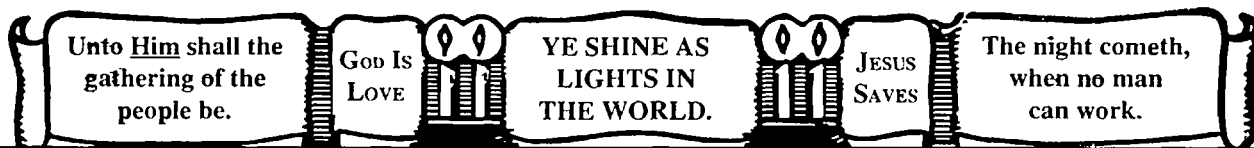


FAITH AND VICTORY

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Choosing a Marriage Companion—A Soul Issue

By Michael W. Smith

Choosing a marriage companion is the most important decision one will ever make, second only to the decision to serve the Lord. While many consider marriage a “heart” issue, it is more importantly a “soul” issue. Many a person’s eternal destiny has been set due to the choice of the one with whom they decide to spend their life. Marriage is the closest of all human relationships, and it behooves all to approach this decision with prayer and much consideration.

The desire for marriage and companionship is God-given. “...It is not good that the man should be alone...Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Genesis 2:18, 24. Marriage is a wonderful institution, ordained of God. Life is richer and fuller with someone to share the joys and sorrows of life. The grass is a little greener and the storm a little less intense with a companion by your side.

Contrary to the practice and teaching of the world, marriage is a lifetime commitment. Once

the vows are said, the couple is sealed as husband and wife before God until the union is dissolved by death alone. “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress:...” Romans 7:2-3. (Reference I Corinthians 7:39.) Hence, it is imperative that the decision of whom to marry is approached with caution and wisdom.

Some things in the Scripture are spelled out and are just a matter of obedience on our part. There are other things in which God gives mankind some direction but also leeway due to personal preference and desire. Marriage is one such issue. While God has a plan for each of our lives, God will never force someone to marry or not marry. He has given us some freedom of choice in this area.

Choosing the right person to marry can be confusing and a time of uncertainty often ensues. There is no exact science or formula to follow to find that perfect soul mate. But there are biblical guidelines, sound principles, and some basic prerequisites that must be followed for a marriage to be in the order of the Lord and to set the foundation for a successful, godly home.

Before an individual even considers marriage, he or she should be saved, with a good solid experience with the Lord. If there is

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spiritual instability, so will there be instability in the choice of whom to marry. Most likely, a wrong decision will be made and the result may not only be a life but an eternity of trouble. It is paramount that an individual focus first on his or her own spirituality and be living very close to the Lord.

It is important that marriage is entered into for the right reasons—God's will, desire for companionship and love. The wrong reasons include the following: everyone else is getting married; there may not be another chance; to escape dad and mom; on the rebound – trying to fill an emotional vacuum; financial security; lust; or marrying due to pressure from parents and peers.

Marriage should be approached with feelings, opinions and desires being fully submitted to the will of God. The Holy Spirit will lead and direct in choosing the one with whom to spend life. If God is left out of the decision, the choice will be wrong. Sometimes it would seem easier if the Lord would speak out of the sky saying, "This is the one for you." This is not usually the case. We are led by the Word and by the Spirit. There should be a real sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. If there is a sense that the Lord is not pleased with the potential union, it should be stopped until the Lord gives clarity in the decision. Too many times people make up their minds and allow their affections to go out to someone, then ask God to bless the union. By that time, it is hard to really know God's will because the feelings and emotions are so strong. It is best to seek God first. When there is clearness before God, then is the time to move forward with the potential husband or wife.

The most important relationship is our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. If He is the most important aspect of our life, then every decision should center around Him. Marriage is as much a spiritual union as it is a physical or civil union. A spouse generally has the largest influence and impact on their husband or wife. It is for this reason the Scripture teaches that marriage should be within the faith. This is an absolute. If someone is not saved, they should not even be considered or thought twice about in the context of dating or marriage. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:..." II Corinthians 6:14. While this scripture deals explicitly with idolaters, it would also apply to

that closest of all human relationships. How can someone profess ultimate love for God and yet enter into a union with an unbeliever whose values and beliefs are different? The Old Testament also was very clear in instructing the children of Israel not to marry men or women of other nations. Solomon, a man of much wisdom, violated this commandment, and in his old age his heart was turned away from God because of his wives. It is a trick of the enemy to think that one can keep his or her integrity with God and marry outside of the faith.

Similarly, just because someone is saved does not make him or her suitable marriage material. It is so important that the fundamental doctrines and faith in Christ are the same. Many people have married "saved" men or women of other groups, movements and faiths. There is then a pull to worship at times with the group of the spouse. There may be doctrinal differences and standards of holiness that are not observed. This can create friction and division in the home. There must be a union of spirit and faith in a marriage not only for the married couple, but also for the successful raising of the children. When these are absent, the long-term tendency, unintentional though it may be, is for a couple to veer toward the more liberal, compromising lifestyle. This applies as well to people fellowshiping in the same congregation or group. Just because an individual attends the same church is no guarantee that he or she is spiritually stable. A common faith and spiritual stability is essential to the unity of the home and well being of the soul.

It is important, before pursuing a relationship, that the other party has a good track record of spiritual growth and integrity. Someone who has recently been saved is not a good person to begin courting. A lengthy period of stability is important for many who start out for God fall by the way side.

Even after the spiritual criterion has been met, there are also many other things to consider. One should never marry with the assumption that the spouse will change or be different after marriage. There will be growth, change and maturity as well as areas in which to improve in every marriage. But there is no assurance that the change will always be in the direction one wants or desires. So, if the potential companion can't be accepted as he or she is

currently, he or she probably isn't the appropriate companion. What irritates before marriage will most likely be compounded after marriage in daily living. Hence, it is not fair to marry an individual expecting him or her to change who he or she is as a person. It is also important to practically understand that nobody is perfect and without faults. There is no Bro. or Sis. Perfect out there, in the sense of being without weakness or shortcomings.

Some people are more compatible than others. Compatibility has to do with the ease of companionship, communication, interests, lifestyle, ambitions and goals. Some people are drawn together because of differences and some because of similarities. There is no right or wrong here. But there needs to be a strong sense of compatibility that goes beyond the surface.

Before marriage, there must be a strong element of trust and faith in each other. If there are questions and issues of trust, the union will be weak from the onset. There should be a high level of respect, acceptance and admiration for the potential spouse. If not, it is either not the right person or the right time for marriage.

When a man considers marrying a woman, he must ask himself if he is willing and able to love her as Christ loves the church and if he will put her welfare and interest above his own. A woman must also be willing and ready to submit to her husband in everything. If there is not a willingness to observe these biblical principles, that individual is not ready for marriage. If the intended spouse does not believe in the biblical family structure as stated above, it would not be in the order of the Lord to marry that individual. A woman needs to consider the ability and willingness of the man to provide for her. The man needs to consider his intended's willingness and ability to be a keeper at home as the Scripture teaches.

There is wisdom in seeking advice and counsel from others. A good place to start is with one's own parents and spiritual leaders. It is wise, before entering into any commitment, to talk to those who know the one in whom you are interested. They may be able to give sound advice and some perspective to the situation. It is good to go to the person's pastor and talk to him. There may be issues that would be revealed that might make a difference on whether the relationship is pursued.

Godly counsel should not be taken lightly or discounted. This is another reason it is important to give consideration to all of these things before allowing one's affections to go out. Very few people take contrary advice once their heart is set. It is much wiser to evaluate first, giving the soul and mind preference over the heart. Once the heart is given, the soul and mind usually get outvoted. It is best for the heart, soul and mind to be in one accord. No individual has the ability to matchmake and bring about successful, godly marriages. People need to be very careful about trying to bring two individuals together. No one should be married because of the pressure to do so. No one can know better than oneself, in honesty before God, the one who is best to marry.

A relationship based on physical attraction alone is doomed for failure. A pretty or handsome face can lose its glamour real quickly when there is not grace in time of stress. Marriage should not be based on the physical nor should it be in spite of the physical. While outward beauty is vain and fades, there should still be an attraction. Part of a healthy marriage relationship is the intimacy that belongs to marriage alone. If there is not an attraction and draw, there will be problems in that marriage.

While a godly marriage in the will of God is most importantly a "soul" issue, it is also an issue of the heart. For the soul in marriage cannot be satisfied without the strong love of the heart. True love is a requirement for a good, strong marriage. Love is that which brings kindness, gentleness, happiness and joy. It is love that enables one to sacrifice and give when it hurts. It is love that draws and binds together in the hard times as well as the good. Love comes from the heart and words can't always explain the whys or wherefores.

Choosing a marriage companion is not always easy, but it should be committed to God, knowing that God has a plan for all of us. Single people, young and old alike, should be careful not to rush into a relationship, but rather, wait on the Lord. Marriage has the possibility of security, fulfillment and love, but it also has potential to wound and destroy.

Marriage is a wonderful institution that God created for the betterment of humankind. It proves to be a wonderful blessing and union when it is in the will of God. Marriage should be entered into with much prayer and consideration—for it is an issue of the soul.

FAITH AND VICTORY 12 PAGE HOLINESS MONTHLY



This non-sectarian paper is edited and published in the interest of the universal CHURCH OF GOD each month (except August of each year, and we omit an issue that month to attend camp meetings), by Willie Murphey, and other consecrated workers at the FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE, 4318 S. Division, Guthrie, OK 73044.

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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.

Through the Free Literature Fund thousands of gospel tracts are published and sent out free of charge as the Lord supplies. Cooperation of our readers is solicited, and will be appreciated in any way as the Bible and the Holy Spirit teach you to do or stir your heart. "Freely ye have received, freely give." Read Ex. 25:2; I Chron. 29:9; II Cor. 9:7; and Luke 6:38.

Freewill offerings sent in to the work will be thankfully received as from the Lord. Checks and money orders should be made payable to Faith Publishing House. All donations are tax deductible.

A separate Missionary Fund is maintained in order to relay missionary funds from our readers to the support of home and foreign missionaries and evangelists.

In order to comply with Oklahoma laws as a non-profit religious work, the Faith Publishing House is incorporated thereunder.

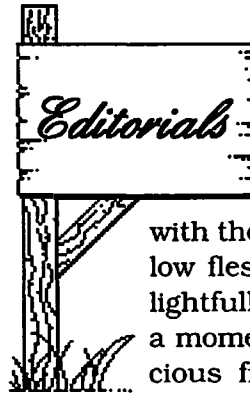
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To bite into a freshly picked peach that is ripened to rosy-golden perfection is a most satisfying experience. The savor of the sweet juice, mingled with the exquisite flavor of the mellow flesh excites the palate so delightfully. The cares of life vanish for a moment as one relishes the delicious fruit that God has blessed mankind to enjoy.

There is much work involved in caring for a productive orchard. Gathering the fruit is not the only duty; planting, watering, fertilizing and controlling insects that may damage the trees are also a part of the intensive labor one must invest in order to reap a bountiful harvest. On a less delightful note, there is another chore that must be performed to keep a tree in good condition for bearing fruit. That chore is pruning. It may not be pleasant, but it is necessary if one expects production to continue.

Jesus used an illustration of a vine bearing fruit in the fifteenth chapter of John. Notice the first two verses, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." God's desire is for those branches that are growing from the True Vine, Jesus, to produce an abundance of rich, lush, tasteful fruit. He knows that objective can only be accomplished by pruning the right amount, in an appropriate way, at the proper time. Be assured God knows exactly how to perform that operation with precision. However, there is often a degree of pain associated with the procedure, and the enemy of our souls often takes advantage of the occasion to bring doubts, accusations and bitterness in an attempt to defeat the objective of the Lord.

Jesus identified the reason for purging the branch,—"that it may bring forth more fruit." When the end of a branch is cut back, it removes some of the weight. This means it is not only able to support more fruit, but it is also less likely to break under adverse weather conditions, such as wind, snow and ice. The Lord knows about the storms that are brewing over the horizon of our future and in His mercy He

snips us back so we will not be overloaded and break when they strike.

A branch that has been properly pruned does not cause the remaining stub to die. What really happens is that more nourishment from the trunk is supplied to the remaining branch through the sap of the tree and new growth takes place—more leaves, more blossoms, and more fruit grow. The beautiful thing about this is that afterward the fruit and branch are situated closer and are more firmly attached to the trunk. After all, isn't the prayer of a child of God to draw closer and be more firmly attached to Jesus, the lover of their soul. Realistically, a Christian will begin focusing their time, finances and energies on things that are of greater value. Priorities and ambitions will be redirected to allow a more noble character to emerge. The spiritual fruit maturing from this improved environment will be richer, sweeter and more Christ-like.

When excess foliage is trimmed back, it allows the sunshine to penetrate more deeply into the previously shaded areas of the tree. The light stimulates all of the processes of life and promotes new growth. The additional light also causes the fruit to ripen more fully. When the sunlight from Heaven shines on our soul, it brings warmth and new life to our spirit. Greater peace, an abundance of joy and an enhanced appreciation for all of God's precious dealings will result from the increased level of illumination. Often when one reflects at a later time, they will be thankful the Lord dealt with them as He did. Even though it was painful when things in their life were trimmed back, they realize that it was for their good.

When we view the natural wonders of God's creation, we find there is an abundance of diversity. Not all fruits look and taste like a peach. There are fruits of various sizes and flavor, which are of value to man and beast. The quality and nutrients they contain may be somewhat characteristic of a particular kind of fruit, but they are also influenced by the conditions of their environment. God knows the type of fruit He desires our life to produce and how we must be dealt with to produce that special variety—It may be through an extended period of trial, through the loss of a loved one or through an unusually strong temptation. Whatever the price we must pay in physical loss, humiliation or

suffering, we can be confident that we will receive more than a commensurate reward. At times it may seem that we are being unnecessarily afflicted, but remember that God is working these things in our life for our good and His Glory, and if we submit to His will, He will fashion us into a gem that reflects His holiness. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15:8.

Sometimes it becomes necessary to purge a branch to remove areas that are diseased or damaged by insects. If these branches are left, the damage may continue to injure much more of the plant. In like manner, the Lord may have to remove things in our life to prevent permanent damage to our spirit. While the loss may be hard to bear, we will be forever grateful that He spared our life from being completely destroyed.

"In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely..." Isaiah 4:2. It is a precious privilege to be grafted into the vine of Christ Jesus. The fruit that is produced is not really our own, but it is a result of the Holy Spirit working through us. For the fruit of righteousness to reach perfection in our lives, it will require chastening and purging that will at times reduce us to tears. But dear child of God dry your eyes, hold tightly to the Son of God, and allow Him to work His perfect work in your life.

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God has been gracious to the Faith Publishing House in permitting us to continue in His service for 85 years. The first issue of the *Faith and Victory* was published in March 1923. We praise God for meeting the needs that have arisen throughout these many years, and we feel His hand is still upon this work. Joys and sorrows, tears and laughter have all touched the lives of the servants of the Most High who have toiled day after day to produce the various books, tracts and periodicals for the benefit of the Church of God. The Saints have stood behind us, held us up in prayer and shared of their financial means to keep the presses printing the glorious Gospel, and I thank you for your sacrifice of love. It is our prayer that God will be pleased to continue His blessing upon the work and that the message of holiness will be published and practiced until His return.

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

PRAYER REQUESTS

CA—I have a prayer request for two of my friends, Dave and Marty; one has cancer and the other has an aneurysm. Thank you for printing my prayer request. God bless you,

—Bro. Don Viser

KS—I have had some high blood pressure problems recently and some mini strokes. The Lord undertook and healed me, and I am endeavoring to get my strength back because the meetings will be starting before long. I am pressing on the upward way and still rejoicing as I go. I intend to make Heaven my home. Praise God!

—Sis. Shirley Knight

CA—Dear Bro. Murphey: In times past we have sent missionaries to Mexico, but Mexico has come to Pacoima, CA, surrounding the entire Church of God Campground. My request is that the Lord encourage us to begin to go door-to-door in the apartments to pass out and witness with Spanish tracts to many of these families. We need to invite them to our campmeeting and Sunday services too. April 12 we plan to meet at the Pacoima Campground at 9:00 a.m. to pray together and then pass out tracts. We invite others to join us in this effort. For further information you may contact me at (661) 940-8222. Your brother in His service,

—Ronald Riley Sr.

Standing Prayer Requests

Bro. Carlos Arriaga
 Sis. Gladys Cashio
 Sis. Helen Carson
 Sis. Waneta Creel
 Sis. Patsy Doolittle
 Sis. Dorall Forbes
 Bro. Troy Gentry
 Bro. John Gutwein
 Bro. Lee Hilton
 Sis. Leta Inman
 Bro. Mark and Sis. Darlene Knight
 Sis. Melba Powell
 Bro. Jerry Quave
 Sis. Olene Rector
 Sis. Marilyn Rendall
 Sis. Cheryl Smith
 Bro. Michael Smith
 Bro. Edward and Sis. Gloria Taylor
 The Mitch Taylor family
 Sis. Norma Tiller
 Sis. Anneta Williamson
 Sis. Lula Williamson

MEETING DATES

Miami, FL (Spring Meeting)—March 30-April 5
Springfield, MO (Spring Revival)—April 2-6
Wichita, KS (Spring Meeting)—April 13-20
Boley, OK (Spring Revival)—April 17-20
Alabama (Spring Singing)—April 19
Ministers' Meeting (Balch Springs, TX)—
 April 24-26
Vanceburg, KY (Spring Meeting)—May 15-18
Oklahoma State (Guthrie)—May 23-June 1
Holly Hill, SC (Camp Meeting)—June 1-8
Sisters' Retreat (Okmulgee, OK)—June 20-21
Jefferson, OR (Camp Meeting)—June 20-29
General Southern (Loranger, LA)—
 June 29-July 6
National (Monark Springs, MO)—July 18-27
Sponner, WI (Tent Meeting)—August 20-29

MEETING NOTICES

MIAMI, FL, SPRING MEETING

Lord willing, the Church of God located in Miami, FL will be having its Spring Meeting starting March 30 through April 5. Service will be held nightly at 7:30, except on both Sundays. There will be two services on Sunday. A morning service at 10:30 and an afternoon service at 3:00. Bro. Charles Clay is the pastor and he can be contacted at (305) 804-8504 for further information, or Bro. Kenneth Baxter may be contacted at (786) 554-8833.

SPRINGFIELD, MO, SPRING REVIVAL

The Springfield, MO congregation is planning a Spring Revival Meeting with Bro. Bob Wilson, April 2 - 6. Evening services will be held Wed.- Sat. at 7:00 pm. Sunday services will be at 9:45; 10:45; and 1:45, with dinner on the grounds. We solicit your prayers and extend a warm welcome to all to join us. For further information, please contact Bro. Michael Smith (417) 725-5769 or Bro. Randy Sorrell (417) 357-2121.

WICHITA, KS, SPRING MEETING

The Wichita Spring Meeting has been set for April 13-20. There will be three services on Sundays and two services Monday through Saturday at 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Our congregation has been praying, since the first of the year, for deeper depths in God and more strength and power for each of us. Therefore, we trust we will achieve that and will be expecting the meeting to help us fulfill this need. We are looking to God to send the ministers of His choice. Please pray with us that the devil will stand rebuked and the Holy Spirit will have full control of the entire meeting.

The chapel is located at 2509 N. Grove St. If you are travelling I-35, you take exit 42 (135, 81, 235) then stay on 135 to the 21st street exit. Go East on 21st to Grove (about 7 blocks) turn to the left (north) and proceed to 2509. If you need to contact someone, you may call Bro. Emmanuel Gracey at (316) 461-1267 (cell) or Bro. Theodore McCray at (316) 641-4170 (cell)

**ALABAMA SPRING SINGING,
 NEAR WARRIOR, AL**

The Church of God congregation near Warrior, AL is planning a singing, April 19th at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel. Activities will begin at 10:00 a.m. Saturday morning at the park in Hanceville, which is the same place as last year. On the following day, April 20, there will be dinner on the grounds with services at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome. The chapel is located approximately two miles west of Interstate 65 at exit number 289 in the Enterprise Community. For further information please contact Bro. Roy Herron at (205) 647-7869 or Bro. Marshall Whitson at (205) 647-6325.

MINISTERS' MEETING, BALCH SPRINGS, TX

A three day meeting for ministers is planned for April 24-26 at the Church of God chapel located at 11501 Rylie Crest Dr., Balch Springs, TX 75180. The first session will begin at noon on Thursday. Sessions on Friday and Saturday will begin at 9:00 a.m.

For further information contact Bro. Darrell Johnson (214) 275-9638, pastordj63@yahoo.com For information concerning lodging contact Sis. Linda Montgomery (972) 286-6239 or Sis. Ava Sherman (469) 585-7480.

VANCEBURG, KY, SPRING MEETING

The Vanceburg, KY, Church of God congregation, Lord willing, will hold a Spring Meeting, May 15-18. There will be morning services at 11:00 and evening services at 7:00. We encour-

age all who feel a burden to come and support the meeting. The meeting is conducted on a freewill offering basis. There will be meals prepared daily on the grounds. This meeting will be held on Ruggles Campground in Tollesboro, KY. We are depending upon the Lord to lead and direct in sending the ministers of His choosing. Accommodations will be provided; please bring bed and bath linens. There are RV and camper hook-ups for those who wish to bring them. For those who may desire to rent a motel, they are available within 20 miles of the grounds. For further information and to make reservations, please contact Bro. Dallas Cooper at (606) 796-3645 or (606) 202-1366.

Driving directions to Ruggles Camp from Maysville, Vanceburg, or Flemingsburg: Take Highway 9 (AA Highway) toward Tollesboro (13 miles East of Maysville, or 17 miles West of Vanceburg.) At the intersection of Highway 57 in Tollesboro, turn South toward Flemingsburg. This turn will be between mile markers 28 and 29. Go South approximately 3.5 miles and look for the intersection of Highway 1237. There is a large "Ruggles Camp" sign at the road. Turn to the left (East) and proceed approximately 1.5 miles. On the right there will be a smaller "Ruggles Camp" sign; turn to the right and follow the lane into the campgrounds.

From Flemingsburg, take Highway 57 North into Lewis County, and watch for the intersection of Highway 1237. There is a large "Ruggles Camp" sign at the road. Turn right (East) and proceed approximately 1.5 miles. On the right there will be a smaller "Ruggles Camp" sign; turn to the right and follow the lane into the campgrounds.

HOLLY HILL, SC, CAMP MEETING

We would like to extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to all to attend our Holly Hill, SC camp meeting to be held from Sunday, June 1 through Sunday, June 8, 2008. Lord willing, we will have two services daily, and meals will be provided for all. If you would like to come and need accommodations, please call Sis. Beverly Pratt at (803) 496-3057 or Bro. Kevin and Sis. Cheryl Smith at (803) 492-7975 to make arrangements. Please come if you can, and if you aren't able to come, please pray for the precious Holy Spirit to lead, guide and bless in this meeting. We are looking forward to what the Lord has in store for us, and we welcome all who can come and be with us.

In Christ's Love,

—The Holly Hill, SC Congregation



LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

OK—Dear Bro. Willie and Sis. Neta: We send greetings of Christian love to you once again. I hope and trust all is going well with you and all the workers at the Lord's Print Shop. I have just finished, the last few days, reading the book *God's Gracious Dealings*. I have read it many times, but I enjoyed it more this time than ever before. I wish everyone could read it. It is wonderful how the Lord blessed Bro. and Sis. Pruitt in the printing work for so many years, and helped them to be such a blessing to the workers that have worked there, and also to the readers of the *Faith and Victory* paper as well as the good tracts and books that are mailed out to many. If the good Lord permits time to last until two thousand and twenty three, that will make one hundred years since the work began. I have been blessed to be a reader of the *Faith and Victory* papers since the year of 1941, and I find it to still teach the same truths as it did in the beginning. I hope and trust that God will cause it to be the same until Jesus comes to take His bride to be with Him forever. There we will see Him as He is. There we will meet all the Saints of all ages. That will be a happy reunion. The writer of the book of Revelation describes some of this in chapter seven, beginning at verse nine, through the rest of the chapter. It is worth reading. Read it.

I trust God will continue to bless you as you labor on in printing the pure Gospel and sending it out to be read of all nations. Your saved brother,
—T. V. McMillian

LA—Dear Bro. Willie & Sis. Neta: The reason for this letter is to testify of the miracle that the Lord has done for me. I want the name of our Father to be glorified, and trust that it will be a blessing to all those who read this.

On the night of November 18, 2007, I was on the interstate coming home from work. I was in a Chevrolet Cobalt (small car) and was driving between 65-70 mph in the right lane. As I was crossing a bridge and was at the end of it, I looked in my rearview mirror and saw a car a

good distance behind me, in the same lane I was in, coming at a high rate of speed. I kept looking to see what they were going to do. When I saw that they were coming real close to me, I tried to speed up to avoid them hitting me, but they hit me anyway. The next thing I knew I was rolling and landed upside down in the woods. I was hanging from my seatbelt and tried to unbuckle myself, but I was confused with my surroundings so I did whatever I could to get out of the seatbelt. Once I was out of the seatbelt, I looked for a way to get out of the car. I saw an opening and recognized it as the back window. I reached out to make sure the opening was big enough for me to get out, and then squeezed out of the car. I saw the other car was upside down next to me. There were two young men in the vehicle, and a man who had stopped was trying to help them. I walked away from the vehicles and sat down and started shaking from the shock.

The ambulance took all three of us to the hospital. They ran a CAT Scan on me and, thank the Lord, I didn't receive any internal injuries. I suffered with my neck, upper back, chest, arms, shoulders and other areas of my body. When I got home I was not able to do for myself; I could not sit up or eat without assistance. This went on for two days.

As I was lying there, the song "Whatever It Takes to Be More like You" came to my mind. I told the Lord that if this is what it is going to take to be more like Him, I was willing to accept it. I told my wife that if the Lord was able to spare my life, healing this body would be a small thing for Him to do.

The second night following the accident, my wife and I had prayer together and she went on to sleep. I lay awake trying to get comfortable, but it was difficult because of the pain. Finally, after lying in one position for awhile, I felt the touch of the Lord in my body. I felt my body begin to heal from my neck down, and the pain was released. The feeling was so incredible that I stayed in one spot for a moment, then I began to move to experience the healing of my body. I started to sing in my heart "He Touched Me" and my tears started falling. I didn't want to wake up my wife because she was tired with the stress of it all, but I couldn't wait for morning to come, so people could know of what the Lord had done for me. I was able somehow to go to sleep.

The next morning we were still asleep when the phone rang. My wife answered and it was a

brother from Honduras calling to find out how I was doing. My wife turned and asked me how I was feeling. I suddenly got up from the bed and walked to the bathroom. I came back and said to her, "The Lord has touched me." That was a day of rejoicing for many of us; especially me, because I had experienced His healing power. I believed that the Lord was going to heal my body, but I was not expecting an instant touch.

The Lord spared all three of our lives who were in the accident and also healed my body. We are thankful for what the Lord has done and appreciate the prayers of the Saints.

Christian love,

—Bro. Bryan & Sis. Andrea McLaughlin

SC—Dear Saints: My heart is overflowing with thanksgiving to my Lord this morning and I thought I might share my thoughts. Like the song says, He is so good to me.

I sat down for my worship time this morning and my Bible opened to Psalm 68:19. "Blessed be the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*, even the God of our salvation." I took this literally and began looking around my living room and giving thanks for all of the temporal things that the Lord has blessed us with. I have a warm home, electricity, running water, a way to effortlessly have clean clothes and warm meals, etc. Then another scripture came to mind and I looked it up. Psalm 103:2, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:" It goes on in that entire chapter to list the kind of benefits that it's talking about. I know that the Lord didn't mind at all for me to be thankful for the earthly blessings that He's bestowed on me, but I think He wanted to show me something more.

Remember what John wrote to Gaius? "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." He implied that the soul had pre-eminence, and then the prosperity and health followed. I think that was what the Lord was trying to get across to me. The first thing mentioned after that second verse of Psalm 103 is forgiven iniquities—that is what salvation is. That is why Jesus was willing to come to earth as a little baby. Why is it that I get caught up so easily in the things around me and forget this? I felt a little ashamed that my thoughts went so quickly to things that were earthly instead of spiritual. As I read further in the chapter I became happier and happier. Just think of all

the wonderful things that the Lord has made possible for me because of His sacrifice! I want to always praise Him for the most important benefits of all—peace in my soul, joy in my heart. I can live free from sin by His grace! Nothing in this world can touch the benefits that the Lord gives. His mercy is "from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." "Bless ye the Lord all ye hosts: ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure...Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Christian love,

—Sis. Krista Clark

CA—Dear Saints: "Oh How I love Jesus!" This is still my testimony. I just wanted to thank the Lord for a great victory I received during my affliction. In the last few months, the condition of my body had progressed to the place where my legs had swollen to twice their size, with sores and bleeding and intense pain. Sometimes the pain would be constant for 24 hours. At times, it was so intense that I would cry out in pain for hours. I was not able to walk for any distance nor sleep in a bed for over a month. Many times, in answer to the Saints prayers, God would send relief. I was unable to attend service due to my condition. I didn't know how I could live much longer in that condition, and I began to ask God to take me.

Our afflictions have a purpose in our life, and we need to go before God to find that purpose. I had been searching my life and one day the Holy Spirit began to speak to my heart. He let me know that I needed to be more fervent in prayer, work on my attitudes and change my diet. I was obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and began to eat more vegetables, salads, chicken and fewer starches. The Lord sent a Divine healing touch to my body. The swelling went down in my legs, the pain ceased except on occasions. The skin returned on my right leg. I was able to sleep in bed again and I made all ten services of the Bakersfield Revival. "What a Mighty God we serve!"

I know what the Lord can do. I know He wants to do more for His people and use the gifts. It will take a fervent prayer life for us to get through to the throne of God. We need to get down to business for the Lord. Truly live a sanctified life; everything must be given over to Him. Be perfectly obedient to the Holy Spirit and pray without ceasing. I want to thank you for your prayers. I am not completely well. Keep praying for me, that God will finish the work

that He has begun in my life, and that I will glorify Him whether in life or death.

—Bro. Robert Sherman

(Brother Robert and some of the brothers have made a CD called " It's Praying Time." For information call. (661) 835-1482.)

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KS—Dear Bro. Willie and Sis. Neta: Greetings from Merriam to Guthrie. I thank the Lord for salvation and His blessings bestowed upon me, both spiritually and physically. Dealing with the cares and trials of life I thought, "Why me, why now?" Then I thought of the scripture

in John 16:33, Jesus was speaking to His disciples and said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This verse was very comforting.

Later on, I reread a poem/song that had been sent to me, titled, *In the Valleys I'll Grow.* (See page 12.) The trials and tests of life strengthen us, and they enable us to make Heaven our home. Please pray that I will continue to grow in the valleys.

—Sis. Gertrude Lounds



The Beloved Physician

By Bro. Ed Wilson

Adapted from a message delivered at Neosho, MO, September 2, 2007.

Luke is one of the Bible's fascinating characters. He was not an apostle, and in the New Testament he is never spoken of as one. There is no record that he preached. He didn't claim to be an eyewitness, like Peter, nor a theologian, like Paul. Whereas Paul had a Macedonian call, Luke "most assuredly gathered" his leading. He is called "fellow-helper," "fellow-servant." What he was instead was a man with a trained, analytical mind, which God used to provide us with the proof to establish our salvation. For Luke wrote as no other before or after has ever done. His work is absolutely vital to the church.

Colossians 4:14 has, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." The ancients said he was a medical doctor. Besides this, his writing shows scientific training. He describes maladies more diagnostically than any other Gospel writer, although there's no record he used medical skills to heal after he began his Christian work. Clearly he sacrificed his medical career to the work of spreading and preserving the Gospel. He wrote in purer Greek than any other New Testament writer, except perhaps Paul, and was expert in the use of that difficult and expressive language. He was Paul's companion on missionary travels—from Greece through Macedonia and Asia, to Jerusalem, then finally to Rome, where he stayed with Paul two years and where he probably was when Paul suffered.

Did Luke meet Jesus? How was he converted? We don't know. He may not have even been Hebrew. And yet there is that one intriguing passage in Luke 24:13 travelers on the

Emmaus road—Cleopas, our risen Lord—and whom? Has modest Luke concealed his identity? The third is not named, though the story makes our hearts burn like theirs so long ago. If not Luke, how could he have written in such detail what Matthew and John overlook, and Mark mentions in only two verses? Finally, we are told by the early church that he lived into his 80's and died peacefully.

He is the acknowledged author of Luke and Acts. Both Mark and Matthew wrote before him, and since the events of Jesus' ministry were so powerful and widely known, no doubt many others wrote letters and told stories, sometimes partially and sometimes inaccurately, of here an event, there a saying. We may be sure there was springing up around Jesus' ministry an aura of mystique, half legend and half fact, which was certain to change the focus of His central message.

This is the burden Luke addressed. His Gospel begins, "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." Luke 1:1-4. Theophilus means "friend of God." Is that someone's name, or does Luke use it as a term of endearment? In any event, Theophilus must have been educated and able to disseminate what Luke sent.

After traveling with Paul, Luke, being distressed by the vagueness arising concerning Christ's ministry, returned to Jerusalem to write his Gospel. He set about the task of interviewing, using the iron rule of accepting only eyewitness reports of spiritual people. His term "perfect understanding" could be restated "we've traced things until there is no possibility of error or inaccuracy." His phrase "most surely believed" shows the very soul of the man; he had caught the towering vision of the Gospel message as the transforming event of the world, and had the flame in his spirit to preserve and spread it to future generations. Luke's book contains many private conversations, like that of Mary and Elizabeth. He could only have known that from one of them. Consequently, Luke claims things for his Gospel none of the others do.

The book of Luke is not historically chronological. Luke groups his subjects into classes: Jesus with His parents, John Baptist, Galilee ministry, etc., hence we can't establish a timeline of Jesus' life by comparing Luke to the other Gospels. But how could we possibly overestimate the importance of his book? He wrote while Peter, James, and John were alive and could review his work. Very likely, Paul preached from Luke's Gospel, for there was the man himself, at his very elbow!

Then there is the book of Acts, which has been called "the fifth Gospel." The first four are of Christ, but Acts is the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. It starts where the book of Luke ends and bridges the gap between the crucifixion and the Pauline letters. It is not a "how-to" book like Galatians or Ephesians, for Luke was a recorder of events, and Acts is, in a sense, his journal. But how much poorer would we be without it! For while the prophets and our Lord spoke of the work the Holy Spirit would do, it is only the book of Acts that proves how those promises were fulfilled. Most of what we know of the Spirit's work in the New Testament church is from it. Without it we could scarcely grasp the weight of the letter books; we could not tell the powerful impact of the Holy Spirit in church affairs. And if some things Paul wrote are hard to comprehend now, how much more without the book of Acts? One may ask, "What did Peter or James do?" We cannot answer that question—for them or any other apostle—because they had no Luke.

Nor is that all; Acts is the bridge between Jew and Gentile. Paul said Jew and Gentile were one. Peter had his Cornelius; but Luke tells how it happened: of the ministers' meeting that freed Paul to the Gentile work, of churches established, of Diana of the Ephesians, the Philippian jailer, the reverberating Macedonian call, Mars hill, the final trip to Rome. Acts reveals the door to the Church of God.

In Acts we see how the church was formed and settled. Nothing was used to "promote the spirit of devotion" —there were no entertainments in worship service, little regard for office and none for ceremony. There was one key message: Jesus Christ can deliver you from your sins. When people experienced it, they didn't just have a change of religious sentiment. They changed in morals, eternal hope, and spirit; they had new hearts. This happened by the truth itself, witnessed to the heart by the Holy Ghost. The Gospel changed thousands, then nations. We know this because a diligent man named Luke wrote the book of Acts.

Luke was not an apostle, theologian, nor perhaps even a preacher. He doesn't say much about God speaking directly to him. He was instead an educated careful recorder. And he wrote two books that changed the world. Do you hear the Master calling for modern-day Lukes, saints of spirit and devotion who care about coming generations and who will follow his footsteps to bless us and our children?

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In the Valleys I'll Grow

*Sometimes life seems so hard to bear
With sorrow, toil and woe.
It's then I must recall to mind:
The valleys were I grow.*

*Had I stayed on the mountaintop,
Avoiding valleys' pain,
Would I appreciate God's love;
Or spend my life in vain?*

*There is so much to learn each day.
Why things come as they do,
But of one thing I'm very sure:
The Christ will see me through!*

*How little now my valley seems
As look I to Christ's cross.
It spells for me: SALVATION WON!
For satan, it spells: LOSS!*

*Forgive me, Lord, for my complaints,
When I feel very low.
Stay with me as my Risen Lord,
In valleys, where I grow.*

*Provide me with the strength I need,
The Spirit for each day,
To share Your Love with all around
And guide them in Your way.*

*Thank You for all the valleys, Lord
For this I'll always know;
While mountaintops are glorious,
It's valleys, where I grow!*

—Eugene F. Pennekamp

—Submitted by Sis. Gertrude Lounds

*May be sung to the tune of "Amazing
Grace."*

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