At home, we woke up to Gospel songs playing on the radio. The lyrics of two of those songs still echo in my spirit today: “Love is the key; The golden key that opens Heaven’s door;” and, “‘Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?”

We lived on a hill close enough to the Apostolic Faith Mission that we could hear the melodious singing on Sundays. We listened from home because economic reasons kept us children from being able to attend services in our early years. Sitting on the hill outside our home, I savored the messages of the songs. Among the members of the congregation was my dad whose rich tenor voice seemed to single him out above the others. In addition, I took great pleasure in listening to my dad pray every afternoon when he returned from work. When he started to pray, the atmosphere in our home quickly changed; we lowered our voices in respect. Anyone who raised a voice was instantly reminded that Pappy was praying. As I look back on those years, I recognize that a foundation of love for the things of God was being laid in my heart.

When I was sixteen years old, I knelt in my pew after a Sunday service and asked Jesus to forgive my sins and save my soul. He answered my prayer

(Clockwise from top) Maruita in 2023; On her last day of teaching at Jericho Middle School in Hempstead; With a group from the Hempstead Apostolic Faith Church; With two sisters at a family reunion; On her wedding day; With eight siblings and a nephew in East End, Tortola.



and gave me His peace and the joy of salvation. I knew God had made a real difference in my heart because before then, I'd had a terrible fear of death and dying. Sometimes I would dream that I was in a coffin, and oh, how terrified I would be! After I was saved, those dreams ceased, and I understood that death was not to be feared but welcomed as a transition from earth to be with Jesus forever.


Though I loved the Lord and being in church, I did not prioritize my daily prayer and consecration, and consequently my spiritual condition suffered. After a few years, I felt that like Peter, I was following the Lord "afar off" (Matthew 26:58). Spiritually speaking, I would fall and get up again. I had a desire in my heart to live for the Lord and please Him in all my ways, but my walk with Him was not consistent.

Then in January of 1975, when I was age twenty-six, God spoke to my heart through difficult circumstances that were happening in our congregation. A conflict between some members caused me to recognize my own backslidden condition, and along with others, I made my way to an altar of prayer. I wept bitterly, asking God to forgive me and help me to serve Him with my whole heart. I wanted God's peace more than anything else. That Sunday, God forgave me and lifted my load.

In the days following, I was hungry for more of God. Tears would flow as I sought after all He had for me. As a school teacher, during morning devotions at school I had to try to keep my tears under control as we sang praises, read Scriptures, and prayed. The Lord graciously drew me to Himself and sanctified my soul several weeks later in our Road Town church. After that, I felt so clean and separated unto the Lord.

That summer, I attended our camp meeting on the island of Anguilla. We had a day of prayer and fasting, and that day I purposed to seek for the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, so that I could be effectively used by God. An elderly brother encouraged me to praise and give God thanks unceasingly for all His past blessings and for the power to serve Him. As I stayed focused on honoring and praising God, the fire fell. I continued praising Him in my heart, but my tongue was speaking words I did not understand. When I rose to my feet, I felt light, as though I was walking on air. I remember on the way back to my room, Sister Clover Anthony said, "Look at how your face is shining!"

Over the years, the Lord has been my faithful Provider. When I did not have the financial resources for continued education, in September of 1975 He made the way for me to pursue a one-year higher education course in England. Five years later, another door was opened for me to study at a university in



*Ere you left your room this morning,
Did you think to pray?
In the name of Christ, our Gavior,
Did you sue for loving favor
As a shield today?
Oh, how praying rests the weary!
Prayer will change the night to day.
Go, when life gets dark and dreary,
Don't forget to pray.*

Canada. In both cases, all expenses were paid on my behalf.

I told the Lord that if it was His will for me to marry, then He should determine my spouse because He knows everyone's heart. I asked Him to choose a man after His own heart; a man who loved to pray and who would encourage me to serve Him. The Lord graciously fulfilled my desire. In August 1988, I married Christopher Kupoluyi at our church in Brooklyn, New York. Seven years later, he was ordained as pastor of the newly established church in Hempstead, New York. He passed away several years ago, but I thank God for the blessed memories of our union and our service to God as a team.

God has also proven Himself to be my Healer. After suffering from chronic back pain for over ten years, I decided to trust God for my healing and wrote to our church headquarters, requesting an anointed handkerchief. I placed the handkerchief on my back, and in time God honored my faith and healed me.

Another time, I woke up one Sunday morning to discover that I had contracted the red eye virus (also known as pink eye). This time, I opened my Bible and prayerfully read every Scripture I could find related to healing. The school where I worked had said that anyone with that virus should stay home for at least a week, but this happened to me during the exam period, which was a critical time for me to be at school. I pleaded with God to heal me, and He directed me to

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

ACKNOWLEDGE

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” *Romans 3:23*

“God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Luke 18:13

CONFESS

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9

REPENT

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” *Luke 13:3*

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” *Acts 3:19*

FORSAKE

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him...for he will abundantly pardon.” *Isaiah 55:7*

BELIEVE

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” *John 3:16*

If you are a new Christian, contact us and request the tract entitled “Starting Out.”

use seawater, warming it in a basin and flushing my eyes with it every few minutes. I obeyed, and the next morning I woke up completely well. I went to school and no one suspected that the virus keeping others away had attacked me the day before.

God is a wonderful Protector, too. Several years ago, while driving from Great Mountain to East End one night, God prevented me from plunging over a precipice. Due to low visibility, I did not realize how close I was to a dip in the road. When I saw it, I slammed on the brakes. The road was wet and the car skidded but stopped at the brink of a deep valley. Had the car gone any further, it could have been a plunge to my death, but the Lord in mercy stopped it just in time. In another incident in 2013, I was travelling home when a driver from oncoming traffic tried to pass a truck at the wrong time. The result was a head-on collision with me. My car was totaled, but the Lord brought me through walking on two feet. He preserved my life for His glory.

On September 6, 2017, Hurricane Irma struck the British Virgin Islands with wind gusts above two hundred miles per hour. Yet as the catastrophic storm raged, God’s peace flooded my soul. He gave me the assurance that I would be safe, though I would suffer much loss. The sound of destruction filled the air as fierce winds unfastened the hurricane shutters on my house. They became useless as they



Maruitta’s car after Hurricane Irma passed through.

slammed back and forth, breaking all the glass louvers and leaving the interior exposed to flooding. Galvanized metal on the utility room and car port were ripped off and carried away by the wind. Two doors leading outside of my house were smashed, and inside, cupboard doors were ripped off and their contents strewn everywhere. When the storm subsided, neighbors came over to check on me, and they found me unharmed as God had promised.

The Lord proved to be my Healer again just recently. While at our Portland camp meeting in 2022, I contracted the flu and became so weak that I felt I would not be able to return home on my scheduled flight. The Lord gave me energy to return as planned; however, at home, severe symptoms continued and the weakness returned. As brethren prayed for my recovery, my body was subject to much pain that started in my back and spread to my left leg and foot. I could not walk for several weeks and it was a real trial, but God came through for me again. Praise God for answering all the prayers that were made on my behalf; my health has been restored by His healing virtue.

I thank God for His great faithfulness to me. He is my best and dearest Friend. My desire is to be faithful and to live with Him throughout eternity. ♦

Maruitta Kupoluyi worships at the East End Apostolic Faith Church in Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

The Benefits of Proximity

By Karen Barrett



(Left) Rich and Karen Barrett. (Right) Their next door neighbors.

Not everyone can live next door to family, but all of us can dwell near God.

God's invitation to Moses in Exodus 33:21 was the opening

text of a sermon during one of our 2023 camp meeting services. That verse states, "And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock." The minister emphasized the words "a place by me" as he read.

For several weeks prior to camp meeting, the first verse of Psalm 91 had been going through my mind: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." When I heard the words "a place by me," I mentally connected the two portions of Scripture. What a wonderful privilege it is to dwell in a place by Almighty God, near enough to be under His shadow! While there are requirements for living in that place, there are also amazing benefits. A parallel example from my own life came to mind.

The requirements for proximity

Living by someone you love became a reality for my husband and me some years ago when we decided to downsize from the large, three-story house where we had raised our five children to a smaller home more suited to "empty nesters." A parcel of land near the church that could be divided into two buildable lots came on the market, and we were interested. Ultimately, we decided to purchase the property jointly with our youngest daughter and her husband, and build neighboring houses.

It did not take long for the four of us to discover that a joint project of this nature came with requirements. It would necessitate transparency, agreement . . . and lots of effort!

The need for *transparency* was obvious as assets, account

balances, credit ratings, and monthly earnings for both households were put on the table in connection with obtaining the property. *Agreement* had to be reached as we poured over the lot's legal description and the city requirements for land division. The property was irregular in shape and one side faced a busy street, so we needed to determine how it should be divided. Who would build on which portion? Could we come up with house dimensions that would fit on the lots and still meet our needs? Finally, the process took *effort!* We had to work through the land division procedure with the city, get approval to remove a few trees from the property, and adjust house plans to accommodate the required property line setbacks. And that

was all before we even started the building process!

Dwelling near God also requires transparency, agreement, and effort, and this begins with salvation. We must come to God with open hearts and nothing hidden, confessing and repenting of our sins. We must align our lives to His Word in agreement with the principles and instructions He has given. Staying close to Him will require effort on our parts. While we cannot earn salvation—it is the free gift of God to those who repent and believe on Him—we will not coast into Heaven! I'm reminded of the familiar old hymn "Am I a Soldier of the Cross" which asks the thought-provoking questions:

*Must I be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?
Are there no foes for me to face?*



WE ALWAYS HAVE A PLACE TO
TURN WHEN A CRISIS ARISES . . .

*Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?*

The benefits of proximity

As my husband and I look back on those busy days of the building process, we remember with amusement that some of our acquaintances were initially dubious. From time to time, someone would ask us, "Do you really want to live that close to your children?" Friends of our daughter and son-in-law would

ask them, "Do you really want to live that close to your parents?" We never had any doubts, and now, a dozen years later, we can heartily affirm the benefits of living by our children—including many that we never imagined when we started the process. Here are just four of those benefits.

Companionship. Since those days of house building, our next-door neighbors have added three sweet daughters to the little son who was toddling around the site as we installed wiring, sanded sheetrock, and painted walls on their house, the first to be built. Once our house was completed, we had the ongoing privilege of rocking babies and reading bedtime stories that we would never have enjoyed if we lived further away. (And yes, we changed a few diapers too!) While babies and bedtime stories are a thing of the past, we're now enjoying family walks, backyard bonfires, and loaning our truck to a teenager!

Crisis intervention. Help in times of crisis is another benefit we've appreciated. I don't consider myself to be accident prone, but it was a great blessing to have a medical professional (our son-in-law) living right next door when I lacerated a finger on an immersion blender. Then there was the time I scalded my hand and wrist with boiling stew, and another occasion when I fell down a flight of stairs. In each case, our son-in-law was there within moments to assess the situation, provide

calm reassurance, take me to the emergency room for stitches, or call 9-1-1 for an ambulance!

Daily support. Thankfully, crisis situations only occur on an infrequent basis. However, small needs arise almost daily, and it is good to have someone nearby to help out. When I get to work and can't remember if I closed the garage door, a grandchild is happy to run over and check. If we need assistance to move a heavy table or couch, a quick call is all that is needed. When we are on vacation, you can guess who takes in our mail and waters the houseplants. Nearly every day, our two families interact with each other.

Availability of resources. Only someone who lives next to family will understand how convenient it is to have a backup supply of resources right next door. When I need extra plates for a family dinner (we now number twenty-four when our other children, spouses, and grandchildren join us) or am out of one ingredient when I want to bake bread, I can get just what

I need a few feet away. When my son-in-law needs

WE CAN LOOK
TO JESUS.

a putty knife or my daughter wants to borrow a tablecloth, they know where to come. We have a veritable lending library going on between the two households!

The benefits of dwelling by God

As I considered the benefits of living by family, it occurred to me that

the same benefits are abundantly available to those who accept God's invitation to dwell in a place by Him.

Companionship. In the Book of Proverbs, we read that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). In Hebrews 13:5 we are told that God has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The family next door often goes places without us, of course, and we miss them when no lights are on in their house and no grandkids are running in and out our back door. But Jesus will never leave us alone. He is never asleep, never on vacation—never even gone to the grocery store!

Crisis intervention. We always have a place to turn when a crisis arises—we can look to Jesus. Psalm 34:15 says, "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry," and in our fifty-three years of marriage, my husband and I have proved that to be true. When I was a young mother, I went through a time of severe illness and spent many weeks in the hospital. One

to me, but I knew He was there! Another time when our children were small, my husband had a severe staph infection that nearly took his life. How grateful we were that we could turn to God and feel His loving arms around us during that period!

Daily support. God also helps with day-to-day concerns. We have found that the One who notes the sparrow's fall (see Matthew 10:29) sees our needs as well. My mind goes back to prayers that we would find missing keys (our toddler son had thrown them in the fireplace!) and later, that God would touch our two-year-old daughter who was suffering with a terrible earache. God has proved Himself willing to get right down to the basics of our existence. He loves us enough to walk with us through our world of pending bills, busy schedules, and stalled cars. The fact that we would rather not have to replace the washing machine this month doesn't escape His notice. He cares! And He helps.

Availability of resources. Psalm 68:19 records the words of David: "Blessed be the LORD, who daily

classroom, and that made all the difference. When my mother passed away suddenly from a stroke, He was there to bring comfort in an unforgettable manner. When we needed to arrange an in-home companion for a widowed aunt, He provided a wonderful caregiver to live with her. I could go on and on! Guidance, wisdom, encouragement, and so much more are all freely given when we come to Him with our needs.

A place available to all

Not everyone can live next door to family, but all of us can have a place by God. It is accessed through surrender and faith, and then maintained through daily obedience. If you have not yet come into that "secret place," you cannot imagine the benefits that will be yours when you do! Though some may question your decision at first, it will prove to be an immeasurably good move and you will never be sorry. You will find that a place by God is a precious place, and the benefits and blessings mentioned above—and countless more—will be yours. ♦



Companionship



Crisis Intervention



Daily Support



Availability of Resources

night my condition suddenly deteriorated, and the medical staff literally ran my bed through the hospital halls into the Intensive Care Unit. As doctors and nurses gathered around me and worked to stabilize my condition, God gave me a song: "Near to the Heart of God." I didn't know what would happen

loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Over the years, we have found that God's resources are unlimited and always available. When we were unsure about how to handle our first grader's reluctance to go to school, He led me to volunteer in the

Karen Barrett is the Senior Editor at the Apostolic Faith world headquarters office in Portland, Oregon.



EVIDENCE

OLAWALE ISAAC OLUWANIY
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

There is power in the Blood of Jesus to save, to keep, and to heal. I thank God that He saved me, sanctified me, and baptized me with the Holy Ghost and fire. Since then, there have been trials but God has kept me.

In early 2021, God opened an opportunity for me to study in Ukraine. I was overjoyed. About one year later, we started hearing rumors of war. I thought it would be settled diplomatically, but on February 24, 2023, at exactly 4:00 a.m., I heard a missile drop. BOOM! I didn't know what to do. By 7:00 a.m., the whole city was scattered. People were running frantically in every direction, trying to get cash from the bank and supplies to sustain themselves. Friends of mine were saying, "Let's go! Let's go!" but I didn't know where to go. I felt that if we left, the war we were running from could meet us in another place. The temperature was below freezing and soon there was no food or water. Suddenly, I was living like a beggar, running from one shelter to another and another.

There were four options of countries to flee to: Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary. If I didn't make an instant move, I would be trapped in Ukraine, not knowing when there would be another chance to leave again. I decided I would go to God in prayer, and whatever He said, that is what I would do. On my knees, I told God, "This is a life-or-death decision." I asked Him to direct me, and He led me to choose Hungary.

First, I needed to get to the train station, but that was a challenge because there was almost no transportation available. I decided to try to call for an Uber ride anyway, and somehow a driver was available and picked me up. It was as if God directed that person to me. The train station was *filled*. People were trying to squeeze into the trains to leave the war zone. I made it onto a train going to Lviv, and within ten minutes of arriving there, I saw another leaving

for Hungary. I knew God was right when He led me to Hungary. I arrived there at 7:00 a.m. The journey to leave the country took some people four days, but I made it in a day!

There were long queues to get into Hungary, and soldiers were sending people back, saying "Go, you cannot cross." When it was my turn, I remembered Moses and the Children of Israel at the Red Sea, with the Egyptians chasing them from behind. I could not go back to Ukraine, but these soldiers were an obstacle to me entering Hungary. I just said a simple prayer: "Lord, into Your hands I commit my spirit." When it was my turn, I just showed the man my resident permit and my passport. Without saying a word, he passed me.

I came to Hungary as a refugee; I had nothing. I had left my home in Ukraine with only a backpack, thinking maybe I would go back soon, but it was becoming clear that I would not go back. Everything I had of value was back in Ukraine. Psychologically, I was so downcast. I even doubted the point of my existence, but thank God for the prayers of the people of God and for their love. In Hungary, people that I did not know took good care of me. They gave me clothing, shelter—all free of charge! I was given three months of refugee status in Hungary, and I began applying to many other schools in Europe. Finally, as God would have it, I was offered a scholarship at two schools. I could not believe what God had done for me.

When the Spirit of God is with you, you don't need to be afraid. I just thank God for everything He saw me through. I am also thankful that this year, He made a way for me to be at an Apostolic Faith camp meeting for the first time in four years. There is no Apostolic Faith Church in Ukraine or Hungary, so most of the time, I join online for worship, but it is not the same as being among the people of God. At the camp meeting, I have been so happy and filled with God's blessing. I am so thankful for everyone's prayers and I pray God will keep me until He takes me Home at last. ♦



(Top to bottom) A train arriving in Hungary; Isaac in Kiev; War-torn Kyiv, Ukraine.



WORLD REPORT

SHORT TAKES

32

SOULS SAVED AT THE FIRST DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CAMP MEETING

34

FORMER WESLEYAN CHAPEL IS DEDICATED AS CRANFIELD CHURCH
IN THE UK

35

75TH ANNIVERSARY AND GROUNDBREAKING IN BENIN

SHORT TAKES

Brief reports from our churches worldwide.

Souls Saved at the First Dominican Republic Camp Meeting

The first Dominican Republic camp meeting was held August 24-27, 2023. Although national gatherings have been held there in the past, this was the first time a location was provided where attendees could remain on site for the entire event. The theme of the camp meeting was “The Path of Faith,” and attendees came from over ten branch church locations in the country. District Superintendent Deivys Pichardo reported that the presence of God was evident throughout the weekend, with several praying through to salvation and their deeper experiences.

On Friday morning, a Bible teaching titled “Personal Growth and Development” touched on techniques for good time management. In the afternoon, study sessions were held on the topics of Christian values, disciplines, and fellowship. At the evening service, Haina Pastor Andres Pichardo Richards preached on “The Path of Faith for Revival and Restoration.”



He read Romans 10:17 and Jude 3, and encouraged the congregation to walk in faith, seek God, and receive by grace. That night, several made the decision to serve God; souls were saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit and fire, motivating others to seek God too.

A number of activities were carried out simultaneously on Saturday. At a pastors’ and ministers’ meeting, spirits were strengthened to continue the work of God. At the same time, a morning devotional and prayer time was held, where



God continued to sanctify and fill hearts with the Holy Spirit.

In the evening, a concert was led by Ruth Mills with participation from various locations, including a combined youth and children's choir. At the close, Pastor Hector

service included the installation of three national leaders: Nelson de la Cruz, Jr. as the national youth leader; Fiordalisa Demostenes as the national women's leader; and Laura Yicel Pichardo as the national Sunday school leader. Members of the Board of Trustees who were present laid hands on them as everyone prayed for God to help them in their new roles.

During the testimony portion of the service, individuals shared about blessings received during the camp meeting, with some already expressing a desire to attend camp again next year. The sermon was from Hebrews 11:1, encouraging the congregation that unwavering faith in God brings supernatural results. The meeting closed with a final opportunity to pray.

As the Dominican Republic camp meeting closed, the participants were grateful for the mighty presence of God in their midst. Reverend Pichardo reported that

Guillermo of La Romana brought the sermon from Acts 1:8. He spoke about renewal and the decision to seek God, and a special time of prayer followed. One child said that he would not leave until he obtained the blessings of sanctification and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Several stayed and prayed with him until after midnight, when the glory of God descended and he received God's promises.

On Sunday morning, after Sunday school the devotional



(Top Left) Rev. Noemi King leads prayer alongside Ruth Polanco King, Rev. Deivys Pichardo, and Rev. Andres Pichardo Richards. (Above) Rev. Laura Yicel Pichardo teaches a Sunday school class. (Below) A group photo of pastors, ministers, and camp meeting assistants. (Left) A time of congregational prayer.

about twelve were saved, three received sanctification and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and several also received spiritual renewal. They are thanking God with joy and gratitude for the success of their first national camp meeting! ♦



UNITED KINGDOM

Former Wesleyan Chapel Is Dedicated as Cranfield Church in the UK

On Sunday, October 15, 2023, a dedication was held for our Cranfield church in England. With visitors



(Top to bottom) Congregational singing; An orchestra special; Cranfield pastor Fungai Mangere (left) with his wife, Shupiko, alongside several visitors at the dedication: (left to right) Rev. Mark Mfandarahwa and his wife, Marble; Rev. Joshua Idowu and his wife, Bukie; Rev. LeRoy Toning and his wife, Vigdis; and Rev. Darrel Lee and his wife, Debbie.

from branch churches throughout the United Kingdom and several from the United States as well, the congregation soon filled the entire sanctuary and part of the annex.

As the service began, the orchestra played two numbers, including “Be Still for the Presence.” Then the choir sang “Where Your Glory Dwells.” Both set the tone for inviting God’s blessing and presence on the special occasion.

Following the welcome, a brief history of the Cranfield congregation was given. Its origins are in Aylesbury, a town in Buckinghamshire County. In 2013, Felix and Miriam Panganayi began holding services there in their home. That group of twenty eventually disbanded after two families moved away. However, in February of 2022, an online Bible study was established, drawing regular participants from Buckinghamshire, as well as Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire counties. It was led by Fungai Mangere, who is now the Cranfield pastor. The Bible study group desired a centrally located permanent place of worship and sought God’s guidance. Then, in January of 2023, a Wesleyan chapel built in 1880 came on the market, and God made the purchase possible. Since then, the building has been remodeled. It includes an

kitchen, large and small dining halls, and restrooms.

The service continued with congregational singing and then prayer led by Isaac Adigun, the former United Kingdom District Superintendent. This was followed by acknowledgments given by Mark Mfandarahwa, the current United Kingdom District Superintendent. Before the Scripture reading, the choir sang “Let Us Build a House.” Then Joshua Idowu, the pastor at St. Louis, Missouri, read 2 Chronicles 6:40-7:3.

The dedication sermon was given by Superintendent General Darrel Lee. He read 2 Chronicles 5:1 and focused on the unity that was present among those who participated in the dedication of Solomon’s Temple. When everyone was focused on serving God regardless of their role, His glory filled the house. Today, He continues to inhabit the praises of people who are unified in serving Him.

Following the sermon, the dedicatory prayer was offered by LeRoy Toning, the Scandinavian District Superintendent. Then the congregation sang “To God Be the Glory” before the service closed with prayer led by Nick Segres Jr., the pastor at Atlanta, Georgia. Afterward, everyone gathered in the main hall and enjoyed a wonderful time of fellowship. ♦



BENIN

75th Anniversary and Groundbreaking in Benin

Special services were held October 14-15, 2023, to commemorate seventy-five years of Gospel work in the Republic of Benin and to begin construction of a new camp meeting tabernacle. The events were held at the headquarters church at Jericho Road in Cotonou.

The weekend activities opened with evangelistic outreach on Saturday afternoon, and then the showing of a documentary film that explained the history of the Apostolic Faith work in Benin. It started in 1948 with the help of the late Reverend Ben Abbey of Togo, who eventually became the first overseer of Benin (Dahomey at that time). Reverend Abbey was living in Lagos around the time the Apostolic Faith work was starting there, and he came in contact with the church founders. After praying through to his three Christian experiences, he decided to go back to his country to introduce the Gospel in Togo, but the message was rejected. Since his wife was Beninese, they decided to relocate to Cotonou in Benin, where he found hearts that were ready to receive the Gospel message. Following the passing of Reverend Abbey, several missionaries were sent from Nigeria to oversee the work, until 1997 when Reverend Marcellin Hounmenou, a native of Benin, was appointed as the leader. After his passing in 2021, Reverend Marcellin Kploka was asked to fill that role, where he continues to this day. During the last seventy-five years, the work in Benin has grown greatly, and now includes sixty-six branch churches.

The Sunday schedule included prayer meeting at 7:30 a.m., Sunday school, a morning anniversary service, afternoon meal, and then a groundbreaking ceremony for the new campground facility. It felt like camp meeting with over five thousand in attendance, and there was truly joy in the camp! Members of local media outlets were also present to document the occasion.

At the prayer meeting, Reverend Kploka introduced a delegation from the West and Central Africa (WECA) headquarters in Lagos, which was led by Reverend Kayode Ajiboye. He expressed greetings and congratulations on behalf of WECA District Superintendent Isaac Adigun and read an inspiring message from Rachel Fakorade, the WECA Director of Francophone Regional Services. Her team's work to translate Gospel literature into French has been of tremendous value to the French-speaking Benins.

During Sunday school, students presented a play about the history of the work in Benin, including the persecution of the founding members who were at one point arrested and taken to jail. Then the morning service opened with an orchestra piece, followed by the choir singing "Clap Your Hands, All Ye People." The Bible reading was chosen from Joel 2:21-27, which was followed by another song, "Unto the Lord Be the Glory." The sermon for the special occasion was delivered by Reverend Ajiboye, and the topic was "The Faith of Our Fathers," based on Psalm 16:6-7. He drew a contrast between an inheritance and a heritage, pointing out that a heritage is something that cannot be seen. He likened the faith of our fathers to a heritage, and church buildings or properties to an inheritance. Our heritage includes the sound doctrines of salvation, sanctification, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is far more precious than any physical inheritance. Following the service, many seekers were drawn to the altars of prayer and were blessed.

After lunch, the groundbreaking service for the new campground started in the old campground tabernacle. During announcements, a preview of the new campground building was projected onto screens. The beautiful edifice inspired prayers for a speedy completion of the work. Following that, the Bible reading was taken from Haggai 2:7-9 and the sermon was titled "God Is Greater than Man," based on Job 33:12. The preacher asked, "Is the LORD's hand waxed short?" (Numbers 11:23) and declared God's blessing on the work despite the current economic recession. The closing benediction was given by Esther Ibikunle, a member of the Francophone Regional Services in WECA, and then the congregation walked to the construction site while singing "Stand Up, Stand Up to Build." At the site, the ceremonial pouring of the cornerstone was conducted by several leaders, including Reverend Ajiboye, Reverend Kploka, Sister Ibikunle, and Reverend Raphael Hounkperi, a retired Benin Board Member. The events concluded with a prayer.

The special weekend was a blessing for all who attended, with everyone prayerfully anticipating the completion of the new Benin campground tabernacle in the near future. ♦



OUR CLASSICS

37

THE WAY OUT

Gretchen wanted freedom from the anger and bitterness that she felt in her heart, but she did not know how to find the way out.

The Way Out

By Gretchen Friesen

Originally published in the May 1993 edition of our magazine.



Gretchen wanted freedom from the anger and bitterness that she felt in her heart, but she did not know how to find the way out.

As a child, I was raised on the island of Oahu in a home where we went to church regularly, and I attended a religious school. However, we were taught that we could not talk directly to God. Instead, our forgiveness was supposed to come from confessing to a priest and saying memorized prayers. My first recollection of talking to God myself was when I was thirteen years old. I had been stealing from my mother, who was an alcoholic. One day as I was sitting in church, I asked God to stop my stealing, and I never stole another thing after that. When I was nineteen, I told a priest about this experience, and he said, "That's not possible." I replied that it had happened to me, and I had not stolen for years. Since he continued to maintain that such a thing was impossible, I walked out of that church and never went back.

Our home was a miserable place full of hate, bitterness, and fighting. I had a vile temper and the hatred in my own heart caused many of the problems. I wanted a way out, and one time I remember looking up into the sky and thinking, *God, what am I here for? What is the purpose for living?*

The only thing I could say to God was, "Can You love me just the way I am and do something for me?" God saw my heart and He *changed it.*

Shortly after that, the young man I had been dating became a Christian, and he told me about it. I didn't understand what he meant when he said he had been saved, but I could see that he was different. The change I saw in him prompted me to ask what church he attended. He invited me to attend, and when I went to a service, it was different from anything I had ever known. At the end of the sermon, the minister said, "Will you see Heaven?" It seemed as if he looked right at me when he said it. I knew I was not going to Heaven, but I wanted to. I wanted to be friends with Jesus, but I didn't know how.

After the service, people went to the front of the church to pray. They asked if I wanted to pray too, so

I went, expecting to hear others pray the memorized prayer I was accustomed to. Instead, the lady beside me talked to God as if they were friends, and she prayed for me. What a surprise!

For two weeks I went to that little church. During that time my mind was in turmoil, and I could hardly sleep. I wondered if God could love me, or if He would reject me because I was so bad. One Sunday morning after the service, I knelt and prayed. The only thing I could say to God was, "Can You love me just the way I am and do something for me?" God saw my heart and He changed it. When I got up from my knees, I was so happy! It seemed as if I couldn't contain the happiness that was inside me.

Although I had hated my mother for years, she was the first person I wanted to see. She was in the hospital and hadn't seen me for seven or eight months, and she had no idea that I had been going to church. Yet when I walked into her hospital room, she called the nurses and said, "Look at what God has done! He has given my daughter back to me!" I had not yet said even one word to her. At that point I hugged and kissed her and told her that I loved her. She smiled and said, "I know you do." Then she said, "Now, tell these nurses what God has done for you." So even though I had been a Christian for less than one hour, I gave my first testimony. After the nurses left, I asked my mom how she knew God had done something for me. She said, "You smiled from ear to ear, and you were standing up straight. You look different than I have ever seen you, and I knew it could only have been God."

As the weeks went by and I continued to serve God, I began to learn how much He cared for me and that He could work in every area of my life. Once, severe cold sores developed all over my mouth and I could not eat. They got so bad that my boss sent me home from work and told me to stay there until they were gone. At church that night the pastor asked me, "Did you ever think of praying about those?" I replied that God was not interested in them. He said, "God is interested, Gretchen. Just ask Him."

When I knelt, I said, "God, can you take away these cold sores?" I remember thinking that God might be angry with me for asking, so I told Him, "The pastor told me to ask You, but if You're too busy,

You don't have to worry about them." When I got up to leave, the pastor looked at me with a big smile and told me to go look in a mirror. My lips were perfectly well! There wasn't a mark on my mouth—no scab, nothing. It was as if the cold

The pastor said to me, "You see, God is interested in you, Gretchen. He loves you and He is willing to take

care of you."

sores had never been there. The pastor said to me, "You see, God is interested in you, Gretchen. He loves you and He is willing to take care of you." The next day I was back at work, much to the surprise of my boss.

The people at church told me about sanctification. When I received it, I thought it was marvelous. That year I traveled from Honolulu, Hawaii, to Portland, Oregon, for the Apostolic Faith camp meeting. There I received the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord continued to bless my life in many ways. In time, I married a Christian man, and we started our family. When our first two children were still babies, they came down with a terrible skin disease. They had raw, open blisters and screamed every time we changed their diapers. The doctors had no idea what it was. Our daughter was just old enough to say, "Pray for me, pray harder!" I remember crying and saying, "God, can You just touch them? Can You do something for them?" This went on for a month, and finally one Saturday night, my husband and I consecrated our children to God. We told Him that if He wanted to take them, He could, but if He was going to heal them, to please do so. On Sunday morning I went in to get our daughter ready for church. As I took off her diaper, I saw that her skin was perfectly normal. The doctor had told me just the day before that if the sores ever healed up, they would leave deep scars, but there was no mark. I grabbed our son and pulled off his diaper, but his sores were still there. We cried out to God again, and the next day his sores were gone as well. This caused my faith to soar.

As the years went by, God undertook in our lives in so many situations. For a time, I had a real fear

of being alone. Whenever my husband was gone, I was tormented by anxiety. I would push the couch in front of the door and then try to wake up early in the morning and push it back before the children were up so they would not know how afraid I was. I didn't want them to grow up with the same fear, but they knew that I was afraid. In 1980, we moved from Hawaii to Grants Pass, Oregon, and my husband had to work out of town. I knew he would be gone all week and home only on weekends. There was no way I could live in such fear week after week, so I prayed earnestly to the Lord. He gave me the verses in Isaiah 41:10-13, and I held onto that assurance of His presence as a promise. My husband worked out of town for almost two years after that, but I was never afraid again.

Over and over, I have seen God undertake for our children. It pays for parents to pray. When our son was eighteen, he nearly had a disastrous accident. He was out that evening, and when he hadn't returned home by one o'clock in the morning, I was very concerned. I prayed earnestly that God would take care of him wherever he was and whatever he was doing. Eventually he did come home, and the next morning he asked me, "You were praying for me last night, weren't you?" I said, "Yes, I was." He responded, "Well, I knew it, because God took care of me." He had fallen asleep at the wheel, and when he woke up, he was headed off the edge of the road toward a huge drop off. Thank God, he woke up in time to get his truck back on the road. Incidents like that make me thankful we can pray and receive answers from God.

God has been so good to us. He has given my husband work when there was no work available, and we've received money when funds were tight. If our children were sick or having problems at school, we prayed about it and told them to pray. When they did, God answered. It has been wonderful to serve God! As I consider what my life could have been, I am so thankful for what God has done for me. My parents had been married nineteen years and were in the process of getting a divorce when my mother died. She was only forty-six years old. I am forty-six now and have been married for twenty-five years. God is the reason for that!

No one could ask for anything better than serving the Lord, and my heart is full of praise for Him. ♦

Gretchen Friesen joyfully served the Lord as a Sunday school teacher and pastor's wife until God took her home in October of 2003.

A STATEMENT OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

We believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible, and endorse all the teachings contained in it. Following is a summary of our basic doctrines.

THE DIVINE TRINITY consists of three Persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Ghost, perfectly united as one. *Matthew 3:16-17; 1 John 5:7.*

REPENTANCE is a godly sorrow for and a renouncing of all sin. *Isaiah 55:7; Matthew 4:17.*

JUSTIFICATION (or salvation) is the act of God's grace through which we receive forgiveness for sins and stand before God as though we had never sinned. *Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17.*

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION, the act of God's grace whereby we are made holy, is the second definite work and is subsequent to justification. *John 17:15-21; Hebrews 13:12.*

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST is the enduement of power upon the sanctified life, and is evidenced by speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. *John 14:16-17, 26; Acts 1:5-8; 2:1-4.*

DIVINE HEALING of sickness is provided through the atonement. *James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24.*

THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS will be as literal and visible as His going away (*Acts 1:9-11*) and will consist of two appearances. First, He comes to catch away His waiting Bride. *Matthew 24:40-44; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.* Second, He comes to execute judgment upon the ungodly. *2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14-15.*

THE TRIBULATION will occur between Christ's coming for His Bride and His return in judgment. *Isaiah 26:20-21; Revelation 9 and 16.*

CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN is the 1000 years of peaceful reign by Jesus on earth. *Isaiah 11 and 35; Revelation 20:1-6.*

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT is the final judgment when all the wicked dead will stand before God. *Revelation 20:11-15.*

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH will replace the present heaven and earth, which will be destroyed after the Great White Throne Judgment. *2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1-3.*

ETERNAL HEAVEN AND ETERNAL HELL are literal places of final and eternal destiny. *Matthew 25:41-46; Luke 16:22-28.*

MARRIAGE is a covenant between one man and one woman that is binding before God for life. Neither person has a right to marry again while the first companion lives. *Mark 10:6-12; Romans 7:1-3.*

RESTITUTION is necessary, wherein wrongs against others are righted. *Ezekiel 33:15; Matthew 5:23-24.*

WATER BAPTISM is by one immersion "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." *Matthew 3:16; 28:19.*

THE LORD'S SUPPER is an institution ordained by Jesus so that we might remember His death until He returns. *Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23,26.*

FOOT WASHING is practiced according to the example and commandment Jesus gave. *John 13:14-15.*

You may obtain additional information about these doctrines and learn about our other publications in both English and foreign languages by writing to the Apostolic Faith Church at 5414 SE Duke Street, Portland, Oregon 97206, U.S.A. or visiting our website at www.apostolicfaith.org. Before these magazines are sent out, they are always prayed over for the healing of the sick and the salvation of souls.

The Apostolic Faith (ISSN #2475-9988-print; ISSN #2572-4401-online) is published quarterly by the Apostolic Faith Church, 5414 SE Duke Street, Portland, Oregon 97206, U.S.A. and is available free of charge. Periodicals postage is paid at Portland, Oregon. Postmaster: please send address changes to The Apostolic Faith Church, 5414 SE Duke Street, Portland, Oregon 97206, U.S.A.



Jesus
THE LIGHT of THE WORLD