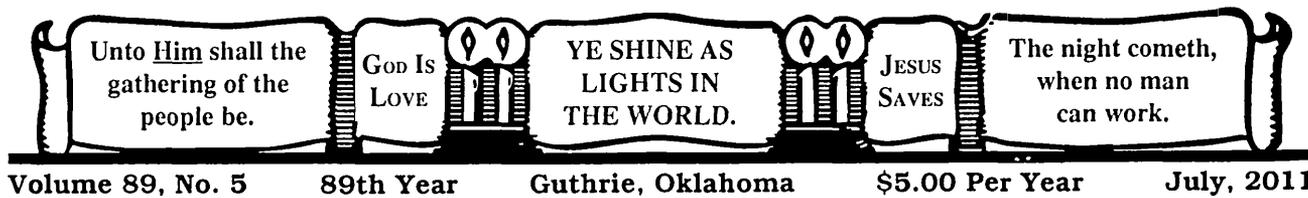


FAITH AND VICTORY

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Church of God Servant



Living Water

By Sis. Marilyn Cole

The soil is dry and baked. The grass sounds like dry breakfast cereal under my feet. It is a browned crisp stubble that even the greedy grasshoppers don't bother to chew on. Fields of tall corn, vibrant and green just ten days ago, now curl into browning withered spikes and all hope of earring is gone. Desperate farmers cut the parched stalks and chop it for silage, salvaging what they can from the dying crop.

The temperature rises as day after day the sky stretches blue and cloudless. The heat bakes the soil, the gardens, and flowers turn brown and droop to the ground, the squash and bean leaves hang limply in the drying wind. Sprinklers help for a few hours, but only in small spaces are we able to water regularly. The land lies baking, hardening while the vegetation is dying.

Rain! What we need is rain. Showers, and more showers to give life to the parched soil, to restore hope, to cool the parched earth. But the rain does not come. Pastures give out and cattle are sent to market. The water levels in wells begin to drop and run dry. We need rain. For the rain we pray—hope—wait.

Much of the heartland of our nation lies under drought conditions—seared, parched, baked and lifeless. The hearts of so many men and women, like the land, are also dull and dry. They are seeking, searching, wandering and wondering—yearning for life, searching for life as it slips surely away day after wearisome day.

There was a woman who was wandering and wondering as well. She was a woman of Samaria whose life was a long string of broken hearts and shattered dreams. She went to the well with her jar to get water, but there she met a man who promised her Living Water. Like a parched garden, her heart was washed, watered, and restored to life again.

Her heart had been wounded time and time again. She knew she was an outcast, living without hope of peace or joy. No spark of love radiated from her expression as she cast her dark eyes to the ground that day at the well. But when He asked her to draw water from the well for Him, she slowly, doubtfully raised her eyes to His. Perhaps His steady gaze was too piercing and she quickly looked away, knowing He must not recognize the kind of woman she was. But there was something about His gaze that looked

Contents

Living Water	1
Tunnels on God's Railroad	3
Editorials	4
Prayer Requests	7
Meeting Reports and Notices	7
Letters from the Readers	8
A Most Wonderful Place	9
Mary Had A Little Boy	11
Head and Heart	12

into her heart, and almost stopped its beating. Something that drew her, something different, something gentle and kind. His gaze looked into the weary places of her soul and saw the parched hopelessness, brokenness of her dreams, her soul's deep needs.

A little man wanted to catch a glimpse of this Man, too. He knew the Good Man was to pass by, and so, to get a better view of Him, and perhaps to hide himself and his deeds from the Man's view, he climbed up into a tree to watch Him pass by. But the searching gaze of the Good Man turned upward, and the little man clinging to the leafy branches knew his secrets were open to those kind, gentle piercing eyes.

This broken woman and little man were both longing for the same thing we are still seeking today. We so want and need peace, joy and love. Our hearts cry out for something, anything that will soften the hardness of life. We yearn for peace, and find chaos. We hope, and our dreams often wither and curl. We search for someone who will love us, heal us, complete us, and too often end up hurting, broken and wounded. The joy of life seeps away, leaving the cells of our souls dried, wasted and lifeless. We want water, the Water of Life, Living Water that brings life and vitality to the soul. Like the parched soil, we crave water, and our barrenness seeks, searches and deeply yearns for Living Water.

The River of Life flows from Jesus. This Son of Man, the precious Son of God, has that Living Water that waters the soul and enlivens the weary heart. When plans and dreams have caused us to despair, when we reach with both hands for love and it leaks right through our fingers, when hope dies and pain and disappointment take its place, when our hearts dry and wither and living seems to be more trouble, more painful than it is worth, then we can come to the fountain of Jesus' love and He will meet us there. He will look into our eyes with gentle compassion. He waits there, patiently, tenderly, longingly for us to come to Him.

"Come unto me, all *ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Has your life become like a dry, burnt-out desert in which no joy, no hope and no love grows? Have you come to the place where you

feel no one cares, that there is no way out of the sad, hopeless web of life? Do you feel you are trapped in a downward spiral that will end only in a lonely death, and no one will care when you have passed on? This is the voice of the enemy of your soul who has brought you to this low place, and has worked his plan to bring you to this barren wasteland.

But there is hope! There is One Who loves you so much and Who wants to give you Living Water. When Jesus lived and walked on earth, He went about looking into the eyes of weary men and women, and there they saw love, forgiveness, healing and life. He saw the weakness of His followers, gazed into their eyes when they failed Him, and He still loved them. He called the little children to Him when men of the day shooed them out of the way. He blessed them, and encouraged us to become simple, tender, carefree, trusting children choosing to walk in His way.

As Jesus was raised up on the cross between heaven and earth, He fulfilled the Word that promised, "... and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." When His side was pierced, a fountain was opened to us that freely flows with Living Water. This water will heal the souls of men and women, boys and girls—wherever and whoever you are. This pure Living Water will cleanse, revive and restore the hearts and hopes of all those who will lift their eyes to His. No cover can hide you from the loving eyes of the Savior. No sin can be too great for His forgiveness. No soil can be too dry to be watered by the spring of Living Water Jesus opened for each and every one of us. No enemy is able to separate us from His love if we will simply seek Him and bring all our cares, our broken dreams, our hopeless lives to the foot of His cross. You may choose to come to Him and find water for your longing, thirsty soul. There is healing for your hurts and a soothing balm to the wounds you have received. There is peace for the turmoil, and new growth for your heart. The leaves of your heart's garden that were dry, curled and withered, can be refreshed and made green and lush again. Jesus can give you Living Water.

Jesus told the woman He met at the well: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14.

There is no need to have your heart remain like a wasted, parched desert. Jesus wants to

give you hope, joy, peace and love. He wants to send rain, showers of blessings, refreshing, life-giving water to the cells of your parched heart. He has love and healing for your soul, and He waits

for you. Bring your cares to Jesus. He waits, longing to bring peace and joy to your soul. He longs to give you His salvation and life eternal—to make your life a flourishing garden again.



Tunnels on God's Railroad

In Italy, there is a range of mountains called the Apennines. In this area, there are numerous industrial factories, which causes much travel. In the Apennines, there is a great railroad. This railroad passes through forty-three tunnels in less than seventy miles. Why are there tunnels? The tunnels were built to take the traveler to his destination by the shortest and safest way. The tunnels are not very enjoyable, yet in a range of mountains there are many beautiful scenes. The sunbeams playing upon the rocks bring out such beautiful colors. The shadows, made by the lovely pines, lying far out upon the shrub, being interlaced with wild flowers, touches something deep within a person. The blue sky above, the birds singing their notes of praise to their Maker, bring a peace and joy that comforts one's heart. Just as you are rejoicing in such a lovely view, then you pass into another tunnel. The sunlight is shut off and the view is darkened to only bleak walls. You look at what is in the coach. There is the conductor and other fellow travelers. You long for another beautiful view.

How much this is like our Christian life in this world. Doesn't God lead us through tunnels? Sometimes they are long ones, and other times, they are short tunnels. We like the times when we can bask in the sunlight and enjoy the glorious view and the fresh air of the mountains, but God sees that the tunnels are necessary. In the tunnel, we learn to appreciate the blessings of the sunlight. In the tunnel we, by faith, look forward to the end of it, knowing that on God's railroad we are sure to come out safely. God is the Engineer. He is One Who will never fail us. He will bring us safely through. Christ is the Conductor and He is ever near to see to our comfort. He has many instructions to give to us. He can answer our questions. He can lift the disappointment and give us power to rebuke depression of mind. While in the tunnels of trouble, we find that we are leaning upon Jesus in a greater measure. When He comforts us, we see our love deepen and grow for Him. We pray to Him more; we praise Him more.

In the Apennines, the railroad stops at a station. If the traveler decided to get off and

strike out through the mountains to find other paths because he didn't like the tunnels, he would almost be sure to get lost and starve to death. That is what would happen to us if we decided to get off the heavenly railroad because we did not like the tunnels through which God takes us. We would be sure to be lost in eternity's night and damnation. There is no safer way to go in this life than God's way.

Tunnels are necessary for us. The Bible says "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, [a tunnel] ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ; Whom having not seen, ye love....believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable." 1 Peter 1:6-8. The beauties of what you see and enjoy when you come out of the tunnels are very precious. Tunnels make those beauties greater. Be encouraged, dear fellow traveler, some day this train will pull into that heavenly station and we will be welcomed by the angels in Heaven. There will not be tunnels in Heaven. We will enjoy the beauties there forever more. At that time, we will be glad we stayed on the gospel train, received and obeyed the instructions from the Conductor, Jesus Christ.

Notice that there were 43 tunnels in less than 70 miles. The Bible says, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten: and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away....So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalm 90:10, 12. In comparing this to our life, which could be 70 years, then 43 tunnels would not be too many. Remember, Jesus will be with us in the long tunnels and the short tunnels. So let us number our days and ask God for wisdom to live an acceptable life before Him and help us to be ready to meet Him.

—Sis. Marie Miles

From *Faith and Victory*, March 1972.

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This publication teaches salvation from all sin, sanctification for believers, unity and oneness for which Jesus prayed as recorded in John 17:21, and manifested by the apostles and believers after Pentecost. By God's grace we teach, preach, and practice the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ-the same gospel that Peter, John, and Paul preached, taught, and practiced, including divine healing for the body. James 5:14-15.

Its motto: Have faith in God. Its object: The glory of God and the salvation of men; the restoration and promulgation of the whole truth to the people in this "evening time" as it was in the morning Church of the first century; the unification of all true believers in one body by the love of God. Its standard: Separation from sin and entire devotion to the service and will of God. Its characteristics: No discipline but the Bible, no bond of union but the love of God, and no test of fellowship but the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

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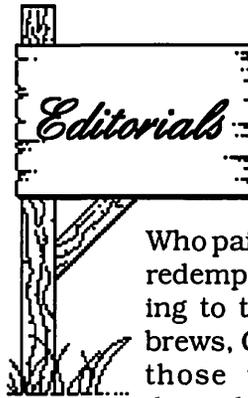
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"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God." Mark 11:22.

Those who manifest faith in God in the midst of this sin darkened world are truly cherished by the One

Who paid a tremendous price for the redemption of their souls. According to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, God has honored the faith of those who believed His Word throughout the recorded history of mankind. In the early days of the world, Abel offered a sacrifice to God that was a direct manifestation of His faith, and it pleased the Lord and was accepted by Him. Noah believed the Lord's warning that revealed there was going to be a flood that would destroy the world, and he exhibited great faith by building the ark which, no doubt, made him a laughing stock of society. Abraham was a man that often proved his love for God through His faith. At the Lord's call, he was willing to leave his home and follow the Lord, not knowing where he was going, he traveled as a migrant into a place that he should later receive for an inheritance. He was searching for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Adam Clarke gives this commentary on Hebrews 11:10, "He knew that earth could afford no permanent residence for an immortal mind, and he looked for that heavenly building of which God is the architect and owner; in a word, he lost sight of earth, that he might keep heaven in view. And all who are partakers of his faith possess the same spirit, walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing."

Because of Abraham's faith, God gave him a special promise, "...In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." This promise was repeated different times throughout Abraham's life as his faith continually triumphed what seemed to be impossible obstacles. This promise became understood to mean that the Messiah would be born of Abraham's seed and it was the secret hope of most all Jewish mothers that their child would be that promised Messiah.

In viewing the lineage of Christ, recorded in the first chapter of Matthew, it is interesting to note that there are only five women listed. Because of a special manifestation of faith, God granted them an honored place in His lineage. These five special women are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary.

Genesis 38 records the story of Tamar. Judah, one of Jacob's sons, took a Canaanite woman to be his wife and they had three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. Tamar was given to be the wife of the oldest son, Er; however, he was so evil that the Scriptures say the Lord slew him. One can only imagine what it would be like to be the wife of a man who was so wicked. The Bible does not say what his sins were, but they were obviously very serious. Tamar was then given to Onan, but Onan refused to give his seed to her for the sake of his brother and the Lord was displeased with him and slew him. Judah then told Tamar to go live as a widow at her father's house and wait for the third son, Shelah. However, after a period of time she saw that Shelah was grown and it became evident that she was going to be left out. During this time her desire grew to have children who might be heirs of the promise God made to Abraham. Her faith obviously was so strong in believing this promise that she was willing to risk her life to have children who would share in that blessing. After Judah's Canaanitish wife died, Tamar successfully devised a scheme to bear children by the seed of her father-in-law. God honored her faith and gave her twins and a place in the direct lineage of King David and His own son, Jesus, the Savior of the world. Through her life, Tamar suffered hardship, rejection and abandonment, but her faith in God's promise was not weakened by her own suffering. Like Abraham, she looked beyond her present circumstances and believed in the promises God had given for the future. She actively sought to have a part in those promises and God granted her righteous desire.

The second chapter of Joshua tells about the two spies who were sent to secretly check out Jericho and the land thereabout. These two men came to Rahab's house and she took them in and hid them from the king of Jericho who sought to capture them. Rahab told the two men of Israel that her people had heard what God had done for them and they were fearful. She said, "...our hearts did melt and neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you...." She then made a proclamation that was an expression of her faith and was the key to giving her a place in the lineage of Christ. She said, "...For the Lord, your God, he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath."

If more people would share her faith, they too would have a place in the kingdom of God. Rahab risked her life to make a place for God and His people. How wonderful it would be if more would open their hearts and make a place for Him today. God would honor their commitment and their lives would be forever changed for the better. Rahab was living in a city that was marked for destruction and her faith spared not only herself, but her whole family. It is a mistake that many people make by allowing a love for the comfort of their present circumstances to hinder them from following the Lord when His voice speaks to their heart. We have no continuing city here and our world, like Jericho of old, is marked for destruction. May the faith of Rahab bless us and encourage us to make more room for the Lord in our lives.

The familiar story of Ruth is one of true love and devotion that has been an inspiration to many throughout the course of time. During a time when Israel was suffering from a severe famine, Elimelech, Naomi and their two sons journeyed into the country of Moab and lived there for a number of years. During this time Elimelech died and the two sons took wives of the Moabite women. One was named Ruth and the other was Orpah. In the process of time, both sons also died, leaving Naomi, Ruth and Orpah widows. Then Naomi heard that the famine in Israel had ended and she decided to return to her home country to spend the remaining years of her life. Ruth and Orpah both wanted to go with her, but they came to a place where she entreated them to return to their own homes and families. In a sad, tearful parting, Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye and went back to her people. Ruth however would not be persuaded to return. She loved her mother-in-law and through her godly influence, as well that of her deceased husband, she had learned about the true, loving, God of Israel. With that knowledge, how could her soul ever be satisfied to return to the idolatrous ways of her people? No, her soul was longing for something better, even if it meant poverty and hardship she would not go back. She would go with her mother-in-law. In this context Ruth proclaimed the resolve of her soul, "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall*

be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me." The soul that comes to the Lord with this kind of resolve will quickly find a place in His heart and in His kingdom. God responds to faith like this, it does not matter whether that person has a background of ignorance about Him or of intense religious training. He will gladly reveal the truth of His love to the sincere heart. Ruth's choice to follow Naomi wrote her name in immortality and she was blessed to be granted a place in the lineage of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Ruth found favor in the heart of Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi, and he took her to be his wife. God blessed them with a son who was the grandfather of King David. It was said of Ruth that she was better to Naomi than seven sons. What a rich legacy her earnest devotion gave to the world. It is truly a marvel of faith.

There is another type of faith that is important for people to understand. People come to God from many varied backgrounds, and it is not generally from a respectable, upstanding, righteous walk of life. Sin has entered into the world and has left its crushing mark on hearts, families and homes. Many nefarious souls are trudging along through life without hope because their hard master continually tells them there is no way out of their gloomy prison of sin. Yet, is there no hope? Are they doomed forever once they fall into terrible sin? Consider the woman who was referred to in the lineage of Christ, yet her name was not actually mentioned. Could it be that Matthew could not bring himself to actually write her name? Or, was he making a statement about the nature of God by writing it in this manner? Matthew 1:6 records her in this manner, "...and David the King begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;" It could be that certain sins leave a stigma on a soul forever in the sight of man, but with God there is mercy and forgiveness. David and Bathsheba found that place of mercy and forgiveness with the Lord. Humility, repentance and confession are all necessary for the one trapped by sin, however there is a faith that believes God hears those prayers and that He will pardon the transgressor. The Lord took the life of the child that was conceived by David's sinful lusts, but as a token of His mercy He gave them another child that was a wonder to the world. Solomon's place in history and in the

lineage of Christ is a witness of God honoring those who have manifested faith in His willingness to forgive.

There is one more woman who is mentioned and remembered with great tenderness, Mary, the mother of our dear Savior. Her faith is summarized by her response to the Angel Gabriel when he announced the coming birth of Christ. "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word...." Luke 1:38. Mary's faith demonstrated her submission to, and acceptance of the will of the Lord for her life. She was called upon to suffer much in her life for being the chosen vessel of the Lord to bear the Christ child. The scorn of the world was upon her from the beginning, for she was only espoused to her future husband when she was with child. Then consider the difficult conditions that surrounded the time when she gave birth—riding a donkey into Bethlehem, no convenient place to stay in the crowded city, a crude place to give birth followed by a hasty flight into Egypt to escape the wrath of King Herod. It would not be easy to continually accept the Lord's plan for her life. The ridicule, the hatred, the questions that were focused on our Lord inevitably touched her life also. How it must have hurt the heart of Mary to see her son mistreated, beaten, abused and crucified. Could her faith bear all of these things and still say, "Thy will be done?" Of necessity, her faith and consecration had to parallel, at least in a proportionate way, that of her Son, for her heart went with Him. Our last record of her is when the 120 elders were gathered together in prayer waiting for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. Her faith prevailed and brought her into a joyful union with the glory of the Lord. God's promise to Abraham was complete and His blessing of salvation is freely available to all mankind. Thank the Lord for these beacons of faith that played a significant role in bringing God's glorious blessing to all humanity.

"Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:26.

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As is our usual policy the August issue of the *Faith and Victory* will be omitted. May the Lord bless and keep His people in the perilous, uncertain times we are living.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey
wemurphey@yahoo.com



My granddaughter is 15 months old and has a brain tumor. She had a biopsy and it is not cancer, but they could not remove it because it is attached to her optic nerve. Her name is Alexandria and she is the love of my life. She has an MRI coming up and if the tumor has grown she will need surgery, and then there is a 60% chance she will go blind. Please pray that this tumor either stops growing or shrinks.

—Paulette Casey

Standing Prayer Requests

- Sis. Agnes Burleson
- Bro. Gary Burleson
- Sis. Gladys Cashio
- Sis. Helen Carson
- Sis. Genevieve Carver
- Sis. Elizabeth Corteway
- Sis. Waneta Creel
- Bro. Terry Dawson Sr.
- Bro. Mancil Doolittle
- Sis. Guy Domin
- Sis. Dorall Forbes
- Bro. Dan Gellenbeck
- Bro. Troy Gentry
- Jaden Howard
- Sis. Patsy Jordan
- Sis. Earnestine Jordan
- Sis. Karoline Kessler
- Bro. Mark and Sis. Darlene Knight
- Sis. Evodna Marler
- Sis. Virginia Myers
- Sis. Elsie M. Offerman
- Bro. Vernon Robinson
- Bro. David Runion
- Sis. Cheryl Smith
- Bro. Michael Smith
- Bro. Edward and Sis. Gloria Taylor
- Sis. Imogene Taylor
- The Mitch Taylor family
- Sis. Norma Tiller
- Bro. Delmar Wilkins
- Bro. Curtis Williams
- Sis. Jan Wood

MEETING DATES

- Spoooner, WI (Tent Meeting)—August 17-21
- Pacoima, CA (Camp Meeting)—August 19-28
- Boley, OK (Camp Meeting)—August 20-21
- Wichita, KS (Fall Revival)—September 18-25
- Baldy Mesa, CA (Fall Revival)—October 7-9
- Okmulgee, OK (Fall Revival)—October 22-24
- Fresno, CA (Fall Meeting)—Oct. 30-Nov. 6

MEETING NOTICES

SPOONER, WI, TENT MEETING

Lord willing, this meeting will begin Wednesday, August 17, at 7:00 p.m., with services daily at 10:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. through Sunday, August 21.

Come for a blessing and to be a blessing, and please support the tent meeting with your prayers.

There will be some accommodations but please call for arrangements. Bring your own bedding and linens if possible. Be prepared for cold nights. We give everyone a special invitation to come and be with us to enjoy God's many blessings of love. For more information contact Bro. Ron and Sis. Martha Zacharias at (715) 635-2994.

PACOIMA, CA, CAMP MEETING NOTICE

The annual California State Camp Meeting of the Church of God will begin, Lord willing, on August 19, ending August 28, 2011. The first service will be on Friday evening, August 19 at 7:30 p.m. with three services daily throughout the remainder of the meeting.

The campground is located at 12312 Osborne Pl., Pacoima, CA 91331. A hearty invitation is extended to all. Your presence and prayers will add much to the success of the meeting. Three meals are provided daily as well as accommodations for those needing them. Expenses are met by freewill offerings.

For more information you may contact: Sunset Guest Home (818) 899-2022; Bro. Paul Phillips (661) 251-6956 or Bro. Herbert Clay (818) 897-1396. The chapel phone number is: (818) 899-9021.

BOLEY, OK, CAMP MEETING

The Boley, OK Church of God congregation is planning to hold a two day meeting August 20-21.

to find out what was going on and ended up taking medication six weeks for the only time in my life. I regretted the decision. I vowed to God, after that, to trust Him, no matter what, for the healing of my body. I realized that if I went in to have myself checked out, it would be difficult for me to keep my vow, so I have chosen not to find out. (This is my personal conviction and in no way do I hold others to this, I understand we all have different convictions and levels of faith.)

Instead, in an effort to be obedient to God's Word, I decided to be anointed and prayed over. I told the ministry that I would like the lump to go away, but if not, I wanted courage and strength to be faithful. As I was being prayed for, I felt surrounded with such love and warmth that it is impossible to express. Realizing my propensity to be emotional, I had asked God to help me keep my composure. He chose not to answer this prayer. Smile. Nope, I sobbed from the moment I started expressing my situation and the entire next day as I drove back home to Louisiana.

On the way home satan accused me of being a Drama Queen. Mentally and emotionally exhausted, as soon as I got home, I fell into bed and slept. The following morning I opened my Bible to read and after a few verses I flipped over to another place. I have no recollection of underlining the scripture. My old Bible wore out and I had recently replaced it and have very few marked scriptures in it. The verse my eyes fell on was Jeremiah 33:6. "Behold I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." I felt comforted and I thank God for His lovingkindness. I accept that God will cure me.

Please understand this. Now I am going to make a contrary sounding statement: When my daddy was sick of cancer someone told my mother that God showed them He would be healed, but he ended up dying. So, I want to say that if you hear three months or thirteen years from now that I have cancer, please don't think I am doubting God. I believe He will heal me. There is a Tree of Life by the crystal rivers of Heaven whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. And, whether He heals me here or there, it matters not. His Word is true. My only desire is to be faithful and true to Him Whom my soul loveth. Thank you for your prayers.

Christian love, —Sis. Diane Doolittle

A Most Wonderful Place

By Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

I've just been to a most wonderful place. Picture an atmosphere filled with heavenly praise, love, eager expectation for God's Word, and God's Spirit working and moving. A place filled with babies, children, young adults, singles and married couples of all ages, and elderly; of more than one color, ethnic origin, or background. I like how one lady put it this year, after arriving, for her first time, from Honduras: "This is like Heaven! I want to come every year!"

The physical, geographical characteristics of this place certainly have their importance in lending ambiance and earthly charm: tall, mature trees, a view of the meandering creek and the Missouri hills beyond; the chorus of insects at night and the fragrant smell of the sycamores and the countryside; and the central fixture—an aged, open-air structure we call "the tabernacle."

But it's not the tranquil country setting or the nostalgic campground facilities that compellingly draw me, for ten days, every third week of July, to leave behind the comforts and cares of home and devote my heart, time and energy, to experiencing and immersing myself in the pursuit of all that is godly and heavenly.

I think that the two things that draw me back are God's Word and God's Spirit. Every year, as the time draws nearer, I begin asking God to speak to me through my brothers and sisters who share His Word through preached messages, songs, testimonies or personal conversation. Sometimes there are problems that I struggle with or that I know others are having, that I lift to the Lord, and earnestly plead, "Father, address this!" Every year I am so amazed at how my brother or sister can come from sometimes a thousand miles away, and stand up and give the answer to my dilemma. Oh, I know that if I were not privileged to come to this very special gathering of people, that God could address those problems in a very clear personal way, and He has. But just as in the Old Testament, when He commanded His people to meet together for "holy convocation," there is a sacred and special purpose for the witness He gives in a group setting.

The singing has a lot to do with it, also. We live in our separate, and usually small, con-

gregations scattered all over the country. We sing the familiar songs in our local meetings. But there is just something so beautiful about hundreds of voices singing together—praising, offering testimony to the truth of the song—sometimes weeping, clapping, hugging; and sometimes very somber and reverently quiet, according to how the Holy Spirit is directing.

Because that is our purpose—to worship in Spirit and in Truth. We have laid aside personal agendas. No one person or group is “featured.” No board of directors orders the services. Instead, beginning early in the day, and often into the night, fervent prayer is offered that GOD ONLY would lead the congregational singing, special singing, prayers, testimonies, and preaching. In the freedom we insist upon for the services, there is always risk of human failure, human misunderstanding of God’s will or purpose for the hour, and human usurping of God’s place. So very awesome to me is how God clears up these human disasters, and quietly resumes His place as Lord of all, feeding and renewing our souls, revealing our faults and rebuking us for our human pride and reasoning. We learn to lean on Him. To quietly wait on Him. To be wary of our own humanity, but gentle and patient with each other’s humanity, at the same time.

Each year I learn a little more of the value of these group settings. We need each other. Each one, when led by God’s Spirit, has something to contribute, something beautiful and valuable and vital. Each personality, when tempered by the Holy Spirit, can supply, uniquely, something so necessary. I learn to appreciate how God works with another’s spirit. I learn to understand how another person communicates. The trials and hardships associated with this or that one’s particular work for God. We hear from children. Teenagers. Those bent with age. Central, Northern, Southern, Eastern, and Western US and several other countries. There are different inflections of speech, different ways of expression, and different methods of operation. It’s so wonderful to READ how God’s church should work in all of these ways, in the Bible, and then to EXPERIENCE it in action!

So, I’ve tried to capture in words what has captured my heart and the hearts of my children. But I’ve not done it well at all. You’d have to see it, hear it, feel it and live it. We call our special place—Monark. The name comes from

the historic *Missouri-North Arkansas* railroad station and fresh-water springs nearby, Monark Springs. The group of people with whom I worship established a camp meeting there over 70 years ago. The mode of travel to and from the meeting (I’m writing this as I wait for my flight in Tulsa airport) and the “camp” living conditions have changed over the years. Canvas, army-surplus tents all over the grounds (I remember staying in those) are non-existent, and there are now large men’s, women’s and family dormitories, cabin structures and RV’s. We used to scuff our feet in sawdust under the tabernacle; now the floor is concrete. But other things remain the same, and we seem reluctant to change. We eat our meals in a cramped, non-air-conditioned dining area, with all the work in the kitchen and grounds done on a volunteer, free-will-offering basis. We meet for worship in the “tabernacle,” fans waving, as many times the July weather is insufferably hot.

So why do we willingly brave the hot weather and not-so-perfect camp conditions? Why do Saints make the long two-, or three-day drives from Miami or Los Angeles, or Portland? The answer could be found in experiencing just one visitation from God’s Spirit, whether it’s in the service where the singing is so vibrant that I think I hear angels; or the invitational call, where hardened, rebellious hearts are weeping their way to the altar; or the message that is opening up God’s Word in a miraculous way; or the special time when the healing waters are flowing and the asthma, or the arthritis, or the broken heart is healed and made whole. Maybe it is in the sweetest of all services (for me), where the sisters are washing one another’s feet, gently singing, tears flowing, tenderly embracing and whispering words of appreciation—the brothers having their own feet-washing service in a separate place—and then brothers and sisters gathering under the tabernacle for the solemn remembrance of Jesus’ body and blood given for us. For me personally, Monark is where I was saved at age 11, and where, in 1993, God healed me of a tubal pregnancy, and in 2004, of injuries from a concussion.

The atmosphere at Monark, though tranquil, love-filled, and spiritually renewing, can also sometimes be tense, and here’s why. Spiritually, it’s a battle-ground, this campground is, and many a sword is drawn, many a skirmish is

waged against our souls' enemy. We know he is the adversary, that he comes when sons of God gather, and that he seeks to steal, kill and destroy. We are soldiers of God who have come to do warfare, and we mean to do it faithfully. In one hand, we joyfully lift the harps of praise; in the other, we wield a two-edged sword. Our experiences have taught us that in times past, satan has advanced when we were sleeping. So it's always our aim to be watchful and prayerful and careful. And yes, we have much to learn about keeping our spiritual balance and focus, and our eyes on our commander.

Monark. I've just come from that special place, and I'm now back in the "real world," back to the daily walk. But in my mind are the songs, the happy faces, the streaming eyes and gentle hugs. The shouts of praise and the earnest prayers. A wonderful vision that I keep with me all year, until next July, when the anticipation mounts again as I drive once more into that gravel drive, hear the rafters ring, and see the words over the podium: "I must die, but when? I must meet God, but how? I must dwell in eternity, but where?" That question is asked, and answered, time and again, by countless persons, and I feel so blessed, that once again, God has visited those words personally to my heart, and given me, in that heavenly place, joyous assurance that Heaven is mine.



Mary Had a Little Boy

*Mary had a little boy,
His soul was white as snow.
He never went to Sunday School
'Cause Mary wouldn't go.*

*He never heard the story of Christ,
That thrill the childish mind,
While other children went to class,
This child was left behind.*

*And as he grew from babe to youth,
She saw to her dismay,
A soul that once was white
Became a dingy gray.*

*Realizing that he was lost,
She tried to win him back,
But now the soul that once was white,
Had turned an ugly black,

She even started back to church
And Sunday School, too,
She begged the preacher
"Isn't there a thing that we can do?"

The preacher tried, and failed and said,
"We're just too far behind,
"I tried to tell you years ago,
But you would pay no mind."

And so another soul is lost,
That once was white as snow,
Sunday School would have helped
But Mary wouldn't go*

—Selected

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Head and Heart

By Sis. Lana Johnson

*In my head, at times, I'm tempted to think
Many things in life are unfair.
But in my heart I truly know
That God for us all doth care.*

*Thoughts will come as they often do,
I must resist them and make them depart.
Ask God to take them out of my head,
And not let them enter my heart.*

*Sometimes my head says,
"You don't have a thing;"
"Why don't you give up the fight?"*

*But in my heart, I know I love God
And can conquer in Jesus' might!*

*So, in my head, when I'm feeling confused,
And my eyes with tears are so dim,
He knows the way that I take in my heart,
And my desire to be faithful to Him.*

*We all must submit our head and our heart,
And let God examine our ways.
Seek His grace for every one of our needs
So He can give us His rest all our days!*

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