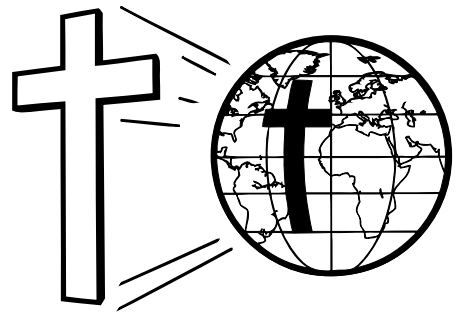


Foundation Of Faith



THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

The Church
AS A FAMILY

UNITY IN THE CHURCH

We Need
A REVIVAL

SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH

JUST A MINOR FLAW

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

Have you ever asked yourself these questions: "Who am I? Where do I belong? What is my purpose?"

In the Old Testament, we read of a widow who lived in a foreign land, Moab. Her name was Naomi. Her husband and two sons had died.

One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, may have asked herself those questions. When her mother-in-law wanted to return to Judah, to the people of God, she said decisively: "For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16). Because of the example of her mother-in-law, Ruth was willing to leave her heathen parents and her earthly home behind in order to go to the people of God. Her desire, too, was to live and to die with faith in the one true God.

I, too, have asked myself these questions. I was also once without a home and without Christ. But when I found the Savior, I became a child of God and also became a part of His people, the church of God that Christ bought with His blood. Before I was saved, I was a spiritual foreigner and did not have a spiritual citizenship. But when my name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life (see Luke 10:20), I became a member of the body of Christ and now belong to the family of the living God. Now I can sing the glorious song:

*"I once was an outcast, stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice and an alien by birth;
But I've been adopted, my name's written down,
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.
I'm a child of the King, a child of the King;
With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King."*

Dear Reader, have you already found your home in the family of God, in His church?

H. D. Nimz

Like Fish in the Water

The shadows of night began to disappear. The first rays of sunshine became obvious. I stood at the water's edge and listened to the steady rushing of the ocean waters. With laborious strokes, the fishermen rowed their boat to land, tired from their night's work. They unloaded their catch from boxes and baskets.

It hurt me to watch how the fish, still alive, flapped around in the baskets and yearned to be back in the water, their life's element. I asked one of the fishermen: "Could I put one fish back into the water? I would like to see if it can still swim." "Do that," he replied quietly.

Quickly I carried one fish back to the water. At first, the fish lay as if unconscious. Then it began moving its gills and fins, slowly at first and then faster and faster. After the fish was right side up, it quickly disappeared into the deep. It had returned to its life's element.

What a powerful picture of the human life! We are like a stranded fish, which is restless and moves back and forth. Because we are far from our life's element, the living God, we have become restless and fearful. The early Christian theologian Augustine (AD 354-430) once wise-

ly stated: "You have made us for Yourself. Our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

Our soul yearns for God, and the Bible says that God also yearns for a relationship with us. Therefore, He lets the Gospel be proclaimed. If we open ourselves to this message, then it works on us like the water did on the fish after it was returned from a certain death to its life's element. We become immersed in the sea of God's love. We begin inhaling the air of eternity. We awaken and receive a new life. With this message, we are returned to our original life's element, our relationship with God. A noticeable change that occurs in our new life in God is our yearning to be together with others who think as we do.

A man who went to church every Sunday and also attended Bible Study during the week was told: "That is excessive. Once a year would be sufficient." In response, he answered: "A living person has different needs than a dead one."

Do we already belong to the "living," or are we still spiritually dead? The Lord gives us new life in communion with Jesus and with our brothers and sisters.

P. W.

Unsinkable

One of history's most notorious disasters at sea was the sinking of the luxury ocean liner, the "Titanic." This occurred in 1912 as the ship, laden with about 2,300 people, raced across the Atlantic in the hope of breaking the speed record of all ocean liners. Warnings against the danger of icebergs were disregarded by its officers, since this ship was thought to have been protected against every possibility of sinking.

One short radio transmission arrived that tragic night: the Titanic had collided with something! Nothing more. Newspaper headlines publicized the incident the next morning. It was also noted by its owners: "We are confident and certain that the Titanic is not in any danger, even if she has encountered an iceberg. With its individualized, watertight compartments, she is virtually unsinkable. This report should not cause you any further concern."

News reporters recalled the captain's words before his departure as he announced: "In my 40 years at sea, I have never experienced a calamity worth mentioning. I cannot imagine a situation that could force a ship to sink. Nor could I surmise what type of mishap this ship should encounter." Unknown to the world was the fact that a few hours before the newspaper report was released, this colossal ship had sunk in the depths of the sea.

Similarly, the Church is also thought to be "unsinkable." We say "it is God's church" and back that up with the Scripture from Matthew 16:18: "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." It was also said that the individualized compartments of the Titanic were watertight. However, with only one significant impact, the water torrents rushed into the hull.

Dear child of God, has your local church perhaps

collided with an "iceberg" of worldliness or jealousy and become lukewarm? The congregation may consist of a great number of "passengers," as well as a fully qualified "staff." But are they watchful and aware of imminent signs of danger? Has the church suffered a collision with materialistic gratification or even greed? Has any sign of a leak been detected? Is worldliness already gushing in? Or is it gradually seeping in? The end result is the same!

When a congregation loses its Christ-like character, it also relinquishes its godly membership, meaning God no longer assumes ownership of it. Outwardly, it may appear to be an established, influential, and financially stable congregation, while suffering spiritual bankruptcy.

The same may be said about an individual member. The tragedy of the Titanic, resulting in the loss of hundreds of lives, cannot be contributed to one single error such as hastiness or lack of knowledge. It was the result of careless negligence, overestimated confidence, and underestimated danger. You, my friend, have a soul to lose and only one life in which to save it. Is He who created your soul also your captain? Despise lukewarmness! Be spiritually-minded, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-led!

Often the warning is repeated: "Do not underestimate the enemy!" We know that the unexposed part of the iceberg is a much greater danger than the exposed part of it. The lookout tower of the Titanic had issued a cautionary warning. For three minutes, the warning was ignored. By the fourth minute, it was too late! May the tragic fate of the Titanic serve as a warning to us!

Naaman Apple

The Church as a Family

The Church of God is not merely an organization; it is also a family. This description is simple and easy enough to understand, but, perhaps because of its simplicity, many people overlook this truth entirely. It seems too simple to them. We, too, can fall into this trap and find ourselves drifting further and further away from God's simple way. Let us not lose sight of the "simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3)!

Several passages in the New Testament describe the Church as a family consisting of brothers and sisters in Christ. In a human family, individual members are bound by blood and a common interest. For their part, the members of the Family or the Church of God are bound by the blood of Christ and the bond of love. This sets the Church of God apart from all human organizations.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God Himself, is the founder of this spiritual family. The Lord wants people to do everything in their power to become a member of this godly family, even if they must forsake their own relatives to do so. This command came from Jesus Himself; however, He added the wonderful promise that everyone who sacrifices and leaves something behind for His sake will receive it back a hundred times over. We read in Mark 10:29-30: "Truly I tell you, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life." Someone who becomes a child of God enters into the great family of believers and becomes a brother or sister in the Lord to everyone who follows Christ. A deep bond connects them, and they grow to love and appreciate each other more and more as time goes on.

It may be easier for all of us to acknowledge as brothers and sisters in Christ, people whom we know to belong to the Church of God but with whom we do not

have closer contact. But what about the pure brotherly love between the members of the local congregation?

It is only natural that occasional differences of opinion arise in the family that is the local congregation, seeing as it is made up of people with various viewpoints and ideas, with unequal temperaments, dispositions, and personalities, and with differing world views. However, when dealing with the problems that arise, we should keep in mind that we are a family in God and that all of these differences should be addressed in and with love. This becomes possible when individual family members are filled with the love of Christ and act in this love. If this is the case, any differences will only bring them closer together once the obstacles have been peacefully removed, rather than driving hearts apart.

Jesus said to His disciples: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). This love of Christ and of each other is the foundation of true fellowship and proof of true salvation. The fact that love and unity can be found in a local congregation despite differences in opinion is the best testimony of real Christianity to the world.

We should never forget that we are even obligated to love brothers and sisters who have wronged us, and we must always be willing to forgive if we want God to forgive us in turn. "We are brethren" (Genesis 13:8), as Abraham said to Lot when differences arose between them. Let us not treat our brothers and sisters harshly, for we, too, have our own weaknesses. Who are we to judge a fellow human being?

As members of the Church and as a family in Christ, we must find a way of peace and harmony through all differences of opinion, interests, and the like if we have a sincere respect for others and their rights. The Holy Scripture admonishes us "through love [to] serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Members of the family in Christ need, rely, and depend on each other and should

therefore treat one another with love, gentleness, patience, and care: in short, as brothers and sisters. Let us help one another.

How great an influence could the Church have on the world if each member were to commit to helping his brothers and sisters through temptations and weak-

ness! If unsaved people were left no choice but to exclaim: “Look how these Christians love each other!”, they would also be forced to acknowledge the reality of Christianity. This is how a local congregation can grow.

E. Martin

Spiritual Life in the Church

A local congregation must be spiritually alive. If it is not, everything that it has and does is of little value. Although the first congregation of Christians had few material goods and comforts, it had plenty of power from God. A steady stream of souls was saved from sin and added to the Church. They were all “living stones” in the spiritual house, which is the Church.

Only living stones, people who have been truly brought to life through Jesus Christ, have a place in the house of the Lord, in the Church which Jesus bought with His own blood. People who do not have spiritual life do not belong to the Church of the great God.

Many religious bodies have perished despite a long membership list because their members were not born again. Many people have never experienced personal salvation but nonetheless participate in the Church’s work. However, they can never do the spiritual work of the Lord and have no place in the true Church, the Church of God.

Worship must be spiritual, for “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Long, dead, and dry prayers

dampen the Spirit. We do not encounter a single long prayer in the New Testament, although we read that the children of God sometimes spent entire nights in prayer. Public prayer is an important part of services, serving to promote a spirit of reverence and worship.

Singing must be spiritual. Some people believe that a lot of noise and clapping while singing is proof of spiritual worth. Far from it! Singing is spiritual if it comes from and speaks to the heart, if it causes us to feel God’s presence in worship, and if it draws us nearer to Him.

God despises cold and ceremonial worship. This was already the case in the Old Testament, and Paul, too, mentions people who have the appearance of a godly spirit but deny His power (see 2 Timothy 3:5). All dead ritual is an abomination to God.

For a sermon to have value, it must be spiritual. Paul wrote to the congregation in Corinth: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything

among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). In verse 4, he continues: “And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Paul did not boast in anything except the cross of Christ, and Christ, the Crucified, was always the focus of his preaching. He always spoke as the messenger of God.

Nothing exerts a greater influence on the spiritual life of a local congregation than its preaching. A congregation may be perfectly positioned and organized, but if its sermons are directed at the head and not the heart, the consequences will soon follow. A congregation will not be spiritual if its preaching is not spiritual.

Only a truly spiritually-oriented pastor can lead the flock entrusted to him deeper into the will of God and into Jesus Christ. Spiritual preaching is constructive and offers listeners spiritual nourishment, allowing them to discern the will of God and to make spiritual progress.

R. C. Caudill

Who governs the Church of God?

The Bible is the unique and only authority for the Church. When questions arise related to the Church, we must go to the Word of God for answers to these questions. The prophet Isaiah said: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder” (Isaiah 9:6). The apostle Paul, who preached and wrote on this topic more than any others, states in Ephesians 1:22-23: “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

These verses show us that the Lord Jesus, who built the Church Himself and cleansed it through His blood, reigns over the Church. He Himself is the responsible authority in His Church. This applies to the universal Church, which includes all those who are saved, but also to each local church congregation.

If all children of God let Him rule in their heart and lives, acknowledge Him as Lord of their life, and in all ways let themselves be governed and led by Him, then Jesus occupies His rightful place in the Church.

Often, however, the Lord has only partial influence in our lives. He would like to lead, but our personal will is in primary control. This could be a reason why some people and some local churches make no progress in their spiritual walk. The personal will and opinions have not been totally given over to the Lord Jesus so that He does not totally lead that person’s life.

How can Jesus be the head of the Church? This can only be the case if the Church has been crucified with Him. Paul said in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Jesus once said: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39), then the plan of salvation was completed. And only then can our speech and actions show that Jesus really is the Lord of our life and also the head of the local church.

Can we be followers of the Man of Sorrow and still cling to our own will and have our own way? When a problem arises, do we just say: “Let us have a business meeting and vote on the problem?” By such actions, is the head of the church taken into consideration? Through such actions, the Lord Jesus is most often partially or totally left out.

The Lord Jesus can only be the head of the Church if He occupies the first place in our lives and if we go to Him in prayer with all our needs. A father is unable to be the leader and the head of the home if all the children decide to carry out their own plans and solve their own problems or leave them unsolved. Then the father is only an observer and not the head of the home.

In the same way, Christ is unable to be the head of the local church if everything is not brought to Him in earnest prayer. Submission to His will and also a willingness to wait is needed until His will becomes known. Naturally, the head of the Church is able to make His will known so that all of His followers are satisfied with His leading. Yes, they would not desire to have it any other way.

Do we as children of God want to be people of prayer, who solve all their problems at the feet of Jesus? Or do we want to have nothing left undone in the church so that everything is on a course we personally like?

Let us look at Acts 13:2-4. Here we have an example of how the Lord leads through His Holy Spirit: “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

So being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

Here we see the harmonious working together of the Holy Spirit and the Church. Barnabas and Paul were sent out by both the Holy Spirit and the church. This is in total agreement with all the teachings in the New

Testament. Today, the Holy Spirit also wants to work together with the completely holy and God-fearing church as in the past. Even in our time, the Holy Spirit wants to guide the furthering of His kingdom. Are we as willing and ready to let the Holy Spirit lead us as He did the apostles?

Unity in the Church

Unity of the Spirit

One cannot imagine the Church of God without unity. No one can be a member of the Church without new birth or being born of the Spirit. All those who are born again have new, spiritual life. They are in Christ, and Christ is not divided. Therefore, His spiritual body, the Church is also not divided. The unity of the Spirit can not be achieved through human effort. It is an entirely natural result of the working of God’s Spirit through new birth.

Divisions of every kind are utterly condemned, for they are not of God. The enemy is the cause of every division among God’s children. Paul sets up the biblical standard with these words: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). “But God composed the body, . . . that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25). That is a biblical image of the one, true Church.

Unity in the Spirit

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

When this unity in the Spirit is diligently upheld, it leads to unity of faith. It must be upheld “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13). Therein a congregation will be established whose conduct is “worthy of the gospel

of Christ” and who stands “fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (see Philippians 1:27).

Unity of the Spirit begins with the new birth. Unity of faith is something that is developed more and more over time, when the unity of the Spirit is earnestly upheld and nurtured. The Lord has given His Church gifts that can be used to lead all believers to a unity of faith and true Christian understanding.

Unity in Working Together

Unity in Christ, unity in the Spirit, in faith, and in doctrine are not enough. There is still more to achieve, if the Church is to fulfill its mission on earth. It is God’s will that all His children work together to win souls.

In the first Church, the unity of the Spirit and faith was not only visibly evident, it was also experienced through united action. “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). And in His priestly prayer, He prayed that the Church of today would be one just as the first church was at the dawn of Christianity. He prayed: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:20-21). Everything that hinders and threatens to destroy visible unity must be removed.

A local church that stands in unity and harmony with other congregations will naturally work together with those churches to advance the Lord’s work. There is work to do that a single congregation cannot accomplish on its own. Working together is advantageous. That is why it is important that there be one mind, one spirit, one faith, and a common goal—a goal to glorify the Lord, further His kingdom and save lost souls.

We Need a Revival

Revivals provide health and healing for the church. How can we experience revival today? Since revivals are sent by God, He can send them at any time, even today.



The little church had 150 seats. The average attendance was rarely over 80. Sunday evening came, and the preacher made his way to the worship service. He felt that he had more inspiration for the sermon on this night than he had ever had before. “If only the seats would be filled tonight!” he said to himself.

Soon he approached the house of God. To his disappointment, he saw that only few seats were filled. The time had come to begin the service. Two songs were sung. It was time to pray. At most, 50 people were present. What a discouragement for him!

As an introduction to the prayer, he directed the following words to those who were present: “The entire day long, I felt joyful because of the presence of God in my soul. I came here this evening with the expectation of a large audience. I cannot understand why people do not attend worship services more diligently. I am prepared to do all that I can for the unsaved. But it saddens me that there is so little interest. And it causes me concern that so many stayed away. Something must be done. This house should be full. Brothers, I believe we

need a revival.” “Amen,” replied those present in unison.

So the congregation decided to plan for a revival service. Preparations were made, and an evangelist was invited. A time was set, and they waited for the coming revival. The evangelist came at the appointed time. The service was held.—The results?—None.

I have given this example only as an important lesson. And this lesson is: We cannot have a revival if we do not pray, cry, and work for it. We can have a revival if we pay the price for it. It is not the unsaved who pray, cry, and work, but the believers and the church that do. It is the church that prays and works and who must wrestle with God for the deliverance of souls bound in sin.

The need for revival

It is clear that a great need for a revival exists. You just have to take a quick look around in order to see the low spiritual state of many people who profess to be Christians, as well as the lack of concern and the indifference among the unsaved.

Someone writes: “The conditions among young church-goers, which I have studied for years, are appalling. There is a form of godliness, but a lack of concern and carelessness in regard to the spiritual life. Even some preachers and leaders in the church seem superficial, and the difficult circumstances in our schools and colleges—all that is enough to break one’s heart.”

C. L. Thompson says in her book, “Times of Refreshing,” that there was “Death in the churches, rottenness in public morals, infidelity coming in like a flood upon the schools It was a time of reckless expenditures, of unparalleled fever for riches without consideration of how they were obtained, . . . of coldness and deadness in the church and alarming godlessness outside of it.”

In light of such facts, it is apparent that something must be done. God has done His part. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Jesus loved this world so much that He willingly sacrificed His life. He became poor for our sakes so that through His poverty we might become rich. Paul writes in Philippians 2:6-8: “[He] did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”—What more could He have done?

The responsibility now lies with the people of God. If people should experience salvation, then they must believe. And if they must believe, then the message of salvation must be brought to them by those whose hearts are aflame with the love of God and who have a deep passion for the lost. Before a revival can occur, everyone should ask themselves the following questions:

1. Do I truly want a revival and am I prepared to pray continually and earnestly for it?
2. Do I want a revival that stirs my own heart deep enough that I ask God to remove everything from my heart that does not please Him?
3. Do I want a revival and am I prepared to gather together with other believers to pray, even if it takes extra time and effort?

4. Do I want a revival and am I prepared to make the most of every opportunity to speak with those who are searching, and to pray with them?

5. Do I want a revival and am I prepared to continue to work and to pray for one, even if the prayers are not immediately answered?

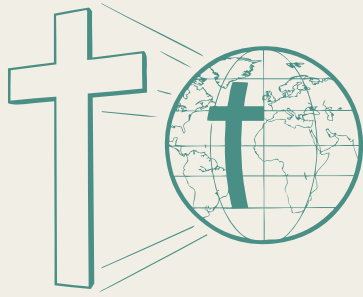
Is it not too much for you, dear reader, to consider each question in detail and with prayer? If you do this—and I believe that you will—then I believe, too, that you will answer each question with a yes. And if you answer each question with a yes, then you will be urged to cry, pray, and work for a revival that may come soon.

It is reported that large revivals took place when whole groups of believers prayed for them. This was nothing new in terms of God working in His church. What preceded the great revival at Pentecost? It was the events of the Easter week, the responsibility given to the disciples by the Master, and the command to go to Jerusalem and to stay there for 10 days of patient waiting and earnest prayer in the upper room. We do not have to wonder that “a people were born” and that “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Let us look at the mighty reformation of the 16th century. It was preceded by a lot of work done by souls. Luther’s routine was to spend the best three hours of the day in prayer. He was not alone. Thousands called and cried out to God. In the huts of the Black Forest, in the Swiss Alps, everywhere there were hearts beating that were ready to advocate for the cause of God. In almost the entire western part of Europe, people felt a burden for souls, and the loud cries for deliverance rose up to heaven. It is no wonder that the reformation came. What occurred back then under unfavorable circumstances can also happen today.

Nothing could please God more and nothing would further the growth and prosperity of the church more than a deep, spiritual longing for a real revival, a holy zeal, and the wish that many souls would be added to God’s church. God stands on the side of the righteous and wants to give His assistance and help to every sincere effort for the kingdom of God. His promises are true. Let us pray and believe that the Lord will send a revival.

M. R. D.



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

The Christian and His Surroundings

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 5:10-12

Matthew 5:10-12 is preceded by seven other Beatitudes. They represent the image of what true discipleship and the Church should look like. Through these Beatitudes, Jesus clearly states what He expects to see in the life and faith of His followers. Seen as a whole, the Beatitudes are then concluded with the statement Jesus makes in Matthew 5:13-14: “You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world.” Whoever wants to work like salt in food or a light in a dark place needs to have a firmly established faith and a close walk with God.

For example, when we recognize our inner need, we will search for greater riches in God. When we have gentleness and humility we will appeal to others. Compassion and mercy will open doors for us to connect to others. In this way, Jesus prepared us as His disciples for our great tasks in this fallen world. We must constantly stand firm in righteousness and truth. We must have a pure heart and be peacemakers. And finally, we must be able to endure misunderstandings, blasphemy, and persecution. Only then can we be usable for the ministry to which we have been called. Only then can we be “salt” and “light”!

Bruno writes: “If it were not for the disciples of Jesus, the world would be even more unbearable than it already is. It would be more helpless, more corrupt, and

more desolate than it is. As salt dissolves in food and as selflessly as light shines, so should true Christians work effectively in their surroundings. If we choose to withdraw and only live for ourselves, we will be like bland, powerless salt, and our reputation could be “crushed.” Likewise, a light is not placed under a basket but on a lamp stand so that it may fulfill its purpose. The world so desperately needs this divine light. It is the saving light of God’s truth and love which needs to enlighten the inner life of men and inspire and lead them to Christ.

This light is very unpopular in our time. The vast majority of people deny it without realizing it. The distribution of Bibles, which is so necessary, has been constrained and even forbidden in some places. These measures will not be without consequences. Where the light is not desired and rejected, evil will be spread, and the power of darkness will lead to deep corruption.

Paul wrote to the Romans: “What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. . . . so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the



incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves For this reason God gave them up to vile passions” (Romans 1:19-26). Since they are offended by the righteous, pure life of the faithful, they rebel against it. This is why Jesus openly spoke of blasphemy, evil slander, and persecution. He foresaw the suffering of His disciples!

“Suffering for the sake of righteousness” seems quite illogical in one sense. There should absolutely be no reason for this! Nevertheless, this fact has historically been shown again and again. The world likes to despise Christians. The faith of believers is punished by the world. Jesus was also considered an offense to his fellow men. “So they were offended by Him” (Matthew 13:57).

In the first centuries after Christ, there were several great persecutions by the Roman Empire against God’s Church. In Acts 8:1, we read of the first great persecution affecting the church in Jerusalem. According to church history, of all the disciples, only John died of natural causes.

Paul wrote: “Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:9). Their path went “by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true” (2 Corinthians 6:8).

Even in our modern time, we are experiencing these kinds of persecution. Not infrequently, they have been evoked by evil and fabricated rumors. Peter wrote, “For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully” (1 Peter 2:19). We should bear in mind that the trials by which our faith is tested and strengthened come not only from what we do, but also from storms and sorrows. This is how we mature in our faith and become, as Psalm 1:3 testifies, “a tree planted by the rivers of water.”

Jesus said: “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). He reminded His disciples of the persecutions the prophets had endured. Likewise, we can look to the apostles, the first Christians, and even our fathers, who passed through all sorts of tribulations and trials.

Now it is up to us to set a good example for future generations. When they look back on our life of faith, may they be encouraged, reassured, and comforted. We all know that after this time comes eternity. Therefore, let us look to Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who said, “your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:23)!

Friedrich Krebs

What do **You** Want Me to Do for You?

In Mark 10:46-52 we read of the blind man, Bartimaeus, that Jesus healed. Jesus asked Bartimaeus this question: “What do you want Me to do for you?” Bartimaeus answered: “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” Jesus answered this plea. But what had taken place before Jesus asked Bartimaeus this question? Bartimaeus himself could have reported something as follows:

“I was blind. Due to my blindness, I was not able to work and was therefore very poor. The only choice I had left in order to survive was to beg. In order to obtain enough alms from people, I sat at the side of the road, the best one being the main road leading into Jericho where not only the citizens of the city, but also travelers and traders passed by. Some travelers quickly gave me an alm as they passed by and continued on their way. Others stood for a while and chatted with me. I greatly appreciated it when people took time for me. But I loved it when people told me about Jesus Christ, who was a great preacher. Not only this, but I heard reports of Jesus giving sight to the blind! He also healed the lame, those with leprosy, and those who were deaf. Naturally, I asked if a blind person had ever walked away from Jesus still blind. But these men said that all who came to Jesus had experienced help. So I began to wish to meet Jesus. For if Jesus could give sight to others, then He could make me see, too. I believed this. But who would take me along to Galilee or to Jerusalem? Which trader would take a blind man like me along on such a journey? So I prayed that Jesus would come to Jericho at least once.

One day, just like every other day, I sat on the side of the road leading to Jericho and begged for alms. But on this day, more people than usual passed by. “What is so different today?” I wondered. I asked a few people who were rushing by what the reason for this big crowd

of people was. The answer I received was: “Jesus from Nazareth is coming.” When I heard this, I was deeply moved. Was this the big day when I could ask Jesus to give me sight? I begged the people who rushed on by me to take me to Jesus, since I couldn’t walk on my own to Him because of my blindness. But the people ignored me on the side of the road. They wanted to see this Nazarene themselves, the One who was spoken about so much, and today no one had time for me. “What should I do?” I asked myself. If I didn’t seize this opportunity today, would I ever get another one again? Up to this point, I had never even had an opportunity. When would I get another chance? Most of all, why should I remain blind any longer if Jesus could help me? Since I couldn’t see to walk to Jesus on my own, I had no other choice than to make myself known by calling loudly. So I called, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

But the crowd of people found my crying out very disruptive. They tried to silence me with all kinds of threats. But I did not allow myself to be intimidated by any of this. I could not lose this opportunity! Would Jesus hear my calls through the crowd of people? Suddenly, Jesus stopped and commanded the people to bring me to Him. A few who had noticed my cries for help came to me, comforted me, and told me that Jesus was calling me. Jesus, who had made so many blind people see, had called me!

Now I stood before Jesus, and He asked me: “What do you want Me to do for you?” Could I ask for what I truly wanted? If I asked for a large amount of alms, what good would it do? But if I could see, then the cause of all of my problems would disappear. I could find a job and could earn a living myself. From then on, I would be able to see everything myself that others had tried to describe to me. So I asked Jesus: “Rab-

boni, that I may receive my sight.” Jesus replied: “Your faith has made you well.” And suddenly, I could see. I had not deceived myself, for I believed that Jesus could make me see too. Now I no longer sit on the side of the road, but follow Jesus and praise Him for this miracle that He has done on me.”

What can we learn today from Bartimaeus and this event?

1. Ask and investigate

Bartimaeus probably asked the people a lot of questions. When they told him about Jesus, he listened intently and asked further questions. This is how he was able to get to “know” Jesus. This was the foundation on which the faith of Bartimaeus rested. How can we get to know Jesus today? By reading and investigating the Word of God, as well as listening to sermons in worship services that are based on God’s Word. How much more stable is our foundation of faith today in comparison to Bartimaeus’.

2. Personally believe

Bartimaeus had heard of many healings that other people had experienced. But he didn’t stop there. Bartimaeus had faith that Jesus would personally give him sight again. When we read a promise in the Word of God, for example, do we believe that God will fulfill it and that He can fulfill it for us personally?

3. Call for mercy

When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was within earshot, he began to cry out for God’s mercy. When we read promises that have not yet been fulfilled in our lives, do we come to God in prayer with the plea: “Lord Jesus, have mercy on me?”

4. Continue to cry out

Instead of receiving help from his fellow men, his cry for help was met with opposition. However, Bartimaeus did not allow himself to be intimidated, but continued to cry out with determination until Jesus heard him. When the result of my prayer is not imme-

diately answered, and I continue to experience further difficulties and opposition, do I continue steadfastly in prayer?

5. Go to Jesus

When people came to Bartimaeus to lead him to Jesus, he allowed it and came to Him. Jesus also says to us today: “Come to Me.” Do we accept His offer?

6. The right request

And now came the question from Jesus: “What do you want Me to do for you?” Bartimaeus gave Him the “right” reply. He did not ask for riches or for a long life but for healing of the root cause of all of his problems.

What do we ask Jesus for? We read in Mark 10 that when the disciples John and James came to Jesus, He also asked them: “What do you want Me to do for you?” When the two disciples answered this question with a selfish request, Jesus told them: “You do not know what you ask.” This request was something Jesus couldn’t grant them.

James writes in his letter: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). Therefore, it is of greatest importance that my requests are not self-centered, but God-honoring and focused on His will.

7. Worshiping and following God

When Bartimaeus received his sight, he did not go his own way but followed Jesus, and he praised God. When God fulfills one of His promises, do we praise and thank Him for it? Do we follow Him determinedly, or do we decide to go our own way after God has given us what we have wished for?

May God increase our faith in His living Word and in His power so that we can take of His fullness in faith and that His name would be glorified.

Alexander Ediger,
Tuningen (DE)

You Can't Join the Church

"You can't join the church." Did you know that? This is not the statement of a sectarian who wants an exclusiveness which bars people from membership in the church. Nor is it the babbling of a fanatic who has been trying to foster a new scheme of things. It is a real fact, a fact which has not been recognized by many people of this generation. The reason it is not recognized is that the popular teaching of church membership nowadays has obscured it.

Church membership is not an ancient doctrine but is a passing phase which has come in the last three hundred years. It could never have become so common, except for a false idea of what the church is. And with a false concept of what the church is has come a second false idea on how to become a member of the church.

Why can't I join the church? There are fraternal organizations I can join and be recognized as a full-fledged member. There are religious organizations which I can become a member of, but that does not make me a member of the church.

Some preacher made the statement that a person could join every church denomination in town and still be as great a sinner as before. A sinner hearing that decided to try it to see if it was true. There were four churches in his small town and he joined all four of them and found he was as great a sinner as he was before. He was a member of each denomination represented in the town, but he was still an unregenerated man and a member of Satan's crowd. It is an undeniable fact: you cannot join God's church.

You see, the church came from above. Many people have the idea that the church originated on earth and will finally end up in heaven. Leslie Weatherhead put it right when he reminded us that John saw the Holy City "coming down out of heaven from God" (Revelation 21:2). The Scriptures bear this out over and over. "We are his workmanship" (Ephesians 2:10). The church came into existence, not because man became Godlike, but because God visited man through Christ and the Spirit. The church appearing on earth was the translation of the divine community which existed eternally in heaven.

Do not misunderstand me. The church is on earth, but it is a heavenly community which originated above. You can't join it. There is only one way you can become a member of it, and that is to be born into it. The church, being a heavenly community here on earth, is a fellowship of spiritual beings made so by a spiritual experience of being born of the Spirit of God. Man, earthly, has been elevated to spiritual life.

He "has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). It has been said that the only way mineral life can be elevated to a higher order is for the higher order to do the elevating. The plant sends its roots down into the soil that is made up of mineral, and it lifts these elements, assimilates them, and they become plant life. In the same way plant life can never become animal life in itself. The animal, which is a higher life, has the power to pluck that plant, and through the animal metabolism it becomes an integral part of animal life. It is always the life from above lifting the life below to its level.


Earthly man is born from above and lifted to a spiritual plane. He is born into the family of God, the church. You can't join the church; you are born into it.

You say, "What about me? I joined the church." You joined an organization. Any church you can join is not God's church. God's people may be found in that organization, and you may be a part of the organization, but unless you have been born from above you are not a member of God's church. You are only associated with the people of God. You are not a part of them. You cannot join the church.

You can approach Christ, confess your sin to Him, repent, forsake sin, receive forgiveness, and then a new life will begin in you. A new spirit will be born in your life, and you will be changed. When that happens you are born, a new creature, into God's family and are a member of His church.

Charles V. Weber

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

I Nearly Fell

Over 100 years ago, a boy named Hans Reimann lived in a small city in America. Although he was only 13 years old, he already had to earn money and stood in an area of the marketplace every day selling newspapers. Because he was a happy and cheerful boy, many people bought a newspaper from him.

One of these people was a particularly friendly and distinguished gentleman. Every day, he came to Hans, spoke a few friendly words to him, and then bought a newspaper. Although the newspaper cost 40 cents, the man gave him 50 cents, which he could keep. He was able to save a little from that.

On one hot day in June, the friendly gentleman came by again. He reached into his pocket and took a dollar out. "Can you make change for me, son?" Hans took a look, but he hadn't sold a newspaper yet. "That doesn't matter," said the gentleman. "You can give it to me tomorrow." And with a friendly greeting, he went away.

The next day, however, was a Sunday. Hans kept thinking of the money he had to repay the gentleman. He would gladly have kept it. "Maybe the gentleman won't even remember," he told himself.

Monday came. Hans saw the man coming from a distance. "If he doesn't see me, he surely won't remember the

money," he thought. "But I can really use it. I will hide for a moment behind the corner of the door of this store. Then with one eye I can see when he has walked past."

The gentleman came. He stopped and looked around. Hans saw everything. Then he heard the man saying: "Where is the little newspaper seller today? I must have a newspaper from him. The poor boy wouldn't be sick, would he?" When Hans heard these words from his hiding place, his cheeks became hot. He felt ashamed because he had wanted to keep the change and cheat the friendly man. He ran as fast as he could across the street, pulled on the man's arm, and handed him the change he owed. The man turned to him and looked at him kindly. "Thank you so much. I am glad that you are such an honest boy." Hans blushed again.

That evening, he ran home as quickly as he could. "Oh Mother, oh Mother!" he called, "I nearly fell today!"—The mother looked at her son with a worried look and asked: "What do you mean by that?"—"I was nearly dishonest," said the boy. He told her the entire story. With gratitude, the mother hugged the boy and said: "I am so glad that I can still kiss an honest boy. Let this be a lesson to you, and may God protect you from falling into sin."

Prayer with Children

The years we spend growing up in our home with our parents shape us for life. That is why the early years of childhood are a very important time to learn the first steps in our walk with God.

An experienced pastor once said: “Above all, I would direct my relationship with my children in such a way that, in matters of faith, there is never a reason for them to not trust me.”

This deep level of trust is dependent largely on the prayers of the parents, for here our sincerity or insincerity will show. Our children will either consciously or unconsciously sense what moves us deep inside. They feel our thoughts and aspirations, our hopes and fears. It cannot remain hidden whether our faith is deeply grounded or whether we lack faith.

Prayer is a highly personal matter. But it is born out of our need for a spiritual relationship. Just as it is a means of communion with God, it is also a means of communion among one another. In the family, common prayer is very important. It brings the family together before the throne of grace. It reinforces the sense of all for one and one for all. The need of one becomes a shared need and the distress of all becomes everyone’s distress.

Prayer brings God into the family. The family in which God is not just an occasional visitor, but is Lord, will grow and thrive. Heartfelt prayer uplifts the family circle to a higher level and expands its horizons. It is difficult to be selfish and wicked when the thoughts and actions of the family are brought before the face of God.

Prayer Requires Sincerity

Prayer must be sincere. If we utter a desire in prayer that does not come from the heart or that is just spoken as a form, we deceive ourselves, but not God.

True prayer comes out of the soul’s longing for that which is truly desirable. That is why prayer contributes to “seek[ing] first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). We would like our own will to be done, but we are to desire for the will of God to happen. “Not my will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Prayer is Speaking with God

We should encourage children to speak naturally with God in their own words. The memorized prayers of children are helpful to steer the child’s thoughts into a certain direction. Thereby they learn to express certain thoughts. If the child understands the prayers, they can be a blessing. But they can also pray completely mechanically. Then the prayers are an empty shell. It will be helpful to the child if the parents also speak with God in a natural manner, and this in a manner that a child can understand. But the child must also feel that the words of the parents are truly prayers and that they pertain to things that concern the child. The child does not just want to say and hear prayers, he wants to notice that he is included in the prayers.

Prayer is Listening

Prayer is not just talking to God. It is listening to God. And this is perhaps the most important. It is certainly easier to urge a child to talk to God and tell Him his wants and needs, his thanks and his worship, than to teach him how to listen to God.

It is hard to hear the “still small voice” of God in all the din that a child in the modern world is surrounded by. Some mothers have had good results with the

implementation of a “quiet hour.” They began when the child was still small. They used free time and rest time to converse with them and be with them in quiet communion. Children love this. It was surprising how much empathy some children showed.

There are families who have created a quiet, secluded place where one can go to regain one’s perspective when tensions arise. Children of five or six years have learned to voluntarily withdraw to regain control when they have lost it. But if this is to succeed, the same self-discipline is also necessary with the parents.

Prayer is Joy

“Faith is worship,” someone said, yes, worship and thanksgiving. In the mind of the child, prayer must not be too closely linked with the notion that it is something solemn, that is related to solving weighty problems. Prayer life should lead to a joyful, uplifting life affirmation. If God takes an interest in the moments of our greatest joy and hope, He will do so even more in the moments of deepest distress.

For this reason, we should turn the thoughts of the children to God in times of joy and happiness, so that they may thank Him and praise Him. It is often the case that parents tell the child to turn to God for forgiveness if he is naughty, and to help him become a good child. Or he should ask God for help in difficult situations or if he has pain or disappointment. Less often, however, the child is encouraged to thank God for His goodness when he experiences a great joy. God cannot be a stranger in any experience, at any time, or in any place, but He is to be our Lord in all our ways.



The Lord's Prayer

by Gerhard Mielke - Part 4: Hallowed be Your Name

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy name (Matthew 6:9). What is the name of the Father?

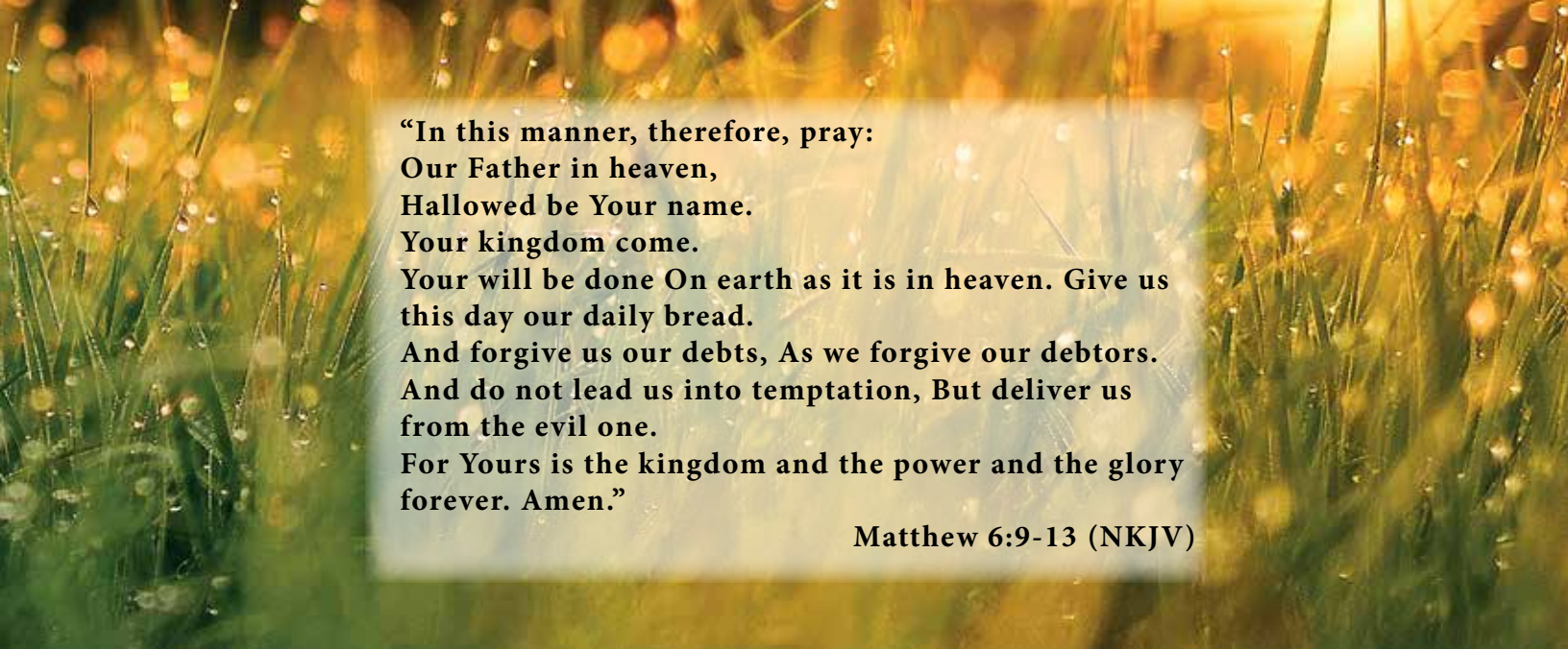
In the 17th chapter of John, Jesus prays: "O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:25-26). In verse 3 of the same chapter Jesus says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Jesus was talking to God, His Father. The name of God is the name of the Father. God is the Father. God is first mentioned and addressed in the Old Testament. The fourth word in our Bible is God. The root name for God is El. El is the Hebrew word for God. The plural of El is Elohim. In Genesis 1 we read "In the beginning [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of [Elohim] was hovering over the face of the waters. Then [Elohim] said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:1-3).

Here we have Elohim speaking, and the Spirit of Elohim hovering over the deep. The Word became flesh according to John chapter 1, and was revealed in the flesh as Christ. So we have Elohim, the Spirit of Elohim, and the Word of Elohim, Three in One at work in creation. Although God is one, He is manifested as

God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Some have suggested the Trinity is the reason why the plural form of God's name is most often used when talking about God in the Old Testament. However, it is not uncommon to use the plural in Hebrew, when addressing a very high majesty. For example in Genesis 24:9-10 the plural of master is used to describe Abraham, when Abraham's servant swears to him before setting out to seek a bride for Isaac. Using Elohim when talking about El confirms that we are dealing with a very high and revered majesty. The term Elohim, used for God, is plural but the verbs associated with it are singular proving that we are not talking about more than one.

God is also referred to as El Shaddai in the Bible. El Shaddai means God Almighty. There are 31 occurrences of Shaddai, (the Almighty) and El Shaddai, (God Almighty) in the book of Job. It is found in the Bible for the first time in Genesis 17: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God [El Shaddai], walk before Me and be blameless'" (Genesis 17:1). How could Abraham believe that he would become the father of many nations, when he did not have the son of promise yet? It was because El Shaddai was talking to him, and as the Almighty, He could do anything. El Shaddai means that with God nothing is impossible. Do you realize that God is El Shaddai in your life? In the book of Job, God was identified as the source of blessing by his name El Shaddai. He is also the one who has all power, who gives and takes away. Nobody is able to triumph over El Shaddai.



**“In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us
this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us
from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever. Amen.”**

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)

God is also called El Elyon in Genesis 14:18. That means God the Highest. “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High [El Elyon].” In the New Testament Jesus is referred to as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, so it is fitting that the angels on the plains of Bethlehem sang glory to “God in the highest” at the birth of Christ. Because El Elyon is God’s name, it is no wonder that Jesus often talked about His Father in heaven. Then in Genesis 21:33 another name for God occurs. It is El Olam, which means God the Everlasting. So in conjunction with the name of God, El, we have four attributes revealed, namely the everlasting nature of God, that He is Creator and Sustainer of the universe, He is the Source of all blessing, and He is almighty.

What is the name of God? It is LORD. Whenever LORD (all capitals) occurs in the King James Bible, it is translated from the Hebrew word YHWH. YHWH is the transliteration of the name of God in Hebrew. Because of their reverence for the name of God, and because of Exodus 20:7, the Jewish people do not pronounce YHWH, the name of God. Instead they say Adonai, which means master or Lord. Remember, in Exodus 20:7 it is written: “You shall not take the name of YHWH, your God in vain, for YHWH will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

How was God’s name revealed to Moses? In Exodus 3:14 we read: “And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of

Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses: “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name LORD I was not known to them” (Exodus 6:3). Was the name LORD or YHWH unknown before the time of Moses? How is this to be understood, since we read about the LORD God as early as in Genesis 2:4? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew God as El, El Shaddai, El Elyon, the Almighty, the Creator, the source of blessings. But now God would reveal himself as LORD or liberator of His people through Moses. He would free them out of slavery. He would be their LORD, their Savior. YHWH is the self-existent one, the eternal I AM. In Isaiah 43:11 God also states: “I, even I, am YHWH; and besides me there is no Savior.” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know God as liberator or Savior in this sense. This aspect of God’s name would now be revealed.

Dear friend, you know that God exists. But do you know Him as LORD? To get to heaven, you need to know Him as LORD and Savior. You need to be freed from the bonds of sin. He revealed Himself in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Jesus says “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:34, 36). It is not enough to know God as El. As El, God blesses all people. However, you need to know him as YHWH, as LORD, as Savior. How to get to know Him as LORD is revealed in 1 John 1:9.

Hallowed be His holy name!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Just a Minor Flaw



As humans, we are not perfect; none of us is without faults. Even the Apostle James, a mighty man of prayer, verifies this (James 3:2). There will be deviations from the ideal—our model. Some of the imperfections in our life will vanish through spiritual growth as we mature in the faith. Through His Holy Spirit, His Word, and other means, God makes us aware of deficiencies. He works in us and helps us grow more like Him day by day. Then there are those character flaws that may appear from time to time, perhaps caused by certain influences or experiences we have had in our lives. These may be bad habits, repeated negative actions, or even words carelessly said without thinking. It could be that we are not punctual, that we act in a manner that causes others to doubt our sincerity, or that we dress immodestly. It could be that we neglect to do our devotions or that our

prayer life is inadequate. Maybe there is a time when we don't feel like attending the worship services, prayer meetings, or youth meetings regularly anymore. These flaws affect our spiritual health and, if not checked, may lead to serious spiritual decline, spiritual blindness, or may even lead to the point where one may lose his or her salvation. In Solomon's Song of Songs 2:15 we read: "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Those little foxes, which seem so harmless, are the ones that spoil the vines. It is just these minor flaws and imperfections that can damage our spiritual well-being and harm the relationship we have with God.

The possibility that such flaws can appear in our lives is a serious danger for each one of us. At first, they may be unnoticed or even be invisible, but they can nevertheless

be compared to deadly cancerous cells. If they are ignored and not stopped, they may not only hinder our spiritual life, but lead to spiritual death.

Please stop for a moment before reading on and open your Bible to Matthew 25:13. The parable of the ten virgins is well known, often referred to and explained. The goal of the parable is to make us watchful. That is why Jesus says: “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming” (Matthew 25:13).

All ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. It is a very good thing when people decide to go and meet the bridegroom. But we also read that all of the virgins fell asleep.

When we are on the way to “meet the bridegroom,” the danger exists for all of us to grow tired and possibly fall asleep. Spiritual slumber, as well as carelessness and becoming lukewarm in our Christian walk, is a serious problem. A slumbering person is not aware of his or her surroundings and is not aware of danger signs. At midnight, a cry was heard. The virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. In doing this, a conversation between the wise and foolish virgins ensued. The foolish asked the wise to share their oil with them because they realized they did not have enough. They had their lamps, but they had failed to see to it that they had enough oil, and now their lamps extinguished.

This flaw seemed only minor up to that point, and they did not even realize that this was a problem. But now the situation was critical. Everything hinged on it. In the end, this flaw of neglecting to bring an adequate supply of oil shut the door to eternal life for the five foolish virgins. We all know the effect of sin. Sin is deliberately transgressing against God, and needs to be confessed and repented of if we want to be reconciled with God again. But what about our flaws?

God leads us in a different direction. We cannot tolerate any kind of sin, and even the flaws, mistakes, and deficits in our life should not be overlooked, covered up, and tolerated; we cannot allow ourselves to just get used to living with them. Rather, we should realize that it is

exactly the “flaws and deficits” that play a very important role.

One flaw deprived the foolish virgins of their expected reward. It was a deficit, a mistake, a neglect that at first glance seemed innocent. But it was something that did not measure up to the expectations.

The Ephesian church in Asia Minor had many good attributes: good works, patience, diligence . . . but there was a seemingly “minor flaw” that overshadowed everything. They had left their first love. What good were all the positive attributes in light of this flaw? They were worthless (Revelation 2:1-5). Such flaws deprive us of our eternal salvation. At the judgment, God will not shut His eyes and ignore them. Sometimes, we can hide things for a long time and act as if they do not exist. But even if we should manage to cover up things in this life, everything will be revealed when our time is done. What may seem minor now can end up being our undoing. If we do not take heed now and correct these deficits, what may seem minor can end up bringing disaster.

My attitude toward my flaws and deficits is important. Do I tolerate them and see them as harmless, or do I see them as a problem that I need to address and bring before God? It is important that I personally recognize the voice of God and that I correct and confess the flaws that the Holy Spirit makes me aware of.

It is still the time of grace, and all who look at themselves in the light of God’s word and recognize their flaws and deficits will be able to overcome them and learn to avoid what may turn into grave inadequacies. Such a person will be pleasing to God.

Only the pure in heart shall see God (Matthew 6:8). Only those who are honest with themselves, open themselves up to God, and pray: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts” (Psalm 139:23) will be able to uncover the flaws in their hearts and see to it that they are eliminated. Then, in the sight of God, we will have a pure conscience, and we can joyfully go and meet the Bridegroom.

Alexander Gross,
Eppingen (DE)

Easter Conference in Hamm

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:14a). This was the motto for this year’s Easter services in Hamm. With much anticipation, fasting, and prayer we waited for God’s help. And God gave His rich blessings and showed us that we should not look to people, but should listen for the words of His Spirit.

The conference began on Good Friday with the sermon topic, “The Great Christ.” In addition to the other great character traits of our Savior, the sermon focused primarily on His characteristic greatness, which every Christian should reflect in all situations. The theme of the evening service was “Near to the Cross.” The gospel of John describes those who stood under the cross and those who stood afar. Because they walked past or did not even come close, they missed out on a powerful spiritual experience. Only near to the cross can we have this experience or hear the Lord’s words.

In the Saturday morning service, we heard about Jesus Christ, the Easter lamb, by examining the Passover lamb whose blood on the door post protected the Israelites from the angel of death. Saturday afternoon is traditionally a youth service. Even though the topic is geared toward young people, anyone over 20 is welcome to attend. The general theme was Jesus’ call: “Come and follow me!” and the secret of following Christ as His disciples. We learned that discipleship has three foundational elements: God’s Word, prayer and the church. The evening sermon looked at the longing of the Greeks, “We wish to see Jesus.” It was followed by an invitation to repent. Several souls responded and found peace with God.

On Easter morning we heard the Word, “The Lord is risen indeed.” The resurrection distinguishes true Christianity from all other religions, and we should not be ashamed to proclaim it. The afternoon message “Jesus’





Church is God's Holy of Holies" gave us an opportunity to test ourselves to see if we as God's church still hold to the foundation of holiness, truth, and unity. The evening service once again reached out to souls that were far from God. Under the topic "And go tell Peter" from Mark 16, we heard that Jesus' primary goal was to restore peace to the one who had sinned against Him. On this evening as well, souls found the Lord. These new children in the faith need extra prayer support and we would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to pray for them.

The last two services on Monday focused on: "The Future of the Church." They examined questions regarding growth and development in the church. Finally, we were challenged to overcome. Based on Revelation 6:2b, "and he went out conquering and to conquer" we were encouraged to overcome sin and the world, but also false teachings. With joy and new strength we parted from our guests and hope to see everyone again next year. May we then be able to testify of the victory that God wants to give us through His Son.

Corinna Kowalski

REPORT

Church Dedication in Weil am Rhein

"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1).

With thankful and joyful hearts, we as the Church of God in Weil am Rhein look back at times past and agree with the Psalmist:

"The Lord has done great things for us" (Psalm 126:3).

Since 1995, we have been renting a building for worship in Lörrach, and during these years the Lord has

richly blessed us. We were able to conduct our worship services, prayer meetings, as well as youth and children's meetings in this building. However, again and again we considered purchasing our own congregational building. Over time, we looked at a few properties but came to the realization each time that they were not yet the right one.

At the end of the year 2015, we were notified of a building in Weil am Rhein. We earnestly prayed for God's



leading and for an open door. By the grace of God, we closed the purchase agreement back in April 2016. But we had to be patient for some time until we could take possession of the building. Then began a special time for us, when together we renovated the church. Most of the work was done by the congregation members themselves. Brothers and sisters from other congregations also came, greatly encouraging us by their help.

We are very thankful to our Lord for protecting us from all harm or accidents. He always gave us the necessary strength and joy to work on the house of the Lord. We also thank all brothers and sisters from other congregations with all of our hearts for supporting us through prayers and financial help. As a congregation, we experienced how good and gracious the Lord is. He opened the hearts of many brothers and sisters to support His work.



On March 11-12, 2017 we dedicated this church to the Lord. Our wish and prayer is that it may be and remain a house of worship. In this church, the complete truth of the Word of God alone should be preached so that many precious souls may come to true faith and find peace through the good news of our beloved Jesus Christ.

Your brothers and sisters of the congregation of the Church of God in Weil am Rhein, Germany.



Experiences with God

Asthma: an Incurable Disease?

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies” (Psalm 103:1-4)

To the glory of God, I would like to share a testimony. In my childhood I was diagnosed with bronchial asthma. In 2006 it was so bad that I had to be admitted to hospital. There I was prescribed medications that were helpful until early last year. In the rare event that I had shortness of breath, I always had an inhaler with me.

In the beginning of 2016, I had major breathing problems, and even minimal physical exertion triggered an asthma attack. My doctor prescribed cortisone tablets and increased my daily inhaler dosage (also containing cortisone) by eight times. Despite this it didn't get much better. After the least bit of exertion, I was very exhausted by the evening and sweating as a result of my breathing problems. In my distress, it became very clear to me that only God could help.

I made the decision to ask to be anointed and prayed for on the following Sunday. At my first opportunity, I spoke to the pastor and shared my request. It was the first Sunday of the month, on which we have morning

and afternoon services in Gifhorn. The Brother spoke about Divine Healing and anointing was performed.

I did not expect God to take my asthma problem away completely. I hoped that God would improve it so that I could manage with a normal dosage of medication.

The next day, I was much better and had such faith in God's provision that I stopped taking my cortisone pills. In the time that followed I was able to manage with reduced inhalers. How thankful I was to God!

Now, approximately one year later, after moving to a new home, I chose a different lung specialist for my treatments. At this clinic they did lung function and methacholine challenge tests. The doctor could not detect any typical asthma constriction of the airways. He suggested that I should completely stop using my inhalers for a month. When I came to my second appointment, he came to the conclusion that I no longer have asthma. Instead, I now have above average lung function.

From the bottom of my heart I am thankful to God that I can be His child. He takes care of me daily and I can come to Him with all of my needs. He healed me from a serious disease. To Him be all glory! Amen.

Tobias Heine, Weil am Rhein (DE)

Special Services 2017

Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany

AUGUST 20-27, 2017

Convention in Swartz Creek, Michigan

SEPTEMBER 2-3, 2017

Fest in Edmonton, Alberta

OCTOBER 7-9, 2017

We Need...

*Hands that pray, folded earnestly in prayer,
Asking, diligently pleading with care;
Faithful hands that always persevere;
Hands that wait upon the Lord; hands trusting,
Without doubt and fear in God's will resting;
Hands that pray to conquer hate and fear.*

*Hands that don't fear work and are productive;
Hands that don't give up and are constructive;
Hands that toil with diligence and joy;
Hands that do not wait until tomorrow,
But will wipe away the tears of sorrow,
And that seek compassion to employ.*

*Hands that sacrifice and share with pleasure,
Strength and time, and valuable life treasures;
Hands that give beyond expectation;
Hands to help souls in spiritual despair,
Comforting the grieving, filled with care;
Giving hope in every situation.*

*Hands that fight the battle for truth and faith;
Hands that gain the victory by God's grace,
Holding fast the Spirit's Sword always;
Hands that God will strengthen when they are weak,
Endeavoring always God's will to seek;
Hands that serve the Lord forever.*