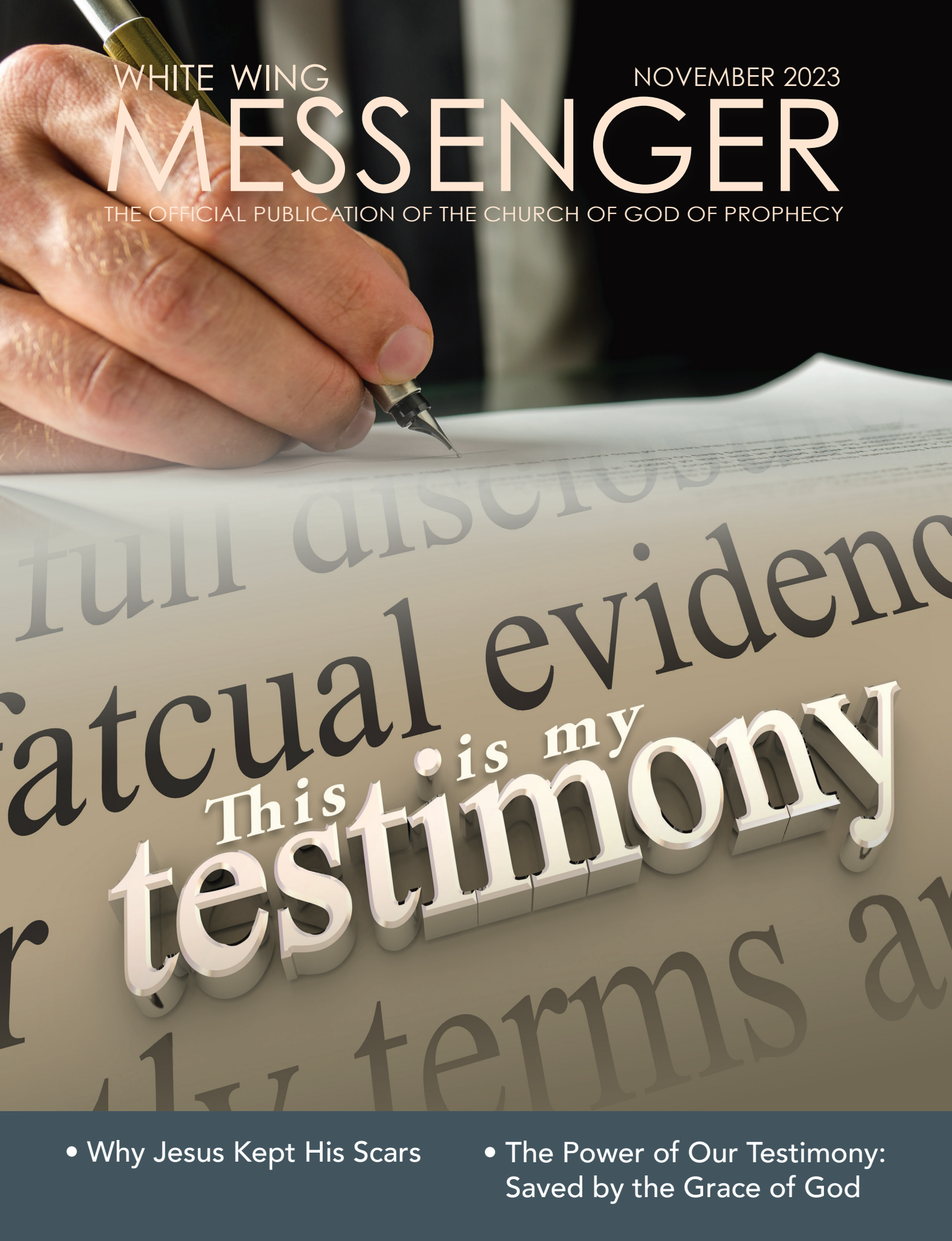


WHITE WING

NOVEMBER 2023

MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



• Why Jesus Kept His Scars

• The Power of Our Testimony:
Saved by the Grace of God

GLOBAL CHRISTMAS

In case you missed it, over the past 10 years I've been working in Global Missions, I absolutely love Christmastime. For me, all my senses are in full force. For instance, if possible, I will sit for hours at one of those homes that has programmed lights synchronized with music. I love walking into a house smelling all the baked goodies that only get made at Christmas, and then, after a year of waiting, finally getting to sink my teeth into them. I love the cold crisp air and, when we do get that completely random snowfall, making that first snowball. These are just a few of the examples I have for all my senses being happier at Christmastime. With sound alone, I've been listening to Christmas music since September.

In Global Missions Ministries, especially at Christmastime, we want our One Child Fund children and our national bishop families to not only experience all five senses of the celebration, but an extra sense of being remembered and feeling loved from their church family. Would you join us this year in sharing God's love by giving an offering to Global Christmas? You may designate your gift to go towards One Child Fund to give the children in our children's homes a Christmas meal, gift, and new clothing outfit. Or you can designate the gift to go to our national bishops just to give their families an extra blessing this Christmas.

Shelly

If you would like to help make Christmas special for our OCF children or our international bishops, we have a few different ways you can give your tax deductible gift.

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One Child Fund (*please circle one*): Bulgaria, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Mali, Myanmar, Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda, Ukraine, General Christmas

National Bishop (*write specific bishop, nation, or general*): _____

Please have donations in by
December 11, 2023.

Shelly Wilbanks
One Child Fund and Helping Hand
Ministries Administrative Assistant

WHITE WING MESSENGER

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

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About the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, worldwide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the brokenhearted. The organization has more than a million members and more than 10,000 ministers, worshiping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service

Vision Statement

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Mission Statement

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with passion for Christian union.

General Presbytery:

Tim Coalter: Presiding Bishop
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Clayton Endecott: Wider Europe and the Middle East
Benjamin Feliz: Mexico/Central America/
Spanish-Speaking Caribbean
Clayton Martin: Caribbean/Atlantic
Ocean Islands
James Kolawole: Africa
Tim McCaleb: Asia/Australia/Oceania
Gabriel E. Vidal: South America

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FEATURES

- 6** Testimony from Cuba: The Persecuted and Powerful Church
- 8** My Testimony
Penny Elliott
- 10** Why Jesus Kept His Scars
Hunter Roberts
- 12** This Is My Testimony: Nothing Wasted
Kimmy Jones
- 14** This Is My Testimony: The Season of Waiting
Tessa Dietze
- 16** This Is My Testimony: Restoring the Years
Verna Seager
- 18** Testimonies from the Next Generation in Wider Europe and Middle East

DEPARTMENTS

- 20** AMD—Our Lifestyle Is the Loudest Testimony
Albert Murza, MDiv
- 21** CM—The Power of Testimony: Echoing Him to the Next Generation
Bishop Shaun McKinley, PhD
- 26** CBL—The Power of Our Testimony: Saved by the Grace of God
Bishop Elias Rodríguez, DMin

COLUMNS

- 4** Facing Forward: This Is My Testimony
Tim Coalter, Presiding Bishop
- 5** Connections
- 31** In His Presence

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FACING FORWARD

This Is My Testimony

A central tenet of Pentecostalism is the power of testimony. It was common in the early days to incorporate a 'testimony service' whenever believers gathered for worship. In that setting, a typical Church of God of Prophecy testimony emerged:

I thank the Lord that I am saved,
sanctified, filled with the Holy Ghost, a
member of the great Church of God, and
on my way to heaven. Pray for me that I
will hold out to the end.

Today's testimonies often sound much different, but the purpose remains the same.

First, testimonies provide evidence of God's power to transform lives. When the woman at the well drank from the living water, it is recorded in John's gospel that her life was suddenly changed. She returned to her community, saying, "Come see a Man who told me all things that I ever did" (John 4:29 NASB). Scripture reads that many of the Samaritans of the city believed in him because of the words of this woman's testimony. When individuals share their stories of how they encountered the Savior and experienced his love and grace, it serves as a reminder that Christianity is not just a set of beliefs but a living relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the Living Water.

Moreover, testimonies offer encouragement to believers who may be going through difficult times or facing doubts. Through the years, saints have shared heart-wrenching stories of struggle but would quickly move on to the faithfulness of God. Often, they would reflect on the words of a song, such as the one penned by Andraé Crouch:

I thank God for the mountains, and I thank Him for the valleys
And I thank Him for the storms He's brought me through
For if I never had a problem, I'd never know that God could
solve them
I'd never know what faith in His Word could do
Through it all, through it all, I've learned to trust in Jesus...

Hearing how fellow believers have overcome challenges or found strength in their faith gives comfort and reassurance to others that they are not alone in their struggles.

In addition to encouragement, testimonies also inspire



Tim Coalter
Presiding Bishop

others to seek a deeper relationship with Christ. Testimonies serve as the saltshaker which seasons the atmosphere, creating a thirst in the listener for more of God. As someone begins to share about the realness of Jesus in their life, somebody is saying, "I want Jesus to be real to me." As someone testifies that Jesus is the best thing that has ever happened to them, something stirs in the heart of the listener, saying, "That's the Jesus I want! That's the relationship I long for! That's the experience I crave!"

Furthermore, testimonies foster community among believers by creating connections based on common experiences. When someone shares their story openly

and vulnerably within a church or small group setting, it creates an atmosphere where others feel safe to do the same. This vulnerability builds trust among believers as they realize they are all imperfect people seeking after the same perfect Savior.

Lastly, testimonies also play an essential role in evangelism. People are often more receptive to hearing about Jesus when they can relate to someone's personal experience. Your story provides a relatable entry point for conversations about faith and hope in Christ.

Don't ever think that your testimony is insignificant. The value of testimony to the Christian faith is immeasurable. It is your very own Spirit-empowered witness that God wants you to carry to the uttermost parts of the earth. Jesus said in Acts 1:8 (NKJV), "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me [*you shall testify of Me*] in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Isn't this what Peter and John were doing in Acts 4:13-20? They were speaking the things which they had seen and heard. They were testifying!

This is my testimony from death to life
Cause grace rewrote my story, I'll testify
By Jesus Christ the Righteous, I'm Justified
This is my testimony, This is my testimony. . . .

If I'm not dead, You're not done
Greater things are still to come
O I believe. . . .

CONNECTIONS

Over 400 Complete Level II Certification in Nicaragua

August 18-20, 2023, International Children's Ministries partnered with the Church of God of Prophecy National Office in Nicaragua to offer its Level II Leadership Certificate training. Over 400 students gathered on the campus of the national tabernacle for this intense time of advanced training, worship, and fellowship. This is the largest training event hosted by International Children's Ministries in the past five years.

For three days, the participants received instruction in nine areas of leadership development with specific application for those serving in ministries to children. Sessions included topics such as planning, organizing, directing, and staffing the children's ministry—with practical application given through activities such as developing a mission and vision statement, setting goals/objectives, preparing a budget, designing a ministry calendar, and screening volunteers. Additional sessions were taught on ways children's ministry leaders can support their pastors and how to improve their communication skills. "The Value and Spiritual Life of Children," the Church of God of Prophecy Assembly-approved statement on children, was presented, as well as an opening session on ministry calling.

"Our team was impressed by the organization of this event and the level of engagement of the students of Nicaragua," said Dr. Shaun McKinley, international director of Children's Ministries. "Their excitement for this ministry and commitment to growing as leaders is evident. Our Nicaraguan church is passionate, growing, and on fire for Jesus. Our team is honored to be a part of what God is doing here."

National Director Yolanda Reyes Taleno, along with the support of her husband and national team, leads this energetic ministry equipping over 1,100 churches that are organized in 13 regions. Over 11,000 children are served weekly through the ministries of the Church of God of Prophecy in Nicaragua. In 2022, outreach events reached over 3,000 children, with an additional 1,180 attending Bible Clubs weekly. National Bishop Jose Esteban Somoza called the meeting "a historic gathering of the largest number of young leaders in the nation's history." In his closing comments, he cast a vision to see 1,000 children's ministers trained in 2023.

The training team for the Nicaragua Institute included Bishop McKinley, Abigahil Avila (International Children's Ministries Spanish-language trainer), Theri Santos (child evangelist and founder/president of New Generation Foundation), and Bishop Ernesto Velasco (North Carolina). Throughout the training, special music and worship were provided by local leaders and children. A number of Spirit-filled, spontaneous sessions of prayer occurred throughout the training as well, with participants worshipping, praising, and weeping.

Tentative plans are to return to Nicaragua in the coming year to provide additional training such as the Level I Certification program, as well as International Children's Ministries' Train the Trainers.



TESTIMONIES FROM CUBA:

THE PERSECUTED AND POWERFUL CHURCH

ELYANA | CUBA

Likewise, all who want to lead a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12 CSB)

"... glorious times for those of us who lived in Carreño, Arroyo de Guano, La Finca de Ricardo Valdés, the wooden house of the Los Posada family, Montequin, Entronque de Ovas... incomparable places, unforgettable moments... but it all happened before they took away what was ours..." my Aunt Loyda, the youngest of her siblings, tells me carefully and as if she were living that moment.

"This being the case, since 1955 these communities were reached for Christ by one of the pastors of that western province, the servant Leoncio Linares," said Deacon Nilo who, at that time, experienced suffering alongside the family of our beloved pastor, Eugenio Momblás. He was the son of the precursor and missionary of this evangelistic work carried out in the 1950s, a historical period for this Cuban family.

"Services were held outdoors..." whether in urban localities or in the fields populated by a few traditional families who since then have moved from one place to another looking for a better salary for their work for the support of the humble [poor] family that characterized the peasant population. "After two years Pastor Linares acquires a property with the purpose of building a church..." This is a dream come true—one that stands out in the encouraging but reflective narrative, teaching us that God's plans are perfect.

My grandparents testified to their children, and they, in turn, took advantage to echo the facts when the





family gathered together. I remember them time and again. "... The anointing of the Holy Spirit was poured out on 45 young people." From these arose evangelists and pastors with gifts of healing, faith, and knowledge. This event would prepare the growing and relevant church for the time of trial that came upon them.

"In 1961 the authorities intervened in the newly built church and closed the worship services in order to use it as housing even to this day. . . ." On October 14, 1960, the Urban Reform Law was enacted, which made those who lived there the owners of the home. According to the Housing Act that came into force at that historical moment, you could not have two properties, since there were many displaced. Although the law currently has modifications in this regard, the fact is reiterated that it does not take into account the acquisition or construction of churches within its established decrees. Therefore, I quote the comment of journalist Sergio N. Candido, recorded in El Nuevo Herald, when he shares updated information about the situation that the Cuban church is going through: **"The Church estimates there are some 2,600 makeshift churches on the island, mostly in rural areas."** And this number is increasing, I add.

Pastor Linares and Pastor Eugenio were subsequently imprisoned on the testimony of false witnesses seduced to betray the trust of their neighbors. The pastoral family, disadvantaged by their skin color and belief, were also accused of forcing the members of the congregation to tithe. This last argument did not have "a place" in the two courts held, but they still expected a prison sentence of two years—while two young daughters waited for their father at home, and a wife and mother was left without support. A congregation of more than one hundred baptized believers of the main church, not counting those in the different areas that exceeded this number, were witnesses of divine protection in difficult times and accompanied their leaders in prayer, preaching in the

cities, and gaining new places that have remained to this day. We await permission from the legal provision regarding the construction and legalization of churches where all those who believe, who come to live together and in harmony as the people of God, benefit.

The word of God tells us,

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "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." (Mark 10:29–30 NIV)

". . . In secluded places we keep vigil to take refuge in the presence of God through the study of his Word," emphasizes my aunt, who does not let me finish and close the subject. "One night when we were walking back because there was no transportation to take us at that time of the morning, the police arrested us for being suspicious. We women prayed quietly, and we were found innocent."

My grandmother remarked, "Your Aunt Elena and other ladies moved not only to this province,



but we left our territory to preach in other places, even to mountain dwellers in hut houses—houses in unfavorable conditions, exposed to danger—since freedom of religious expression does not exist. We can do it now only under the positive response [approval] of the relevant authorities that allow us to exercise this activity under their regulations.”

I quote the updated Report of the Social Rights Observatory (ODS by its acronym), “On December 18, in accordance with the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, as amended, the Secretary of State placed Cuba on the Special Watch List for having engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom.”

From our congregation, law school graduates were summoned by the corresponding authorities to carry out professional work in the so-called popular consultations in favor of the Decree Law that promotes the new “Family Code” where a gender ideology that opposes the biblical principle is implemented. Their desire is that we, as believers, will adapt to the changes made by human laws for society and not take into account the divine law for man, in which we profess and believe. In this case, they found two young leaders who saw an opportunity in this whole difficult process. . . . “They suggested that we not explain every point, much less give in-depth explanations; in other words, talk about the general issues, and for those issues that, as Christians, we do not agree with, don’t even mention them.” Neither were they to make clear a definitive negative response to [the Code’s] open approval of sexual immorality in our country. In general church-state meetings, voting during the drafting of said Code, among other events they attended, Christian professionals whose work is related



to the issue of redefining the constitution of the family [but who stand against it] are threatened and forced to leave their workplaces and work activities related to the subject. They are directly frowned upon and branded as homophobic believers who oppose and denounce such an immoral attitude not only from the church pulpit but also from their position in society.

“Now my work is limited to other jobs such as advising for informative television programs, otherwise I will have to face other penalties and consequences for being on the opposing side that does not adjust to current times but wants to be salt and light in the world. . . .”

That is my testimony, since as a professional of general and social psychology in my country, the social purpose of my profession has been directly intertwined with the political-ideological work, which encourages collaboration and acceptance of this seductive and aberrant proposal towards society. I add, “While I was working as an occupational psychologist six months ago, I suffered from bullying by my colleagues, superiors, and mainly by one of the members of the LGTB movement . . . not only me, but also a sister of the faith who performed

other duties. In my case, I was reprimanded for my ‘abnormal attitudes’ in front of an entire assembly of workers. We both decided over time, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be in a better place and continue to fulfill our mission as a church. . . . First, I quit. Then she told me that she had resigned because the time had come. . . . I don’t give up. As long as I am working in the place that God has placed me, I do not approve nor do I join in the conspiratorial strategy against the original design of the family.”



Penny Elliott has been married to her husband, Dave, for 32 years. They have one son and one granddaughter. Penny works full time as a quality control technician for a company that makes medical devices. She enjoys volunteering at her church and spending time with her family.

PENNY ELLIOTT | SELLERSBURG, INDIANA

My Testimony

Signature: _____

As a young child and through my early teens, I was sent to Sunday school and church on a church bus that came by my house every week. My parents did not attend regularly. They would only go if I was in a children's program and on holidays. My parents believed in God; they were good parents and raised me with good morals. But they did not talk much about Jesus or God, and I always felt like something was missing in my life.

As I grew older and got married, I had a son and raised him the same way my parents raised me. He got married and had a daughter. We always made it through good times and bad times. But even though I had a good husband and family, something was still missing in my life.

When my mom (who, other than my husband, was my best friend) passed away, I did not deal well with it at all. I had an aunt who kept checking on me and asking if my husband and I would go to church with her and my uncle. After she had asked several times, we finally agreed to go with them. It was the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and my life has not been the same since that day!

God kept drawing my husband and me back to church. We went every Sunday. By June 7, 2015, we both had repented and had asked God into our hearts and life. We were baptized on that day and have never looked back. We both have a close relationship with Jesus and love to worship and share the good news with other people, especially with our son and his family.

After thinking back, I realize God was there all the time. He was the one who made a way each and every time.

I know my testimony may not be as dramatic as that of many other people, but I want to let others know that you do not have to have had a bad childhood, gotten in trouble, or done something terribly wrong in your life to need to know the Lord and Savior. We all need to know the Lord. It is when you have a close relationship with Jesus that you feel complete! There is nothing else—people or material things—that can give you this feeling in your heart. He is the only one who can give you grace, continuous love, joy, comfort, and peace! Thank God for giving up his only Son, Jesus, for our sins! Those who believe in him will have everlasting life and love.

Thank you for reading my testimony. Make the choice to love God and love people.

My Purpose

Rita Ford

Sometimes at night I go outside and look up at the stars. They are so beautiful, and God put each one where he wanted them to be. He formed images with them. I feel like the stars are there for a purpose. God uses them to guide us. Sometimes their purpose is just to help us to look up. He helps us to know what we need—to look up every day and know that we have a purpose just like the stars. He helps us to find that purpose. He teaches us to never give up, no matter what it is we are going through, because there is a light at the end. In addition to placing the stars in the sky, he has put each one of us where he wants us to be. Second Timothy 1:9 reminds us, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."



Why Jesus Kept His Scars

It was dark. There was no multitude. It was quiet. There was no rejoicing. It was lonely. There was confusion. It was time. It was the night that Jesus would be arrested. In the Garden of Gethsemane, just after the Last Supper, Jesus had invited three of his closest disciples to pray with him. He knew what was soon to take place. He was sorrowful and troubled. He asked his Father for a way out. Judas, once known as a disciple, would now be known for his betrayal, for selling Jesus out to the ones who wanted him dead. They arrested the Christ.

Over the next eight hours, Jesus would stand trial six times. He went before Annas; guilty. Caiaphas; guilty. The Sanhedrin; guilty. He then went before Pilate; innocent. Herod; innocent. Pilate once more; innocent again. The score, if you will, was three to three. Pilate, trying to satisfy local politics, gave the final decision to the crowd which had gathered outside. They raised their voices to give the verdict... guilty. They chose death.

Jesus was mocked and beaten. A crown of thorns was placed upon his head, and 39 times he was lashed with a whip laced with metal and glass that tore flesh from bone. It was gruesome. He was made to carry his own torture device, the cross. Already weak and severely bleeding, he ascended Golgotha—the place of the skull—Mount Calvary. He was then nailed to that cross and suspended in the air alongside two others. For three hours, darkness fell over the land. Jesus' lungs began to fill with fluid, whereby, he asphyxiated and finally took his last breath. The veil in the temple was torn, and the Savior of the world was dead.

A soldier took a spear and stabbed Jesus in between the ribs into what is now known as the paracardial sack that encapsulates the heart and lungs. Blood and a liquid like water flowed out of his side. There was no doubt about it. He was dead. He was placed in a tomb where no other body had lain before. It was sealed with a stone and a signet. Soldiers stood guard outside. "One day, two days, three days had passed. Could it be that Jesus had breathed his last?"



Hunter Roberts is a licensed minister in the Church of God of Prophecy and was raised in Mooreville, Mississippi. After completing his degrees in International Finance and Spanish at Mississippi State University in December 2021, he relocated to Cleveland, Tennessee to serve in the North America General Presbyter's office. Following the 2022 International Assembly, Hunter transitioned into the role of executive assistant to Presiding Bishop Tim Coalter. In addition to serving in this capacity, he is also now pursuing a master's degree in Church Ministries from Pentecostal Theological Seminary.

HUNTER ROBERTS | OFFICE OF THE PRESIDING BISHOP EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Yet on the morning of the third, the earth shook, the soldiers fainted, and the stone rolled away. Jesus, gone. The tomb, empty. Hell, defeated. Mary Magdalene and Jesus' mother had gone to the tomb that morning when an angel appeared before them and shared the impossible news. He was not there! Over the next few weeks, Jesus would appear to each of his disciples. By the 20th chapter of John, all but one of the disciples had seen the risen King with their own eyes—all but Thomas. You can read the account below:

But Thomas (called "Twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with them [the other disciples] when Jesus came. So the other disciples were telling him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe." A week later his disciples were indoors again, and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at my hands. Reach out your hand and put it to my side. Don't be faithless but believe." Thomas responded to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (John 20:24-29 CSB)

Jesus had been healed—completely restored. God himself had been raised from the dead. Yet despite having conquered death, his scars remained. Why? Simply put, **a scar is a wound that has been healed and now serves as a story to be shared.**

Jesus' scars remind us that he was a man. He suffered injury just like you and me. His scars indicate that God himself was willing to endure hardship. It is because of his scars that we can say, "We do not have a high priest that cannot be touched by our infirmities, but He was tested just like we are yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He experienced the same

things in this life that we do. He cried. He was angry. He celebrated. He rejoiced. He labored. He was hurt. He was ridiculed. He was tempted. He gets us. His scars allow us to relate with him, but more importantly, they show that he has a story to tell. He carries his scars to remind people of the story which I relayed at the beginning of this article.

His scars give substance to his story. If the holes in his hands and the mark on his side had disappeared, someone could have argued that the man on the cross must have simply been Jesus' stunt double, a counterfeit, or a trick. However, there was no denying it. Having seen the holes in his hands and the wound in his side, there was no refusing the legitimacy of the resurrection.

Our past problems preach, our trials teach, and our scars share the story of God's healing for future generations to know. Your scar is a wound that has been healed and now serves as a story to be shared.

In Revelation 12:11, we read that we are made overcomers by (1) the blood of the Lamb and (2) the word of our testimony. The blood of the Lamb is literally HIS story, and the word of our testimony is ours. Through the sharing of his scars and his story, joined with the sharing of our scars and our stories, Scripture says we are overcomers.

We, empowered by the Spirit, have been commissioned with the charge of evangelism. As ambassadors of hope, we have been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. When we see those who are hurting and lost, we point to his hands. We testify of his work. We point to one we know can heal, liberate, and restore. Then, when asked how we can know that to be true, we point to the scars of our own—wounds now healed—giving hope for the afflicted.

This is my testimony: once wounded and despairing—now healed and made whole. Don't believe me? Just look at my scars.



This is my **testimony:** Nothing Wasted

The principal opened the door to what would be my classroom, and I stepped through it with such gratitude that I almost cried. This would have been awkward, so I kept the emotions at bay. My interview for this job was God-ordained, and that was acknowledged by the principal interviewing me. He explained that he got goosebumps when he saw my name come across his desk because he received a phone call with that same name as a suggestion. He knew I was the person for the job. This was 20 years in the making. I had taken a 20-year detour to get to my classroom, and I am so thankful for every moment of that detour.

I had gone to Lee University intending to be a music education major, but poor choices as a

young adult led me on this long detour. Despite my failures, God was, and still is, faithful and patient in leading me to what glorifies him.

In 2002, I married my best friend and an amazing man, Jeff. My daughter and I moved to Middle Tennessee where our life as a new family took shape. I had to find a career path, and my prayer request to our local church for a new job led me to a receptionist position at a media company in a neighboring town. (The president and CEO happened to attend our local church.) On this job, I was introduced to VHS label layout to help the art department, and I loved it. Over the next few years, I worked my way into different areas of the company, but my destination was in the art department doing something I would



Kimmy and her husband Jeff have been in ministry together for over 20 years, primarily working with youth. Together they have two children, Courtney (26) and Jaden (12). Kimmy, Jeff, and Courtney are public school teachers in Sumner County, Tennessee. Kimmy leads worship at her local church, alongside a team of diverse leaders, and enjoys mentoring young people in music ministry. She loves spending her summer break at youth camps in Tennessee.

KIMMY JONES | HENDERSONVILLE, TENNESSEE

have never dreamed of and never knew existed as a career path. I learned prepress and graphic design. I spent 11 years working with these folks who taught me about graphic design, vendor expectations, packaging, and all things media and print. Some days were very difficult, but I look back and see where God was teaching me through every season of my time with them. I will be forever grateful for that training ground and the people God placed there.

In 2011, I stepped away from full-time work to stay home with my newborn son. It was a decision made with much prayer and a lot of cutting out of extras from our budget. I did freelance and contract work from home until my son started preschool. I picked up a part-time job at Office Depot's copy and print department to help supplement our income. Many lessons were learned there, as well. One day as I sat on the floor stocking post-it notes, I wondered what in the world was I

doing with my life. Post-it notes? I was praying and complaining. God did not show me in that moment, but later I would see how he used that time to show me how to minister to people in different seasons of life. Working in the print center meant I printed baby announcements, funeral programs, graduation invitations, birthday invitations, divorce papers, and the list goes on. You can imagine that the emotions behind each of those items were present when customers brought their needs to the store. God used those moments. He taught me how to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn. When my son went to kindergarten, I found my way back to the print and media world. I worked in the art department of a printing company in Nashville, where I learned even more

about the industry. I enjoyed the learning process so much.

The desire to teach resurfaced a couple of years into my working in Nashville. The long drives into the office would give me a lot of time to pray and petition God about this desire and what I was supposed to do with it. Then COVID hit hard in 2020. It was during that time that I learned about an opening to teach digital arts through a teacher who had once taught with my husband. As soon as I heard about it, I emailed the vice-principal and asked about the position. There had not been an opening to teach in this career pathway through CTE (Career and Technical Education program) in over a decade. I had been patiently waiting, but as time passed, I had all but given up. Then the time came, and the door swung wide open. I completed all the application requirements and became a CTE teacher, and this new journey began.

My husband and I have been in youth ministry for over 20 years. God used every bit of what I have learned over the last 20 years in ministry and in the industry to prepare me for the classroom. If ever Romans 8:28 has been evident in my life, it is through this testimony. He took a broken mess of a young girl, ordered my steps, and used the detour to prepare me for the classroom destination. For Jeff and me, teaching is our calling. It is not just a job. It is not separate from the ministry we do in or through the church. It is all sacred to us. Every moment is an opportunity to live out our life in Christ. We may not be able to preach the gospel with words in our classrooms, but we can certainly live it out and shine bright for Jesus in how we respond and care for our students. My testimony is that God is faithful, and a life redeemed through Christ is never wasted. Every season has something to teach us. If we trust God, he will order our steps. This will lead us to the purpose he has for us to benefit and serve the body of Christ and to glorify him.



This is my **testimony:** The Season of Waiting

In three of the Gospels, we read about Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue and the father of a 12-year-old girl—his one and only daughter—who is sick and dying (Matthew 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56). His heart must have been broken; he was desperate and in need of a miracle. He could not sit back and watch his beloved daughter die. His love and the urgency of the situation led him to Jesus. He had heard of Jesus; the news had traveled fast of his many miracles. With hope and the only option left, he went to the crowd to get Jesus’ attention. In the Gospel of Mark, we read that Jairus fell at Jesus’ feet and begged him earnestly to heal his daughter who was about to die. He pleaded for Jesus to come and lay his hands on her because he believed then she would be healed. Jairus believed in Jesus. He believed in the miraculous touch of Jesus—a touch that could change

everything; a touch that could restore; a touch that could heal; a touch that could renew; a touch that could bring life. Jairus was a man who ran to Jesus in need—in desperation, in brokenness, in loneliness, in despair, in pain, and in worry. With faith and humility, he fell to his knees begging Jesus for his powerful touch to save his daughter.

I feel the pain. I feel that desperation. I feel the brokenness. I feel the loneliness. I feel the hope of that touch—the longing of that touch and the anticipation of the outcome of that touch of Jesus that can change your world, your situation, your everything.

My husband and I suffered from infertility for many years. We got married young and knew we wanted to have children, but we never imagined the big storm that was waiting behind that next step in our marriage. The desire to get pregnant



Tessa and her husband (Johannes) live in Germany where they serve locally and in Europe as Youth Ministries Directors for Wider Europe and Middle East. They have been blessed with three miracle children.

TESSA DIETZE | LANGEN, GERMANY

and have children seemed natural. The idea itself was joyful and exciting. At first, we did not think much of it when our plan was not being fulfilled within our timeline. We watched patiently as friends and family were having babies. Then came doctor checkups followed by more checkups and procedures and hospital visits. The idea of having a family suddenly seemed so far away, even unattainable. Doctors could not give us clear answers, nor were treatments working. We spent nights in prayer. We fasted. We pleaded with the Lord. Elders, pastors, and bishops from all over Europe laid their hands on us as we sought out Jesus in our own despair. Unanswered prayers, pain, disappointment, and simply not knowing filled our days and our minds. We knew God had a plan. We knew God had greater thoughts than ours. We trusted him in our storm. In our valley, Jesus was closer to us than ever before. We felt seen by Jesus and knew a different season would come, but we did not know if that new season would include children. Our prayer was for the Lord to take the desire for children away if that was his will for our lives. But the pain remained. The longing remained. The brokenness remained.

Over time our friends did not have just one baby, but they had several while we were still waiting—waiting for our miracle; waiting for our touch; waiting for our turn.

Jairus walked up to Jesus, pleaded with him, and Jesus agreed to go to his home. Jesus was pushing through the crowd when he suddenly stopped. Many people had touched him, but Jesus knew someone had touched him with great faith. Jesus knew someone had received their touch of healing. He asked, “Who touched me?”

Jairus must have felt annoyed by that question. He probably wanted to persuade Jesus to move on. “Please, let us continue to my daughter. She is dying. I am in need. I am desperate. Who cares who touched you?” But Jesus cared, and Jairus had to wait.

Oh, the season of waiting! The season of waiting can make or break you. The season of waiting can bring so much life and so much

restoration if you allow Jesus to take over and you trust his timing—trust his authority, trust his call. After three years of waiting and trying and having weekly doctor appointments, we finally received the great news that we were pregnant. What a joyful moment for us and our families! We shouted with joy; we knew we wanted to give God all the glory for this moment. But the joy only lasted a few weeks. Shortly after we found out about the pregnancy, we miscarried. We had two miscarriages in one year. For a short moment we felt Jesus turn in our direction as though he was coming for our healing. He was headed our way. We knew everything would be good now . . . until the crowd stopped, and we watched once again as others received their miracles and touches. In complete brokenness and disappointment, I recall lying in bed and wondering what was next. How much pain did we have to endure? How much longer did we have to fight? What was God telling us? Were we not meant to be parents? While waiting on the side lines, Jairus was informed that his daughter had passed. As he watched someone else get their well-deserved miracle, he was suddenly not in need of one anymore. It was too late; his daughter was gone. Jairus must have been crushed—in anguish, disappointed, upset, hurt, even offended.

Suddenly Jesus spoke to Jairus: “Do not be afraid any longer; only believe [and trust], and she will be made well” (Luke 8:50 NASB).

Jesus spoke to me in my desperation. I fell to my knees in my apartment in full despair and anguish, in need of a touch. And as I was kneeling, weeping on the floor, I felt Jesus embrace me. At first, I was upset; like a child in full tantrum, I was beating at his chest and questioning my agony and heartbreak. But Jesus held on tighter. He said he knew, he sees it, he feels it, and he gently whispered to me, “Do not be afraid any longer; only believe and trust, and it will be made well.”

I did not know nor believe that we would have children, but I knew Jesus was with me and

Continue on page 30



This is my **testimony:** Restoring the Years

Joel 2:25 states, "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you."

I love this verse of Scripture. You see, when the Lord sent in this great army because of the wrongdoings of the people, it affected everyone. When adults do wrong, it affects the children and destroys many things in their young lives as well. Such was the case in my life, from a tiny child upward, for many years.

When I was 22 months old, I went to live with my great grandparents, and my identical twin brothers, at around three months of age, were living with

our grandparents. Both sets of grandparents were on our father's side of the family. Our parents divorced and neither one raised us, but we were able to see each other sometimes because of being with grandparents on the same side of the family. However, when the boys were around five years old, our grandfather was diagnosed with cancer and our grandmother had a stroke. Thus, they were not physically able to care for the boys. Our father had remarried in Missouri where he was then living, and an aunt contacted him to let him know that he should come and get his boys to raise them because of his parents' health. He did come with his new wife and took them home with him, but only for one year.



Pastor Verna Seager has been ministering 49 years. Of those years, 32 have been spent pastoring and she has pastored the Monterey Church of God of Prophecy for 14 years. Pastor Verna is married to Walt Seeger who she calls her right arm. She and Walt made three trips to the COGOP orphanage in India to minister there with Brother Joshua Wijonamai. The Segers have two children.

VERNA SEAGER | MONTEREY, TENNESSEE

About this time, his wife became unhappy with the boys, so our dad was put in contact with a couple who could not have children and wanted to adopt. He proceeded to allow this couple to adopt the boys, and I and our family never saw them again.

Fast forward to adulthood. After many years of praying and searching to find my brothers, God answered my prayers. I was pastoring in West Virginia at the time, but I had gone back to Memphis, Tennessee, to visit my daughters who were grown and married with families of their own. While there, I received a call that my former workplace had gotten a registered letter for me and had contacted my sister-in-law who, in turn, contacted me. I went and picked up the letter, and my girls and I got together to open it. It was written as a case file with a contact number. I thought someone was trying to sue me, but I had no idea as to why. After calling the number, I learned it was the department of Missing Persons through the Salvation Army, and they had been searching for me for two years. I was told that a Ronald Sloan was searching for me and said he was my brother.

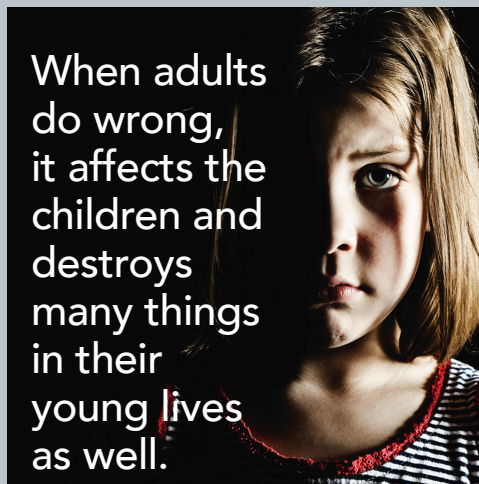
Shocked, I called the number I was given to reach him, but I had to leave a message. Traveling back to my home in West Virginia that afternoon was hard, but when I got there, I had four voice mails from Ronald. I immediately called him. I cannot explain what JOY I felt! It was my brother. He and Donald, as were their names now, lived within six miles of each other. I had made myself a promise that if I ever found them one day, I was going to see them the next day. So, I contacted some very dear friends, Dee Ann and LeRoy Scheuer, in Tennessee. LeRoy worked for Northwest airlines,

and I explained to them what had happened. They knew of my search for years, so both were glad to help. I needed a ticket to Kanas City, Missouri, for the following day, and I could not get to the bank that night. In 15 minutes, LeRoy called back with my flight and seat number. So, the next morning I was on my way to see my brothers whom I had not seen for 38 years. What a great time of joy and tears it was as we just started to get to know a little about each other after so many years of separation!

This journey essentially started when I was 15 years old and had gone to stay with my dad in Missouri for one year of my life. I was told that if I came, I would be taken to see my brothers, but that never happened. I wrote a letter to them, and my stepmother said she would address and mail it. Inside the letter, I put a small black and white picture of me. Unbeknownst to me, the boys' adoptive mom received the letter and tore it up. She was fearful that someone in the family would try to take the boys from her. But the small picture she stuck in a large photo album where it stayed for a number of years . . . until one day, Ronald's wife was looking through the album at pictures of the boys growing up. There, she found a small picture of a young girl who looked almost like her daughter. Telling my brother about it, he demanded answers. Not long after that, the search started. Never underestimate what God can use or do in his time.

My brothers and I now see each other when we can, and we call often. I can testify that God does restore the years that the locust has eaten, and he does it in great measure. I give God all the praise and glory! Never give up believing and praying because God answers prayers.

**When adults
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Testimonies from the Next in Wider Europe and

Jan Szlaur and his wife Teresa serve as local youth pastors at the COGOP Frydek-Mistek Church in the Czech Republic. They also serve on the team of YM Area Directors for Wider Europe and Middle East. This testimony is from youth and leaders who attended GET PLUGGED IN Youth Conference in Prague, 2023.

In the summer of 2023, I had the privilege of attending the Get Plugged In conference, an event in Europe for youth, young adults, and leaders. I was excited about the conference but did not expect that I would experience an incredible journey of healing. Little did I know that this conference would lead me to experience a miracle that would not only strengthen my faith but also inspire those around me.

The story began on a sunny Thursday, August 3, 2023, during one of the conference's free time activities—a friendly game of soccer. As I sprinted across the field, adrenaline pumping, I suddenly collided with another player, and pain shot through my right leg. I stood up and continued to play as I was really into the game.

As the hours passed, my leg's condition worsened. The pain intensified to the point where I could not put full weight on it, forcing me to limp with every step. The next day, the swelling was undeniable, and I knew I needed to seek medical attention to assess the damage.

At the hospital, X-rays revealed that my leg was not broken, but it was badly injured from my toe to my ankle. The doctor informed me that the pain would persist for an extended period, estimating it could take anywhere from three to six weeks to fully recover. I was given a regimen of medical treatments to aid the healing process.

As I left the hospital, I was both relieved that my leg was not fractured and concerned about the weeks of pain ahead. It was during this challenging

time that I truly understood the importance of the supportive community I had found at the Get Plugged In conference.

The leaders of the conference, upon hearing about my injury, showered me with encouragement and prayers. Their unwavering faith in God's healing power inspired me to believe that all would be fine.

The turning point came during the evening service that very same day. The speaker shared powerful testimonies of healing—stories of individuals who had been touched and experienced a miracle. As I listened to these testimonies of God's incredible work in people's lives, a fire of desire ignited within me. I could not help but think, "Could this be the moment when God intervenes in my life too?"

When the time for worship began, I decided to give myself fully to the Lord in prayer, seeking healing with all my heart. I closed my eyes, lifting my hands in surrender, and began to praise him. My focus was on him, and I was experiencing a great time in God's presence.

As the congregation worshipped and prayed together, something extraordinary happened. While I was serving others that came to the altar, I suddenly became aware of a sensation, or rather, the absence of one. The pain that had tormented me for hours, the pain that the doctor had said would persist for weeks, had disappeared. In its place was a remarkable sense of relief and freedom.

I could not contain my astonishment as I realized that I was standing, walking, and moving without any pain whatsoever. It was as if a heavy burden had been lifted, and I was experiencing a level of healing that I had not thought possible. I tested my leg over and over. When I realized the pain was gone, I worshipped loudly and ran to the stage to encourage everyone of God's power and love!

Generation Middle East



In the days that followed, my leg continued to improve at an astonishing rate. The swelling receded, and I could walk, run, and jump with ease. It was clear to me and to those who had witnessed my journey that this was a divine intervention, a healing beyond medical explanation.

This miraculous healing not only restored me physically but also deepened my faith in God's power and love. It is a testament to the extraordinary things that can happen when we place our trust in God, even in the face of adversity. It reminds us that God is present in our lives, ready to work miracles when we seek him with unwavering faith. This experience strengthened the bonds within our community and left an indelible mark on our hearts.

As I reflect on that remarkable August evening, I am reminded that miracles can and do happen. My journey from a painful soccer injury to a miraculous healing has left an enduring impact on my life, reinforcing my belief in the power of faith and the boundless love of our Creator. It is a testimony that I will carry with me, a reminder that, even in our darkest moments, there is hope, healing, and divine grace.

Julian Wetzel is 21 years old and serves faithfully in children's ministry at IJG Langen, a COGOP Church in Germany. This is Julian's testimony from the local youth camp, IMPACT 2023:

This year I had the opportunity again to attend both camp weeks, and I once more experienced how strongly and intensely God works in my life when I give him room to do so. At the beginning and during camp, two wonderful people gave me Bible verses that accompanied me throughout the two weeks: John 15:5 and Ephesians 3:14–21. Both passages fully fit into my current circumstances. I was overthinking some

decisions I made in the past and wanted God to reveal his plans for me. In camp I found greater joy and a much deeper peace in my life because I learned that I can surrender everything to God and entrust him with the planning of my life. No matter how big or small a decision is, it belongs to God, and I am able to praise him no matter what my circumstances are. I have experienced God in a new way through my prayer time, especially in praying for others. He has brought new and genuine love into my life, and I look forward to the things he still has in store for me.

Dorina Druschel, a 19-year-old camper from the Germany youth camp, IMPACT 2023, writes:

Ever since I was little, I suffered from many allergies which limited my quality of life, especially when it came to food. I was often in the hospital because of severe pain and other health problems. Allergies shaped a large part of my life.

I have been visiting the camp of the IJG Langen (COGOP) in Germany since my youth. Thus, I attended it again this year (2023) and was blessed by a life-changing experience. The theme of the camp was IMPACT, and I asked God the whole week to have a new impact on my life. On the last evening, we as a camp experienced a very extraordinary service in which the Holy Spirit worked mightily. Besides prophecies for individuals, we also prayed for healing. Before praying about my allergies, I asked God to work in me, even though unbelief may come. Then people prayed for my healing, and I asked Jesus to heal me from these allergies.

In the days after Camp, despite doubts about my healing, I ate foods that had previously caused me enormous pain, and my body showed almost no reaction. With time, the reactions became less and less, and I realized that Jesus had really healed me.

Continue on page 24



Our Lifestyle Is the Loudest Testimony

ALBERT MURZA, MDIV | SPIRIT & LIFE SEMINARY ACADEMIC DEAN

I was blessed to be raised in a Christian household. My father is the national bishop of Russia and a pastor of a local church. Growing up in Russia, a secular country, it was important to represent God and the church faithfully. People were watching. I am not talking about the people in the church. The people in the world were watching. You cannot imagine how many times I was told, “I thought that’s not how Christians are supposed to act,” after any minor mistake. Those would be the same people who would do worse things on a regular basis.

Why am I sharing this with you? I have been teaching the Old Testament course for Spirit & Life Seminary. During these eight weeks, I have been reminded of how many times the nation of Israel was persecuted. So many times, they were taken to a foreign land. They were surrounded by people who did not believe what they believed—people who had different values. Daniel comes to my mind as a good example of faithful service to the Lord. The story of how he was thrown into the lions’ den is one of the stories that we often teach in our Sunday school classes. There are a few things that I like to point out based on this story.

The first thing to note is Daniel’s good and respectful character. He was in a foreign land, but he still showed respect to those who did not agree with him. This is one of the reasons he was loved and trusted by the king. For example, the first thing that Daniel said to the king after spending the night in the lions’ den was, “O king, live forever!” (Daniel 6:21 NKJV). He could have started by saying something like “good try,” or “you see, I am better than you,” or some other phrase that would have shown that he had won, which he did by surviving the night. But Daniel chose to show respect to the king. He held no grudge. Many other examples of Daniel’s good character can be found in this book that bears his name. He was a man of quality character.

The second thing to note is that Daniel stayed faithful to God. Even though he was respectful and served the king of a foreign nation, he still knew that God YHWH is the only God to be served. This was the reason he ended up in the lions’ den. Daniel stayed faithful to God by continuing to pray even

when it was forbidden. He did not start a loud complaint in public about how he was being persecuted. Nor did he run to the king and tell the king that “my rights are being taken away.” Instead, he kept praying the same way he always prayed. He focused on his relationship with God.

Daniel also continued to share with others about how great God YHWH is. For example, right after he addressed the king, Daniel said, “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me” (Daniel 6:22). He was not afraid to testify about his God. But he did not just speak words. His lifestyle displayed the work of the living God YHWH. He used words only as a secondary tool.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is calling us to be his disciples. We are called to spread the gospel. Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Even though I do believe in sharing the gospel by speaking, there are many examples in the Bible when the word about our God was shared through acts and deeds. John writes, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, **let us NOT love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth**” (1 John 3:16–18; emphasis added). Scripture stresses actions over words.

This world is not our home. Cultures change. One moment, your culture might believe in God and support what you do, but the next, it changes and you may be rejected. I do not know your context and the situation of your particular culture. But I know one thing: God is faithful, and His word does not change. Daniel’s story is a good example of how the world can change its mind. One day you are accepted for being Christian, but another day, you are persecuted. Nevertheless, the world still needs to hear about the hope that God is offering. We are called to share the gospel. Your lifestyle is your loudest testimony. Even when you are unable to speak—it could be for many reasons, including persecution—your lifestyle will speak for you. My prayer is that our lifestyle will show the world the gospel of Christ.

The Power of Testimony: Echoing Him to the Next Generation

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God. (Psalm 78:4–7 ESV)

As a child, I can remember having a fascination with echoes. I have never particularly liked the sound of my own voice, but I can remember the wonder—some might say magic—of yelling out a word, phrase, or sound, and hearing it repeat itself back to me.

There is a Guinness record of the longest ever recorded echo. It occurred on June 3, 2012, and was produced and measured by Trevor Cox and Allan Kilpatrick at an abandoned oil tank at Inchindown, United Kingdom. The echo measured an incredible 75 seconds.

Seventy-five seconds. Pretty remarkable, isn't it? However, there is an echo that has spanned far longer and further than the one recorded in 2012. You and I are a part of an echo that spans generations. Every believing generation has something of value to pass along to future generations. Our experiences, stories, and values are intended to be passed along to the next generation in a divine echo that reverberates beyond our limited time on earth.

One of the most memorable days of my childhood occurred on June 5, 1991. That was the day my grandmother, Geneva McKinley, passed away at the age of 63. Although more than 30 years have now passed since that day, I retain a handful of precious memories of my grandmother. I remember the sound of her voice when she spoke, the melting warmth of her hugs, the wrinkles that



would show in her face when she smiled widely, and how she could yodel better than any Hollywood cowgirl! But I have some memories more precious than those.

I can remember how worn her Bible was. I remember the intensity of her voice as she prayed. And I can still hear her voice singing. At some of the most desperate, crisis moments on my spiritual journey, the sound of

her singing has often faintly returned to my ear:

O victory in Jesus, my Savior, forever!
He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;
He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him.
He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.¹

My grandmother was a Pentecostal preacher. She loved people and gave all she could to pursue the high calling of ministry, until she ultimately had nothing left to give and died at a relatively early age. My grandmother is just one reverberation in my echo.

When it comes to the echo of faith for our children, you and I are reverberations of his glorious gospel message. We are responsible to tell the next generation “the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done” (Psalm 78:4 NIV)

Sadly, current research suggests that we are in danger of this echo fading to silence. An overexposure to worldly philosophies, an increasingly hostile and secular culture, and failing church programming has resulted in the

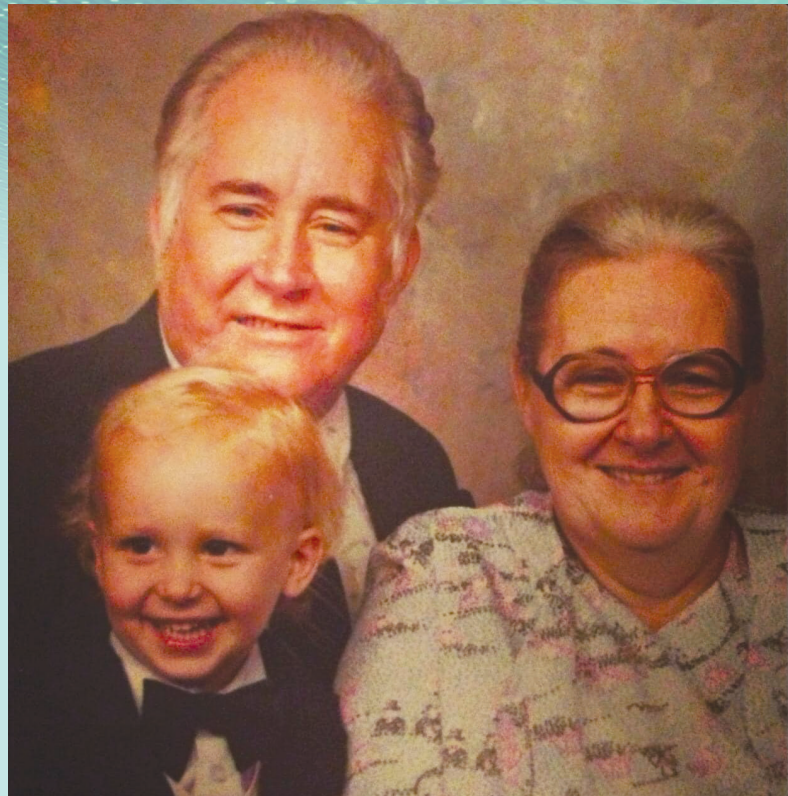
muffling of this echo of faith. Consider these statistics² of the students we presently or recently have served:

- Eighty-five percent of students from Christian homes attending public schools do not hold a biblical worldview.³
- About eight million twenty-somethings who were active churchgoers as teenagers will no longer be active in church by their thirtieth birthdays.⁴
- The majority of teenagers are incredibly inarticulate about their faith and its meaning in their lives. They find it almost impossible to put basic beliefs into words.⁵
- Teens are “functional deists”—they believe God exists, created the world, and set life in motion, but that he only becomes involved with them personally to make their lives happier or to solve problems.
- Many teens (including conservative Protestants) reject the essential doctrine of salvation by grace; three out of five believe people can earn a place in heaven if they are generally good or do enough good things for others.
- When deciding right from wrong in difficult situations, only thirty-one percent of believing teens said they turned to God or the Scriptures. Almost an identical percent said they decided based on whether it made them feel happy or helped them get ahead in life.

Looking on the spiritual horizon, Josh McDowell’s concern for young people was so great that in 2006, he authored a book entitled, *The Last Christian Generation*. He explained,

I realize the title of this book may be shocking. But the decision to call this *The Last Christian Generation* was not made lightly nor was it done for sensationalism. I sincerely believe unless something is done now to change the spiritual state of our young people—you will become the last Christian generation!⁶

I believe we find ourselves at a critical hour much like the people of Israel at the beginning of Judges. Joshua, Moses’ assistant, understood who God is and understood what God had done for him. He learned to stand on these truths and on his convictions as a minority among the spies in Exodus 13. Joshua would prove to be an obedient servant as he led the people of Israel to take possession of the Promised Land. He also boldly declared that he and his household would serve the Lord. The witness of Joshua’s leadership extended beyond his own death: “Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders



who outlived him and who had experienced everything the Lord had done for Israel” (Joshua 24:31).

However, the echo of faith broke down after that generation died. Somewhere along the way, parents, grandparents, and the larger spiritual community failed to instruct their children to honor God. Judges 2:10 records, “After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”

Will this, too, be a generation where the echo of faith fades to silence? Or will we rise up, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to proclaim loudly and clearly God’s purposes for this generation? Will we reverberate the divine echo of God’s truth so that it is renewed, roaring **louder than ever before** in a new generation of disciples?

In Genesis, Scripture does not record that Abel taught or preached to anyone. However, Abel preached as a silent witness of one living a righteous life. What was it that caused Abel to receive the echo of faith and live as a righteous man? Could it have been the witness of his parents—parents who knew the reality of God—the touch of his hand, the sound of his voice, and the authority of his Word? Was it parents whose faith in God was unshakeable because they knew face-to-face who God was and what God had done for them?

Like Abel, the echo of faith was passed on to me by the example of my parents in the home and in the community



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of the local church where they ministered. The faith of my parents and our church community was so strong that I genuinely believed that anything was possible with God. As a child, I wanted to know God for myself, serve him in the church, and understand the depths of his Word. When I prayed, I believed God heard me. When I asked Christ into my life, I knew that God had forgiven my sins and that I was no longer separated from him.

Who was it that impressed faith upon you? Do you know someone who knows God is real and demonstrated that unshakeable faith for you? What a blessing to have parents, loved ones, or members of your church family who modeled a confident faith! Our children need to see this type of faith demonstrated before them.

Whether or not Adam and Eve were the example for him, we know Abel chose to live a life in contrast to the world in which he was living. This is evidenced in the acceptable sacrifice that he brought to God when others brought less. While others rebelled against God, Abel turned toward him.

A witness lived out in obedience is just as powerful a one that is spoken. Abel chose to live his life as a light and, although his life ended at the hands of his brother, his silent witness relayed the echo of faith to the next generation.

Scripture does not record Abel ever being married or having children, but he did have a younger brother Seth, born after his death, who signified that God had "granted another child in place of Abel" (Genesis 4:25). As Seth grew, surely, he learned of the choices made by his older brothers.

As a result, the witness of Abel's life no doubt impacted Seth and others, even beyond Abel's death. Abel's silent witness would continue to testify even into the New Testament as the writer of Hebrews would say, "By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead" (Hebrews 11:4).

Abel passed on an enduring faith to the next generation. Wouldn't it be incredible for generations to recall our lives as marked by unshakeable faith in God? We too have this responsibility, whether it is to our own children, nieces,

nephews, the children of our church, in our classroom, or our community. Opportunities abound around each of us!

But how do we practically live as a witness? I believe we do so by being an example to this generation of children and sharing our faith story with them! Seth heard the echo of faith, and he told it to his son Enosh, who lived a life of worship.

The idea of one generation passing along a legacy of faith to the next generation is not my idea; it is God's, and it is proclaimed throughout Scripture. God designed it this way.

So, make an impact on the next generation by sharing your faith story. Tell it. Write it down. Record it as an audio or video message. And live it before them!

To get you started, consider sharing your testimony with your child or grandchild. As you craft your story, think of the key idea that you want them to remember. This is the main idea of your story. "Jesus satisfied my loneliness" or "Jesus gave joy to my life" are examples of this main idea.

Write it as if you were speaking it to them. Use short sentences with words that are simple and clear. Instead of saying this is your "testimony," phrase it as "the story of your life." Include specific examples that provide a snapshot of your life. As you consider your story, think of it in chapters. Chapter One is your early years and life before Christ. Chapter Two is why or how you came to know Christ.

Chapter Three should tell about your life since Christ and the difference he has made. Whether written or spoken, end with the final chapter, inviting them to join you in this faith adventure.

**A witness lived
out in obedience
is just as powerful
a one that is
spoken.**

¹ Eugene M. Bartlett, "Victory in Jesus" (Albert E. Brumley & Sons, 1939).

² Chris Sherrod, "Equipping the Next Generation," Christian Research Institute, updated July 31, 2022, Equipping the Next Generation - Christian Research Institute.

³ Nehemiah Institute, Inc. PEERS Trend Chart and Explanation (Lexington, KY: Nehemiah Institute, 2004).

⁴ Barna Group, "Twentysomethings Struggle to Find Their Place in Christian Churches," Barna Research Online, September 24, 2003, <https://www.barna.com/research/twentysomethings-struggle-to-find-their-place-in-christian-churches/>.

⁵ NSYR data cited in Richard Ross, gen. ed., *Transforming Student Ministry: Research Calling for Change* (Nashville: LifeWayPress, 2005), 6–8, 46, 114.

⁶ Josh McDowell and David H. Bellis, *The Last Christian Generation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006).

Testimonies from the Next Generation

Continued from page 19

God truly impacted my life in a new way, and I thank God for this healing. He has changed my life, and I can now tell others about his works and goodness.

Susan Morgan, a young adult from Germany, attended the Wider Europe and Middle East GET PLUGGED IN Youth Conference 2023. She writes:

My testimony for Get Plugged In is that I found a new friendship in Prague. I was able to experience that God is running after us no matter where we are in the world.

What touched me the most at Get Plugged In was that a young guy from the Czech Republic prayed for me and told me that God has great plans for me. He told me that I should trust God because God has seen what I have been through; I should trust that he loves me even though I will still go through many valleys. This touched me so much and, at the same time, made me think.

I am so glad to have been a part of get plugged in because it has brought me closer to God again.

Irina Kusnetsova, Ukrainian Youth Director

The GPI conference lit a fire in Ukrainian youth. When they returned to Ukraine, they began serving in their churches. Some acknowledged their gifts at the conference and are now developing and practicing them. The conference inspired us to organize and take part in evangelistic programs more than before. Also we started using different methods to study the Bible. For example, youth from Yellow Vody are learning the gospel of Nehemiah in great detail. Youth from Nikopol are studying the Bible in home groups, and youth from Nikolaev are studying the Bible using the book iLead.

Soon we will have Thanksgiving Day (Harvest) and the youth are preparing now. We have a lot to thank God for. Colossians says, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father

through him" (Colossians 3:17 NIV). In spite of circumstances, we have peace in our hearts, and we are developing plans for the future. Thank you to our COGOP family for support and prayers.

Ukraine Praise Report:

Despite the ongoing war and the many difficulties that the country of Ukraine is suffering, a total of 45 young people traveled for days to attend the GET PLUGGED IN Youth Conference in Prague. National Youth Director Irina Kuznetsova, National Bishop of Ukraine and Belarus Gena Kernazhytski, along with many local pastors and leaders worked diligently to get all young males permission to leave the country and participate in this event. It was a miracle in itself that so many were able to come, and we are grateful for all those who sponsored and invested financially to help them attend the conference. For our digital subscribers, these two videos show different youth groups that were TOUCHED at the conference and went home to their local communities where they started serving and sharing the gospel. To God be all honor and glory for the many miracles HE is doing in Ukraine! Please continue to pray for the nation and our churches in the war zone.

Video 1:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid0SfDBxiG1rzZNDu2J8LiQ96aP-MaW1SxgHRL2demaceYypaqNFBTjfc6fhHNGSDACI&id=100066462044279

Video 2:

<https://youtu.be/rGCC-Y-iBd8?si=RA6gxosbawGKvas>

Isaac Cuellar Yusunguaira moved from Colombia to Germany to marry his wife, Daniela.

Together they serve the local churches in Germany and many Spanish-speaking churches in Europe. They live in Egelsbach, Germany, with their beautiful daughter, Salome.

I am Isaac, and though my name is biblical and I was born into a Christian family, my focus has not always been on Jesus.

Born in Cali, Colombia, I was three years old when my parents, already pastors, were commissioned to open a work in Medellín, the



dangerous land of Pablo Escobar and his cartel. I was a typical pastor's kid who grew up hiding among the church chairs or secretly eating the communion

bread. Sunday was a day to attend church; without any discussion or question, we would dress up as if for a wedding and meet others for worship. Not knowing anything different, this was my life for many years. My parents have been great examples of faith and zeal for the Lord. They were always there for us, and my father always instructed us in the Word of God, although, to be honest, we sometimes got bored with so much reading and praying.

My Christian bubble consisted of the church, my friends, the Christian school, and even the music teachers I had. However, when I was 12 years old, I met another pastor's kid along with a new friend, and they began to show me a different world. Through music and chatting, we became close friends, but they were far from what could be called "Christian." As the text says, "Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Something like that happened to me. I started listening to neo-punk, being rebellious, and not conforming to what my parents told me. The biggest problem was with my mother. Unintentionally, because she wanted to protect me, she prohibited me from being with my friends, from listening to our kind of music, and from watching certain TV programs. I never noticed, but the more she prohibited me, the more I wanted to oppose her. I got angrier at her, and after a while, resentment entered my life.

At that time I realized that I did not really believe in God. I believed in the God of my parents, but he had not become real in my life. Then, when I was 15 years old, we had to move again, and I entered a school that had the reputation of receiving the worst youngsters, since other institutions would not accept me because of my behavior. At this school, a teacher called me to the principal's office. She began to inquire in a normal way about my life and my family

situation. She said it was a procedure they did with all the students. But the more she questioned me, the more I opened my heart, and I began to cry like a little child. God's presence filled the room and I felt two things: shame for my sin and how unworthy I was before his presence and, on the other hand, a love that was like fire burning in my heart. That day I received the Lord; I was free of my rebellion and my hatred towards my parents, especially my mother. The God I had heard about from afar had approached me, without asking and without being expected.

After this encounter, everything changed. I decided to give my life to Jesus and serve him with what I had. So came the songs, the evangelism, the desire to disciple and to be a youth leader; and while I was taking care of the kingdom, God took care of me and blessed me greatly with my wife, a German girl doing missions in Colombia.

In 2014, God totally changed my plans "without asking me" and decided to send me to Europe. Through a prophetic word by Rody Nelson, I received my Macedonian calling. Europe would be my new home and, since then, my heart has not stopped burning for this continent and for advancing his kingdom here. I have had the opportunity to see what God has done in the Church of God of Prophecy from Portugal to Poland. This is something wonderful.

Of course, everything has not been rosy; the suffering and pain of leaving family, the battles you live through alone and in faith with your family, are not easy. We have gone through situations that I would not wish on anyone. But if Christ himself suffered for me, I now receive the same burden and have the privilege of representing him not only in good times but also in hard times.

Now we dream of opening a work. We dream of a different Europe and a Germany healed from so much pain and depression. We dream of seeing the church flourishing amid the desert, and we dream of more workers coming to the harvest. May the Lord allow us to see this and much more.



The Power of Our Testimony: Saved by the Grace of God

Introduction

One of the distinctives of Pentecostalism is the orality of its liturgy. Testimonies have been an essential way of telling our stories. I remember the testimony section of our worship services which usually began with singing a song that could be translated, "Let's testify that there is joy and salvation for our souls, and we will overcome the enemy; Christ guides us in victory to the battle." After this song, people started spontaneously standing up and giving their testimonies that followed this pattern: "I thank God that he saved me, sanctified me, baptized me with the Holy Spirit, [someone who had been healed would testify of his/her healing], and is my soon coming King." Some people added that they thanked God for being a member of the great Church of God and that they were on their way to heaven. The testimony normally ended with an invitation to sinners to give their lives to Jesus before it was too late to get saved.

With this testimony, we were (and are) giving public evidence of the benefits received as a result of the redemptive work of Jesus on our behalf. As we can observe, this testimony is given in first person because we are testifying about our personal experience. This

testimony also highlights that Jesus is the one who saves, Jesus is the one who sanctifies, Jesus is the one who baptizes with his Holy Spirit, Jesus is the one who heals, and Jesus is our soon coming King. Thus, Jesus and his redemptive work at Calvary is the center of our testimony.

The interesting thing about this testimony is that, without being aware, we were attesting to the fivefold gospel or full gospel. This is the message that William Seymour preached in Azusa. Dr. Vinson Synan shares,

When Seymour did preach he emphasized the need to renounce sin and accept Jesus as personal Savior. He did not accentuate tongues or any other manifestation. Many times he told people that if they were to tell others about the revival they should tell them about Jesus, that He was Lord, and of the many people saved. He also encouraged all people to experience the power of God, turn from the world, leave the rigid traditions and legalisms of formal Christianity and instead seek after salvation, sanctification, and the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Two other messages heavily accentuated by all the different preachers at the Azusa Street revival concerned divine healing and the premillennial return of Jesus.¹



Bishop Elias T. Rodriguez was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He obtained a Master of Divinity degree from Church of God Theological Seminary (now Pentecostal Theological Seminary) in 2007 and a Doctor of Ministry from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 2014. Dr. Rodriguez served as regional bishop for the Southeast Hispanic Region prior to his appointment as a Center for Biblical Leadership (CBL) Instructor. He has taught extensively throughout the world. He has been married to the former Maria E. Vargas since 1983. They have three children.

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Additionally, in his book *The Last Great Conflict*, A. J. Tomlinson states, "To accept Christ in these days means to receive Him as savior, sanctifier, baptizer with the Holy Spirit, healer and soon-coming king."² These five cardinal doctrines of classical Pentecostalism are ingrained in our DNA and are acknowledged and affirmed in our personal testimonies as an assertion of our Pentecostal identity. In the words of Kenneth Archer, "Pentecostal identity is articulated by the Full Gospel, which places Jesus at the center of God's dramatic redemptive story."³

For this article, I want to focus on the first distinctive of the full gospel, which is salvation.

We Are Saved by the Grace of God

The first element of the Pentecostal testimony is salvation, and salvation is the dominant theme of the fivefold gospel and extends from initial salvation to glorification. That means, as Wolfgang Vondey states, that "the full gospel is soteriological from beginning to end."⁴

Pentecostal soteriology affirms that salvation is grounded on the centrality of divine grace. Paul told the Ephesians, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9 NRSV). That is, salvation is a gift from God, which we obtain freely by grace through faith in Jesus, and not by works or our own deeds, so that no one can boast. Martin Luther, after trying to justify himself before God through works such as penances and confessions, "discovered from Paul that one can stand in right relationship to God only on the basis of God's gracious activity in Jesus Christ."⁵

As we well know, because of Adam and Eve's disobedience, sin and death entered the world (Genesis 2:17). As a result, the image of God in them was marred and their relationship with him, with themselves, and with creation was negatively distorted. Adam and Eve's disobedience set off a series of events that not only

affected their relationship with God and each other, but also with creation. This act of disobedience is what we call *original sin*, which is "the condition of sinfulness which all persons share, and which is caused by the sinful origins of the race (Adam and Eve) and the fall (Gen. 3). Theologically it consists of the loss of original righteousness and the distortion of the image of God."⁶ Sin, death, fear, shame, and violence filled not only their lives but also the earth and the cosmos, disrupting God's good and perfect creation. But when God sentenced the serpent, he also made a promise: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). That promised seed was Jesus Christ—Immanuel, God with us—because he came to redeem us and restore us to a right relationship with God; as Paul said, God ". . . reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18). Salvation comes to restore man to his right relationship with God, with himself, and with creation. In the words of Darío López Rodríguez, we can "affirm that salvation is the liberation from all forms of physical and spiritual oppression to restore human dignity disfigured by sin, it points to reconciliation with God so that human beings are at peace with Him, with our neighbors and with the created reality, and has the new creation as its horizon."⁷

Since we were dead in transgressions and sins, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:1, we could not save ourselves. That is why it was necessary for God to begin the salvation process. Being dead in trespasses and sins, we could not respond to God, and this is where, according to John Wesley, prevenient grace comes into action. For John Wesley, prevenient grace

is the grace that God gives in preparation for salvation, through the conviction of sin and the drawing of the sinner by the Holy Spirit. . . . Through prevenient grace, God restores to the sinner the ability to make a favorable response to God. In freeing the will from its bondage to sin, God is, in effect, giving the sinner the ability to submit to and cooperate with grace that leads to salvation.⁸

Prevenient grace "brings us to God by creating our first sensitivity toward God, giving us that transitory conviction and activating our first desire to please God."⁹



That is what Paul means in Ephesians 2:1 when he states that we were once “dead in trespasses and sins.” We were dead because of our disobedience to God. In our dead state, we were separated from God and could not move towards God. We could not save ourselves, but God initiated our salvation through his prevenient grace and saved us by his grace.

Vondey expresses that salvation occurs at the altar where the penitent sinner responds to the saving action of God. For us who are Pentecostals, says Vondey, “the call and response of the altar as a fundamental ritual of Pentecostal theology is a core expression of the path to salvation,”¹⁰ and the altar is “a particular space and time of corporate worship, liturgy and ritual... which is ‘neither here nor there’ but which come into existence, as on the day of Pentecost, through the unexpected outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the participation of creation in response to the divine presence.”¹¹

This means that for us, any place can become an altar, whether at church, at home, or on the street, since what makes any place an altar is the presence of the Holy Spirit in that place. During our worship services, and especially after the sermon, we provide time and create space for sinners to receive salvation.

Salvation Is a Journey

In the Wesleyan-Pentecostal tradition, salvation is seen as a journey, also known as *via salutis*. We start this journey when our faith in God is activated by the Holy Spirit, leading us to repentance, justification, regeneration or new birth, and our adoption as children of God into the family of God.

The faith that leads us to salvation makes us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for our sins, and that he rose from the dead. Through faith, we place our trust in Jesus as our Savior. This faith is personal and confesses, as we said in the beginning, that Jesus is my Savior, he loves me, and he gave his life for me (Galatians 2:20).

God’s kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Paul says in Romans 3:23 that “. . . all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In Romans 5:12, he states, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned.” These verses speak of the universality of sin and the need for repentance for all human beings. Repentance is a necessary step in our reconciliation with God and “occurs when the sinner is convicted of his sins and turns from the life of sin to a life of godliness and faith in Jesus Christ and the grace he offers.”¹² Conviction

occurs when the Holy Spirit convinces the sinner of his error and gives him proof that he is guilty, convincing him of his error and his sin, and calls him to repentance (John 16:8–9). When this happens, the sinner recognizes that he has sinned against God, and he needs to confess his guilt with a sadness that comes from God (2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance will cause the sinner to turn from his sin and change his old life to a new walk of faith through the Holy Spirit in the company of the community of faith.

Justification has to do with our legal standing before God. Because we have all sinned against God, we are guilty and under his judgment. There is nothing we can do on our own to resolve this condition. When we repent of our sins, God forgives us through the merits of Jesus Christ and changes our position from condemnation to forgiveness. Justification by faith leads to peace with God. The apostle Paul says in Romans 5:1–2: “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.” In justification, God not only forgives the sinner, but he also declares him righteous.

The justified sinner is also regenerated or born again. Regeneration has to do with the believer’s new status before God. Jesus introduced the need of the new birth to Nicodemus (John 3:1–21), who came to him at night recognizing that the signs he performed validated that he was a teacher who had come from God. In response to Nicodemus’ statement, Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above” (John 3:3). This response left Nicodemus wondering how it was possible for a grown man to be born again. Nicodemus’ question is a reflection that the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). Jesus expands on his response to Nicodemus by adding that “no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (John 3:5). Regeneration produces a change of nature, consequently “a new principle of life has been infused; a new nature is born. The believer becomes a new person in Christ Jesus. He/she becomes a child of God begotten of the will of God (John 1:12, 13) not one of the children of disobedience and wrath (Ephesians 2:2, 3).”¹³ As a result, the new birth restores the “spiritual essence of the image of God in the believer . . . renews the mind that was once depraved and had no understanding of God . . . renews the will that once pitted against God’s will and would not seek God. . . . It is a renewal of the emotions that were once embittered and produced cursing.”¹⁴

The new birth puts us in the category of children of God and in a new family through adoption. Adoption is a



"judicial and personal act of God's grace by which those who were children of wrath by nature are received into the family of God. They are declared to be children of God and are numbered among his children with all the rights and privileges as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ."¹⁵ Through adoption we are made children of God as recognized by Paul: "... You have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:15–17).

The Spirit of God in us is the one who witnesses that we are children of God. Being children of God gives us the right to be joint heirs with Christ. This inheritance includes suffering for him and the expectation of our glorification with him. John declares that our adoption is a direct result of God's love for us when he says, "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 John 3:1).

Our Final Salvation: Glorification

We have already stated that in the Wesleyan-Pentecostal tradition, salvation is a journey. This journey brings us from the past and takes us to eternity.

Our final salvation includes not only our personal salvation but also the salvation of creation. Paul says in Romans 8:19–23:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Both ours and creation's longing for redemption will be realized when our beloved Jesus returns to earth. On that day the desire of all of us who throughout history await redemption will come true. Peter tells that "we wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is at home" (2 Peter 3:13). John tells us that he saw a new heaven and a new earth where God will make all things new (Revelation 21:1, 5). We will be among the "great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God, who

is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9–10). We will enjoy eternity with God as his redeemed people in the New Jerusalem giving glory to "him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5–6).

Conclusion

Pentecostals see salvation as a journey which we begin by responding to the prevenient and saving grace of God. Salvation occurs at the altar with the participation of the community of faith. Although when we receive salvation, we do not know how to articulate theologically what has just happened in us, we follow the example of that man who was born blind, who could not answer the questions of the teachers of the law who wanted to know how Jesus healed him. His answer was "... One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). In the same way, we testify, "One thing I do know, that I was lost, but Jesus saved me, and now I am on my way to the heavenly homeland." And that is our testimony, with which we let the world know about the great salvation that Jesus has given us.

¹ Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 60.

² A.J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (1913; repr., Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House, 1984), 102.

³ Kenneth Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 68.

⁴ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 37.

⁵ John A. Sims, *Our Pentecostal Heritage: Reclaiming the Priority of the Holy Spirit* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway, 1995), 67.

⁶ Donald K. McKim, "Original sin" in *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 197.

⁷ Darío López Rodríguez, "La salvación" in *Teología pentecostal latinoamericana: Una perspectiva wesleyana de verdades reveladas*, ed. Wilfredo Estrada Adorno (Garner, NC: Editorial UNILIMI, 2021), 134.

⁸ Sims, *Our Pentecostal Heritage*, 69.

⁹ Randy Howard and Tony Richie, *Pentecostal Explorations for Holiness Today: Words from Wesley* (Cleveland, TN: Cherohala Press, 2017), 35.

¹⁰ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 43.

¹¹ Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology*, 41.

¹² R. Hollis Gause, *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 8.

¹³ Gause, *Living in the Spirit*, 75.

¹⁴ Gause, *Living in the Spirit*, 76.

¹⁵ Gause, *Living in the Spirit*, 3.



The Season of Waiting

Continued from page 15

that he had great things for our family and our lives. So that day I decided that if I do not have children, then I will choose how I react and what I will do in my season of waiting. We decided to dedicate our time and finances towards the next generation. Our local youth group that we led became our children whom we loved, and still do love, with passion. We traveled Europe and visited the churches and ministered to young people. In that season of waiting, we found our calling. We found our passion for the Lord. We found the passion he placed on our lives to minister to the next generation. While we were still waiting for our miracle, we chose to use the “meantime” for his good! We chose to give him honor in our valley; we chose to trust his ways and not to fear. As Jairus received his touch—his miracle—his little girl received her spirit again and got to her feet. Jairus’ fight for the touch of Jesus was worth it. Many years later, after one of our first European youth conferences, we got pregnant with twins. The Lord breathed life into our babies and blessed us with a boy and a girl. The day we went home with our twins, we promised the Lord we would continue our ministry and would raise them in ministry. Wherever we go, they follow. Now at age seven, they love the Lord. Looking back, I am grateful for the experience of waiting on our miracle. I am grateful I met the Lord there in my apartment that day, grateful for the calling he placed on our lives, and grateful that he was always with us, even when we did not see it. Five years later, we welcomed another baby boy in our lives. I believe that miracle was for our twins. They prayed every day for one whole year for a sibling, and the Lord heard their prayers. He has gifted us three wonderful children, and we give all honor and glory to God who made them—created them and called them by name—and we lay them into his hands. This is my testimony. The season of waiting can birth new and better encounters with the Lord if your heart is willing to hear him tell you to just trust him.

Texas COGOP Pastor Awarded Bishop Enos C. Gardiner Scholarship



Pastor Kenneth M. Benjamin, Jr.

The Selection Committee for the Bishop Enos C. Gardiner Scholarship announced Kenneth M. Benjamin, Jr., as the recipient of the Bishop Enos C. Gardiner Scholarship. The scholarship amount is \$2,500.00 and represents the Fund’s inaugural award. For the past ten years, Pastor Benjamin has served as the lead pastor of New Creation Church of God of Prophecy in Texas City, Texas. His goal is to foster growth through service and discipleship where his members are equipped to minister wholistically to the community. In 2022, Pastor Benjamin graduated from Spirit & Life Seminary where he earned the Certificate in Ministry and Theological Studies. He is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity from Pentecostal Theological Seminary through Accredited Ministry Development. He is a native of New York City but grew up in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. He is the father of two young daughters and is excited about the possibilities of future ministry. Please join us in congratulating Pastor Benjamin.

For more information about Spirit and Life Seminary, please visit spiritandlifeseminary.org. For more information about AMD programs, please visit amdcogop.org.

Evelyn G. Gardiner, President
Bishop Enos C. Gardiner Scholarship Fund

IN HIS PRESENCE

MINISTERS

Roosevelt Ashford

South Carolina
June 28, 2023
Licensed minister for 66 years

Chuck Burks

Tennessee
July 10, 2023
Licensed minister for 16 years

Henry Sylvester Dean

Idaho
January 1, 2021
Licensed minister for 11 years

Tertuliano Puc May

Mexico
November 28, 2022
Licensed minister for 24 years

Daisy L. Baker

Ohio
August 1, 2019
Licensed minister for 8 years

Roy Carpenter

Ohio
December 18, 2022
Licensed minister for 39 years

James Bernard Dickason

Oregon
October 5, 2021
Licensed minister for 12 years

Robin Rai

Nepal
January 30, 2023
Licensed minister for 11 years

Henry Edward Baker

Tennessee
May 19, 2023
Licensed minister for 51 years

Jonny Carver

Tennessee
May 5, 2023
Licensed minister for 11 years

David Green

Oregon
April 3, 2022
Licensed minister for 54 years

Marshall Reynolds

Kentucky
April 6, 2023
Licensed minister for 63 years

James Harold Beck

South Carolina
August 20, 2023
Licensed minister for 16 years

Jerry Caudill

Kentucky
March 26, 2023
Licensed minister for 41 years

Hira Gurung

Nepal
June 30, 2019
Licensed minister for 6 years

Ralph Schnelle

Alabama
August 11, 2023
Licensed minister for 55 years

Eddie Lee Blair

California
July 2, 2023
Licensed minister for 53 years

Santos Inocente Cerrato Trejo

Honduras
May 2, 2023
Licensed minister for 39 years

Harvey Jenkins

Kentucky
March 24, 2023
Licensed minister for 67 years

Edward Thomas

Florida
July 11, 2023
Licensed minister for 50 years

Stephen B. Blount

Idaho
November 12, 2017
Licensed minister for 4 years

Jorge Cervantes

Oregon
January 21, 2021
Licensed minister for 12 years

Alice Scott Jonas

Texas
June 26, 2023
Licensed minister for 39 years



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