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**1Co 14:26** How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

## The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

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Does anyone on earth not want to live confidently and joyfully? Undoubtedly, out of eight billion people, a few are so soured on life that they would rather be dead, a thought they express in their downcast, grumbling and sometimes even

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snarling demeanor. However, they must be a trifling number in contrast to those who sincerely desire to possess [joy](#) in overflowing abundance.

One of America's foundational documents, the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence, states that "we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." This was penned in 1776, and since then, Americans have been seriously and zealously pursuing forms of happiness with greater vigor than perhaps all other people on the face of God's green earth!

Perhaps the pursuit of happiness has peaked in terms of the number of people diligently chasing after it. However, Americans do not stand alone in this because this pursuit is an innate drive found in every man's nature. It does not matter what race we are, when we live, whether we are well-educated or ignorant, skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled, male or female, tall or short, healthy or diseased, wealthy, middle class or poor. Everyone wants to be happy and seeks it in varying ways and intensities.

Some cultures, like those of Rome and Greece during their declines, are notorious because their pleasure-seeking reached such levels that their festivities—sometimes lasting a week or more—became "orgies" or "bacchanalian revelries." Of course, the seeking of happiness is not limited to such occasions, but they stand as notable examples of how some seek to fill this empty place inside.

Others have sought happiness through entertainment or a certain performer they just "[love](#)." Some seek it in athletic endeavors, hobbies, travel, dancing, fashion, home improvements, wealth, status, alcohol, food, and drugs. These all fail except for a brief period of satisfaction and sense of well-being.

### **Solomon and Joy**

Through practical experience and analysis, King Solomon conducted a series of experiments to discover how to get the most and best out of life. His experiments included some of these very areas mentioned above. As Solomon described the parameters of his quest for meaning in life, he used words that are translated into English as "mirth," "laughter," and "pleasure," all of which we normally associate with joy. Even more interesting is that the word translated "pleasure" in [Ecclesiastes 2:1](#) is the Hebrew word *simha*, which is often translated as "joy" throughout the [Old Testament](#).

[Ecclesiastes 2:1-11](#) records:

I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter— "It is madness!" and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with [wisdom](#), and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives. I made my works great, I built myself houses and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made myself waterpools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.

In verses 20, 22-23, 25, Solomon writes a few more conclusions after musing on several other analyses of wisdom and labor:

Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun... For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he had toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work grievous; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity... For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?

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Solomon admits that his quest rewarded him with a certain amount of joy, but he still found it unsatisfactory. We might think that he would have had joy in abundance with all his wealth, good health, and a discerning mind. However, What he accomplished did not leave him with an enduring sense of well-being because he continued searching after this experiment ended. Seemingly frustrated, he says we should seize the joy as it comes along and be content with it (verse 24). His ultimate conclusion, found in verse 26, is that [God](#) determines whether we experience joy.

### **What Are People Pursuing?**

Does the fact that people laugh and diligently seek laughter indicate they are experiencing joy? Proverbs notes that laughter and pleasure often hide grief and sorrow (Proverbs 14:13). Indeed Proverbs frequently pictures fools laughing on the road to destruction (Proverbs 10:23; 26:19; 29:9). Wisdom also laughs (Proverbs 1:26). Proverbs shows that the difference between the fool and the wise is the timing of laughter, its cause, and its object. There is a time for laughter ([Ecclesiastes 3:4](#)), but Solomon's record shows that just because a person laughs does not mean he is experiencing biblical joy. Many other scriptures echo Solomon's conclusion.

Could [the world](#) have the wrong object in mind in its mad pursuit of happiness? Biblical love is much different from this world's concept of love. Biblical love is defined as keeping God's commandments ([I John 5:3](#)). It is the product of God's Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5) and our yielding to its guidance. It does not arise naturally within us and frequently requires us to set our will and make sacrifices. We see this clearly in Jesus' requirement to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Since love is a fruit, a product, of God's Holy Spirit, could its companion—joy—be produced in us differently? Like love, joy is not the product of the natural mind but of the supernatural Holy Spirit of God. If it is not a product of the natural mind, then pursuing it apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit will produce only very limited and pale imitations of what God experiences by nature and sincerely desires us to experience, too.

David writes, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" ([Psalm 16:11](#)). It is interesting to compare our joy with God's continual joy and simultaneously think of what destroys joy for us. As long as we are human, joy diminishes and eventually ends. We realize this even as we experience it. For example, I have owned several new automobiles. Each time I took a new one home, I received it with joy as if I had a new toy. But in each case, I eventually acquired the same attitude toward the new car as I once had toward the old one. The joy was gone, and the car was again nothing more than a tool to convey me from one place to another.

No matter how secure the sources of our joy seem, we know joy does not last long. We may die; a mate or a friend who brings us joy may die; good health ceases; comforts vanish; social tragedies and natural disasters destroy loved things, properties depreciate and wear out; and our senses become dull so that we cannot see, hear, taste, feel, or smell as we once did ([II Samuel 19:31-35](#)).

The God who created everything is aware of all the human tragedies that have unfolded before His eyes over the past 6,000 years, and He still finds cause to be joyful. Our great God does not find joy in the tragedies themselves. His Word records times when He expressed regret, sorrow, or anger over mankind's conduct, yet He still experiences a vibrant, lasting joy. This seems to imply that His joy generally wells from different sources than mankind's. It is this joy we need to seek.

### **Joy Defined**

*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines *joy* as synonymous with "happy," "glad," and "cheerful." A thesaurus relates it to "exultation," "rapture," "satisfaction," and "pleasure." *Webster's* specifically defines it as "a very glad feeling; happiness; great pleasure; delight." It also refers to the source or cause of delight.

These definitions only define the expression of the wonderful emotion. They fail to consider the causes of joy, the circumstances in which it is expressed or its longevity. In these areas, the Bible presents a much more complex virtue than these definitions indicate.

Years ago, the state of Texas executed a woman for murder. Her execution was well publicized because several groups appealed to then-Governor George W. Bush to commute her sentence. An item the murderess mentioned while giving her testimony pertains to this subject. She stated that in her drug-induced state of mind while killing two people with a

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pick-ax, she experienced a sexual thrill each time she drove the pick-ax into her victim's body. She actually felt a pleasurable satisfaction in murder!

This gruesomely establishes that the *cause of joy*—or perhaps any other emotion—must be an important consideration in understanding biblical joy. Our mind can become so perverse and twisted in its response to stimuli that what we feel or what another sees on the outside cannot be blindly trusted as the righteous response of a righteous cause. The cause may be the very reason our joy is neither enduring nor satisfying.

Thus, the Bible takes a dim view of mirth or laughter, showing that excessive laughter often has its roots in scorn or folly. Many in this world find enjoyment in other people's discomfort, stupidity, or even embarrassment, laughing uproariously at its exposure. God admonishes in [Proverbs 24:17-18](#):

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.

Because it is natural to do so, many do precisely what God warns not to do! God implies that He will turn His wrath from the enemy to us. *Barnes' Notes* comments that rejoicing like this could be suicidal.

The Greek and Hebrew definitions of the words translated as "joy" and its synonyms are virtually the same as their English counterparts, except for one whose specific definition is not "joy," but "blessed." This word, the Greek *makarios*, reveals a great deal about some of the major sources of biblical joy. It frequently appears as the first word in the well-known [Beatitudes](#) of the Sermon on the Mount, as in [Matthew 5:3](#): "Blessed are the [poor in spirit](#), for theirs is the [kingdom of heaven](#)."

*Strong's* defines this word as "supremely blessed; by extension fortunate, well off, blessed, happy." The King James version translates it as "happy" five times. In a marginal reference, E.W. Bullinger in the *Companion Bible* says the word means "happy," and J.B. Phillips translates it as such in his *New Testament in Modern English*.

Spiros Zodhiates' *Complete Word Study Dictionary* (p. 937) gives a more comprehensive definition:

Blessed, possessing the favor of God, that state of being marked by fullness from God. It indicates the state of the believer in Christ, . . . said of one who becomes a partaker of God's nature through [faith](#) in Christ. The believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit because of Christ and as a result should be fully satisfied no matter the circumstances. *Makarios* differs from the word "happy" in that the person is happy who has good luck (from the root *hap* meaning luck as a favorable circumstance). To be *makarios*, blessed, is equivalent to having God's kingdom within one's heart. Aristotle contrasts *makarios* to *endees*, the needy one. *Makarios* is the one who is in the world yet independent of the world. His satisfaction comes from God and not from favorable circumstances.

The *Amplified Bible* translates [Matthew 5:3](#) as:

Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 5 reads, "Blessed (happy, blithesome, joyous, spiritually prosperous) . . .," and verse 9, "Blessed (enjoying enviable happiness, spiritually prosperous) . . ."

It appears that for us to experience biblical joy, the fruit of God's Spirit, we need godly inner qualities that we do not possess by nature. As with love—the love that springs from us by nature that is but a pale reflection of God's love—so also is it with joy. Until we come to the point where, by faith, we are supremely confident of God's presence in our life—of His providence toward us in the past, present, and future—we will not experience the enduring fullness of satisfaction God wants us to have.

### **Short-Lived Joy?**

A Christian's joy can be just as short-lived as anyone's in the world if we are seeking it for itself as the world does. Biblical

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joy is a fruit, a byproduct, an additional blessing, not the end in itself. It flows into and grows within the person whose life and energies are not focused merely on being "joyful." The lives of those in this world who are so zealously chasing after it prove this point. If they are still chasing it, they must not yet have it. God's Word also substantiates this.

In this regard, we need to be aware of a danger inherent in festival times: that our pursuit of joy does not obscure more important elements. Psalm 81 is a festival psalm, and verses 1-4 bids us to enjoy God's feasts fully:

Sing aloud to God our strength; make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and strike the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the lute. Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob.

God commands us to rejoice in His feasts ([Deuteronomy 14:26](#)), but [Psalm 81:8-10](#) cautions us to remember certain things so that their real purpose is not lost in an unthinking keeping of that command:

Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me! There shall be no foreign god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

God knows that even among His people, human frailty can misuse festival occasions, for they seem to beckon us to play. Relaxation and merriment tend to become the sole interest. Yet the greater the gaiety, the more obscure God's intent for the feast becomes, and the feast's spiritual value diminishes. God reminds us of the meaning of our songs of praise lest our joy becomes gaiety, gaiety becomes hilarity, hilarity becomes revelry, and revelry becomes debauchery. Our God-produced joy is lost.

"Listen to Me while you rejoice," God says. "Stay completely clear of idolatry and remember I am the God who freed you from your bondage. Open your mouth and I will feed you!" When we follow God's prescription, He will feed us so that we experience real joy and satisfaction. God removes the burdens that make true rejoicing a reality. He continues, "I would feed you with the finest of wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you" (verse 16). He makes it plain that real joy lies in the quality of our relationship with Him!

Our relationship with Him through [Jesus Christ](#) makes possible all the wonderful qualities given in the Beatitudes ([Matthew 5:1-12](#)). "Blessed are the poor in spirit, . . . those who mourn, . . . the [meek](#), . . . those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," etc. These are some of the qualities those in God's Kingdom will possess. They work to produce joy, and in us, they are part of the manifestation of God's workmanship by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:10).

Biblical joy is inseparable from our relationship with God and springs from our knowledge and understanding of the purpose of life and the hope of living with God for eternity when there will be joy evermore. If God is actually present in our lives, the joy He experiences can begin in us ([Psalm 16:11](#)). Joy is the sign that life has found its purpose, its reason for being! This, too, is a revelation of God, for no one can come to Him and find the purpose of life unless He, by His Spirit, calls him and reveals it ([John 6:44](#); [1 Corinthians 2:10](#)).

Quite a number of verses show that the joy of God's children arises from sources other than those sought by the world. Notice how the early believers found joy:

» So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. ([Acts 2:46](#))

» Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household. ([Acts 16:34](#))

» And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much [affliction](#) with joy of the Holy Spirit. ([1 Thessalonians 1:6](#))

These verses point to the same general source of their joy. Once they were called and heard [the gospel](#), they believed and received it. Upon [repentance](#), they were forgiven, baptized, and given God's Holy Spirit, and they reacted with joy at



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God's revelation of His purpose and at their communion with Him in His wonderful work.

### **A Common Thread**

One characteristic that plays a significant role in producing biblical joy is common to all the Beatitudes. Each contains a measure of self-denial or selflessness. When considered with contrasting verses, a clear picture of another source of joy emerges. One of Job's friends tells him, "Do you not know this of old, since man was placed on earth, that the triumphing [rejoicing] of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment?" ([Job 20:4-5](#)). Solomon adds, "Folly is joy to him who is destitute of discernment, but a man of understanding walks uprightly" ([Proverbs 15:21](#)).

These scriptures indicate causes that produce opposite effects. Self-denial, done to serve God and fellow man, produces sustained blessing that continues into the [Kingdom of God](#) for all eternity. Meanwhile, pursuing self-centered pleasure will indeed produce a kind of joy. The longest it can possibly last is to the grave, but the Bible implies that it will be much shorter because evil—and self-centeredness is evil—has the devastating proclivity of devouring its perpetrators.

This is undoubtedly why the proverb warns us to use our understanding to walk uprightly. This agrees with Paul's instruction in [Ephesians 5:15-20](#):

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Joy" does not appear in this passage, but the apostle's purpose is to instruct us how to produce the sustained sense of well-being that should mark a Christian's life. When a person feels good about life, about who and what he is, what he is doing with his life, and where it is headed, a sense of joy is always present. Paul's instructions are timeless in producing this result.

"Walk circumspectly" broadly indicates keeping the commandments. Paul advises us to make the most profitable use of our time, considering the state of this world. He warns us not to be foolish, and always to consider, search for, and focus on the purpose God is working out.

Then, in verse 18, he makes a fascinating contrast that directly involves producing the joy that should accompany the life of anyone following these instructions. It contains a play on words. It is no accident that alcohol is associated with "Spirit." Paul's counsel is not to seek joy in the sensuous, self-centered, worldly ways that produce dissipation or debauchery, but rather to be filled with the Spirit, singing and meditating on God's Word as we give thanks in all circumstances. This formula is guaranteed to produce a sustained sense of well-being because it removes our natural self-seeking and replaces it with a God-centered way of glorifying Him. This allows joy to be the fruit, the blessing of the Almighty, rather than the direct object of our pursuit.

### **Source and Cause Shown**

This world, with its multitude of insolvable problems, is not a place of joy. We must all live in anticipation of disaster simply because we know it has happened so often to so many. Disease destroys the lives of multitudes. Potential war and violence on the streets strike fear into our hearts. Discouragement over the difficulties of making ends meet—or of even having sufficient to eat or a warm, dry place to live—precludes happiness for millions. How many vibrant lives have accidents or natural disasters cut short? Except for brief spurts, this world's current condition and history are sufficient proof that mankind does not know how to produce joy.

David writes in [Psalm 4:5-8](#):

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the LORD. There are many who say, "Who will show us any good?" LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. I will both lie down in [peace](#), and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

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God Himself and our relationship with Him are the source and cause of any real joy we might have. Notice these scriptures:

» Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, *for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.* ([II Chronicles 20:27](#))

» And they kept the [Feast of Unleavened Bread](#) seven days with joy; *for the LORD made them joyful*, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel. ([Ezra 6:22](#))

» Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, *for God had made them rejoice with great joy*; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off. ([Nehemiah 12:43](#))

In each case, the specific incident that caused their joy is less important than the undeniable fact that, for those who have a relationship with God through a covenant, God Himself, combined with their yielding to Him within His purpose, is the source and cause of joy. This is vital to understand because it points out a major cause of biblical joy.

### **The Work of God**

Anybody can experience some form of joy. As we saw earlier, joy can even arise from perversions as horrifying as brutally murdering another person created in God's image. The greatest of joys, however, are those that arise when we are so absorbed in some creative task that we are set free from self-concern. It is self-concern that brings us sorrow, blunting the possibilities for joyful living.

We can seek joy but cannot find true joy merely by seeking pleasures and excitement. The best and longest sustained joys result from self-forgetful activity. True joy can be sought, but it must be sought God's way. It must arise as a product of yielding wholeheartedly to the creative purpose God, the Master Creator, is working out in our lives.

The joy that is a fruit of God's Spirit has its roots in the realization of His purpose and its outworking that transforms us into His image. Biblical joy begins when God calls, and we hear the gospel, understand it, and believe it. Notice this in [Isaiah 61:1-3](#), which Jesus quoted as He began His ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for [mourning](#), the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

This is only the beginning because the process continues. Paul writes in [Romans 5:11](#):

And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Hearing and believing the gospel leads to repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with God. The apostle adds in [I Thessalonians 1:6](#), "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit."

Isaiah devotes much of his book to showing this process of transformation as people yield to being converted into the [image of God](#) as the precursor to or cause of joy. For instance, [Isaiah 51:10-11](#) is typical:

Are You not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over? So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

[Isaiah 55:12-13](#) and [65:11-19](#), among many other scriptures, show that yielding to God's purpose and being converted



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are keys to biblical joy, a fruit of God's Spirit. A son of God can suffer disappointment, persecution, and sorrow from a multitude of sources in his life, but the joy of the Lord in him will always lift him over them because his joy is greater than any negative situation that might occur.

Biblical joy is bound up in our relationship with Him and our understanding of what is happening to our minds. We walk to the beat of a different drummer than this world because we understand God's overall purpose. We know we have been forgiven and have a place in His purpose because we now have His Spirit. No more life-changing experience can ever happen to a human than when God calls and understanding dawns. It forever alters our perspective on life itself and on the things we formerly trusted to give us satisfaction.

Henceforth, our joys must arise from yielding to fulfill God's great creative purpose and seeing it accomplished. This is why we were born! Because of this, we can look forward to hearing Him say:

Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord. ([Matthew 25:21](#))

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**[Chapter 5: Bone of my Bones and Flesh of my Flesh](#)**

***A Bride Prepared***

**Bone of my Bones and Flesh of my Flesh**

It may seem like strange language today, but the very first description of a marriage found in the Bible is this: *“This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh...”* (Genesis 2:23) These, of course, were the prophetic words of Adam as he took Eve to be his wife. Significantly, those words mirror the **perfect spiritual union of Christ and His Bride** – the Church. (‘Bride’ is capitalized throughout, as an indication of her divine nature at the time of the wedding.) It is not only because Eve was taken out of Adam (v.23) that God declared them to be one flesh, it is because their inseparable cleaving to each other bound them as one flesh. *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be **one flesh**.”* (Genesis 2:24).

Every groom has specific qualities that he seeks in a wife – Christ also has specific qualities that He requires in His wife. Who will qualify to be the Bride of Christ? How will Jesus recognize His Bride? Paul tells us of the love that Christ has for His Bride. *“No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord cherishes the Church: For we are members of **His body, of His flesh, and of His bones**. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be **one flesh**. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning **Christ and the Church**.”* (Ephesians 5:29-32) In the same way that a husband and wife become one flesh, Christ and His Bride will be **one Spirit**. *“He who is joined to the Lord is [not one flesh, but] **one Spirit with Him**.”* (1 Corinthians 6:17)

Now, this is getting way ahead of the story – but it is obvious that **the true Church, collectively, constitutes the Bride**. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us that we be a part of the Church. Everyone that attends Sabbath services is not converted, nor is everyone who thinks himself to be a Christian, led by God's Spirit. We understand that tares do not

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recognize that they are tares, so it is vital that we make our calling and selection sure. (Matthew 13:40, 2 Peter 1:10)

How will Christ recognize His Bride – the Church? Those who comprise the Bride will be true Christians following the lead of God’s Holy Spirit – with the spiritual fruit to prove it (Romans 8:14). They will be loving God and loving one another. And, as we saw a moment ago, they will be laying down their lives in service to each other. Jesus laid down His life for His friends – and He tells us that we must do exactly the same thing. (John 15:13)

Jesus intends His example of **sacrifice and service** to all to be an everyday way of life for His wife to be – not simply a symbolic act performed once a year at Passover. In the early Church, a deacon was a servant, like a janitor, maid, nurse, or even a slave. Unlike some men, God does not look down on those who serve. The original deacons waited tables and served the widows, and God greatly honored and approved of it (Acts 6:6, John 12:26).

Though most men in society would not cast a second glance at a lowly cleaning lady – let alone marry one – that is an exact picture of just what Jesus Christ is going to do. Let us remember that Jesus, who is King and Master, took the lowliest status of all, and served as a deacon [*diakonos*]. “*For even the Son of man [Jesus] came not to be served unto, but to serve [diakoneo], and to give His life a ransom for many.*” (Mark 10:45) Everyone in the congregation must be emulating Christ’s example as a servant to all.

### **A New Countenance**

In a world of social class distinction, elitism, and caste systems, it is difficult to imagine that the most powerful and glorious Jesus Christ has chosen to marry a bride without high-class standing, power, status or prestige. Indeed, Paul says that we are now *slaves* of Christ [*doulos*, a *bond slave* without any rights or standing] because we have been purchased with His blood (1 Corinthians 7:22-23). When she is called out of this world, the Bride has no preferable status – but she begins to distinguish herself by putting on a *new countenance, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* (Ephesians 4:24). Jesus Christ will not, in fact, marry across class lines – His Bride will *be like Him* (1 John 3:2, 1 Corinthians 15:49)!

The phrase, “*bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,*” should conjure up the appreciation of a closeness and unity that is only attainable within the *most intimate of relationships* – even a perfect union that is oneness in heart, mind, purpose, and Spirit. Jesus Christ cherishes His Bride (Ephesians 5:29). We have been given this preview of the heavenly wedding that depicts the affection and unique intimacy that the Bride will share with her Creator God.

### **One Body – One Spirit**

At creation, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and He **opened his side** and created Eve to be his wife. That was done as a prototype of Christ and His Bride. Paul understood the prophetic significance of that act – referring to Jesus as the *final Adam* (1 Corinthians 15:45, Romans 5:14). Jesus’ death correlates to the deep sleep of Adam. Jesus’ **side was opened** – His life’s blood flowed out - making it possible for the Church [His Bride] to be formed (John 19:34). *Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.* Eve was the ideal helpmate for Adam, or as Genesis has it – *an help meet for him... Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*” (Genesis 2:20-24) In the same way, Jesus Christ foretold that He and His Bride would be **one Spirit** (1 Corinthians 15:44).

Jesus Christ revealed to Paul that the Church brethren are in effect, His body – as husband and wife are *one flesh – one body* in marriage. The Church of God is the **Body of Christ**. “*You are the Body of Christ, and members in particular.*” (1 Corinthians 12:27) “*...The Church, which is His Body.*” (Ephesians 1:22-23) “*So we, being many, are one Body in Christ...*” (Romans 12:5) “*For [Christ’s] Body’s sake, which is the Church.*” (Colossians 1:24) “*For the perfecting of the saints...for the edifying of the Body of Christ.*” (Ephesians 4:12) Many more verses firmly establish that the “body” of Christ is a direct reference to the Church of God brethren.

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See Warren Zehrung’s other articles at:

[Zehrung, Warren – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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## The Monarch Butterfly's Navigational Skills (Copyright 09-19-2024) by Doug Velting (Grand Rapids, Michigan)



Let's face it, insects don't seem to be the smartest creatures on the planet; after all, they only have tiny brains. And with their compound eyes, they don't see very well. However, God created them to do amazing things.

For example: how do they navigate?

How do they find point B traveling from point A? Let's take a close look at how God has equipped the eastern monarch butterfly to migrate from the eastern United States and Canada to Mexico.

Every year millions of monarch butterflies migrate two to three thousand miles between their home range and Mexico. Because it takes up to three generations to make this long migration route and back, these butterflies will lay their eggs somewhere in route, which then hatch into their larval and pupal stages. Monarch butterfly larvae only eat the leaves of the milkweed plant and thus rely on the presence of this plant all along the migration route.

God has programmed each generation of butterfly to know in what direction they need to travel. So, if a butterfly is born in Michigan near the end of the summer, it knows to migrate southwest toward Mexico, and its offspring is equally born knowing its position on the route so it can continue on a correct course.

It is amazing to realize that while monarch butterflies are found across a home range spanning hundreds of thousands of square miles during the summer, they collect in only small areas of the pine forests of Mexico during their overwintering hibernation. Studies have shown that often these butterflies will even find the same tree that their ancestors departed from generations before.

Monarchs navigate using a sun compass, which involves a complex method of determining the sun's movement from east to west and the butterfly's current position. To use the sun to know what direction to travel, the monarch needs to know its position to true north, which is no easy task since the position of the sun is both throughout the day and also with latitude and by season. Just to handle the daily movements of the sun while flying south, these butterflies must steer to the right of the sun in the early morning, toward the sun at midday, and to the left of the sun in the late afternoon.

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The monarch butterfly relies primarily on determining the angle between due north and the sun's vector on the horizontal plane. This angle of the sun moves throughout the day, and the butterflies need to keep track of what part of the day it is currently. This requires an internal clock. To make this even more difficult, the sun's angle differs based on whether it's fall in Michigan or spring in Texas. Therefore, the calculations vary based on where the butterfly is currently at as well as the season.

The monarch butterfly also uses a type of magnetic compass. Researchers have found magnetite, a highly magnetic iron oxide mineral, in the bodies of these butterflies. And monarchs aren't the only creatures with this substance. Many major families of birds and mammals, as well as the spiny lobster, moths, and even termites all have this ability built into them. While researchers now know this is how animals are able to detect the magnetic field to determine their direction, how these animals' got magnetite in their bodies in the first place is still a mystery.

It would be foolish to believe that the ability of the monarch butterfly to migrate in such a complicated yearly cycle could develop by evolutionary means. At the same time, it makes perfectly good sense to trust that an all-powerful, all-knowing Creator God provided this for even such small creatures.

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**See Doug Velting's other articles at:**

**[Velting, Doug – The "New" Church of God Messenger \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)**

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## Kenya Hands of Hope

(Copyright 2024) by William P. Goff (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

We are asking for your prayers. The Kenya Government has been going too far (especially the schools) demanding unreasonable amounts of funds. It's to a point now where we have to obey God rather than men when it comes to prioritizing funds. Feeding and assisting widows and orphans in their afflictions, comes before overpaying school fees and satisfying the avarice demands of the authorities. Recently the corrupt Government has found new ways of demanding funds to a point that if we comply with their gross and blatant demands, we will have to neglect the needs of our widows and orphans. But that would go against God's will, against His instructions. We are to obey man's laws yes, unless they cause us to break God's laws. And we are at that point!

So, we are standing up against all unreasonable demands. It will probably get us arrested again (especially Haron) But better to obey God rather than men. Peter said: "***We ought to obey God rather than men***" That word *ought* is Strong's #G1163 necessary (as binding). Ought is defined as: "used to indicate duty or correctness, typically when criticizing someone's actions". (Acts 5:29)

So please pray for us. Pray for us to be good stewards, pray for us to become humble, and pray that everything we do is pleasing in our Heavenly Father's sight. I know the orphans pray for all of you, often. And let us all be led by His Spirit. (It's the defining factor of those that are His.) (Romans 8:9) (Romans 8:14)

Also please continue to spread the word that our impoverished brethren (especially the widows and orphans) need our help. As I often say "The need is great, but the workers are few. We are also resuming "*Nehemiah's Daily Bread*" where he visits the various groups bringing the children a hot meal and a Bible Study. The majority of the children (by far) are orphans, and all of the children are members of the remote congregations. This program of Nehemiah has always produced much good fruit. Let us realize the importance (and the rewards) of giving, especially to members of the "*Household of Faith*" that are in need. (Galatians 6:10) (James 1:27)



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Below is a link to an important article by: Christina Rothwell titled: "*Be Ye warmed and Filled*" it covers the importance of giving.

Brethren we want to thank all of you who have been supporting these widows, and orphans. You continue to ease their suffering significantly. These widows are too old to dig, and these orphans are young, abandoned by the world and looked down upon. You have been Mother and Father to them, and you will be rewarded for doing so.

We are living in unprecedented times; we are at the end of the age, a time when we better be close to our Creator. Yes, a time when we need to be studying His Word and walking in His ways.

Link to: "Be Ye Warmed and Filled" <https://khofh.com/be-ye-warmed-and-filled-2/>

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## Wicked Spirits v. the Holy Spirit (and miracles)

(Copyright 09-19-2024) by Curtis Dahlgren (Stephenson, Michigan)

**LEMME JUST** start by saying I was born in a lower middle-class family. We had very little spending money and I still have most of it. I used to buy cars for 50 bucks. I once drove from Wisconsin to southern Georgia and back on \$14 worth of gas. (before the Interstate was finished). My phone likes that one. My mother worked hard. My father worked hard. My brother worked hard. On a dairy farm you go to work at age 4. But what does that have to do with election issues, Kamala?

I have a book, "Miracles and Other Wonders" by Charles Sellier. **It may take a miracle to overcome the media bias and Kamala's lies.** Someone said, "She can't tell time without lying." The border is secure. She's no longer against fracking, and so on. Anyway, I could write a couple of columns just about miracles in my own life, but there's one story in the book I want to paraphrase.

A guy saw somebody throw a dog out of a pickup truck. He took it to a vet and decided to keep it. It was named Lucky. His family was going on a trip from central California to Los Angeles, so Lucky was put in a pet care center. Approaching Fresno, a dense fog developed, and traffic slowed down. The wife heard barking and saw a dog running alongside the car. It looked like Lucky. The dad decided to take a break and there was an exit right in front of them. The dog kept running alongside them, but when approached it disappeared into the fog. His daughter tried to follow it but couldn't see in the fog and stopped. The man had been having recurring dreams with that picture of his daughter in it.

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The delay was a propitious one. Just as they started the car up again, they heard crashing from the freeway. The chain reaction crashes killed 31 people while more than 30 had critical injuries, with at least 100 more injured. It was the worst traffic catastrophe in U.S. history. "Lucky" had saved them. There are more details to the story that would give you goose bumps, but it's all a true story. *The age of miracles is not dead.*

I personally know that dogs have spiritual qualities that we don't have. My dog and I were visiting a guy who was complaining about being bothered by demons. Before we left, my dog looked up into a corner of the room and growled. Some years before, a guy took a picture of Brandy and me, and in the photo you can see him turning his head away from the guy. That guy later shot seven people in church. Demons exist, and dogs know it. And this election may come down to demons versus God. Do we deserve God's help?

THAT IS THE QUESTION.

See Curtis Dahlgren's other articles at:

[Dahlgren, Curtis – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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<http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/dahlgren/220131>

## Donor Letter – September 21, 2024

(Copyright 09-20-2024) by William P. Goff (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

Greetings Brethren, Happy Sabbath.

We hope all of you are doing well as we patiently await the return of our Lord and Savior. The upcoming fall Feasts are approaching, and we're working on another "Kenya Update" trying to have it posted by the Feast of Trumpets which is just over a week away.

But for now, I wanted to send a short letter to thank you for continuing to support the wonderful work we are involved in. We continue to assist our poor impoverished brethren, with our focus still on the orphans and widows.

I'm happy to report that they have been doing much better, thanks to your continued prayers and support. It's been a busy Month, getting all the orphans back in school. Some are still in elementary level; others are going to be graduating from their fourth year of High School. And all of them continue to grow, in more ways than one.

We have also been able to assist in the planting of gardens to help the widows and orphans with food. Some of them haven't planted or harvested in a couple of years. Most of the widows are too old to dig, and many of the orphans are still quite young. Although it seems that no matter how young a child may be in Kenya, they know how to use both a Panga (which is Swahili for "large knife"). And they know how to build a fire and cook their food.

Life for orphans in these third world countries is harsh. But the help you have been giving them is wonderful and continues to ease their suffering. Since my last letter, donations have been up a bit, and it's helped them so much more. Please continue to assist them; your assisting continues to make a big impact in their lives. Nehemiah also continues to print and distribute, Bible lessons, which are so much appreciated, by both the children and the adults.



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Garden at the camp.



Here the brethren are planting maze and beans.

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Orphans and widows receiving maize, beans, and soap.

Your support is helping our impoverished brethren so much. Below is a picture of orphan Elves cooking food. As you can see their living conditions are a bit rough. But thanks to you, they are doing well. And they appreciate your help very much.



Young Elves preparing food.

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Thank You.  
Bill Goff

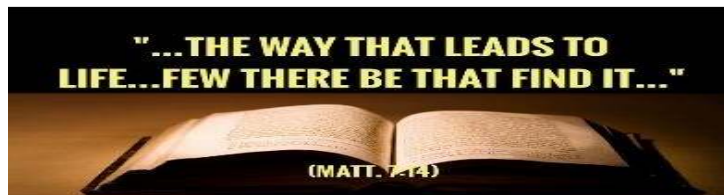
Website: [www.khofh.org](http://www.khofh.org)  
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See William P. Goff's other articles at:  
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## Natural Selection

(Copyright 09-14-2024) by Gary C. Miller (Pocahontas, Arkansas)



### STRAIT AND NARROW WAY:

"Enter you in at the strait (difficult) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way...to life, and *few there be that find it.*" (Matt. 7:13,14).

### THE LAW OF NATURAL SELECTION:

Biological science recognizes the law of Natural Selection: the survival of the fittest. In raw nature survival rates are low: trout 20%, salmon (15%) and birds (10-20 %). Few reach maturity.

### RELIGIOUS NATURAL SELECTION:

Natural Selection works in religion as well; weeding out the many; leaving only that small percentage of the spiritually fit.

Apostle Peter, alludes to this process:

"...in all his epistles (Paul's), speaking in them of those things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest (Gk. "twist"), as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction." (2 Pet. 3:16). This is a good definition of the spiritually *unfit*.

### NEW TESTAMENT IN GENERAL

When we see what is commonly taught, we realize not only Paul's writings, but the New Testament generally is written to weed out, separate the "sheep" from the goats.

### GRACE-WITHOUT-LAW IS A "WEEDING OUT" DOCTRINE:

Many teach grace replaces law in the New Testament, and Faith saves without deeds of the Old Testament Law. Meaning, sin is not imputed to the "saved" who can do pretty much as they please.



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**UNGODLY MEN TEACH GRACE REPLACES LAW:**

“For certain men crept in unawares, who were...of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, *turning the Grace of our Elohim* [“God”; KJV] *into lasciviousness* (wanton, lawless) ...” (Jude 4). These false doctrines and the structure of the New Testament are part of the **Spiritual Natural Selection process** narrowing the survivors to just the few fittest.

**GLOBAL NATURAL SELECTION AHEAD:**

“For then shall be Great Tribulation...And except those days be shortened, there shall NO flesh be saved: but for the Elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. (Matt. 24:21,22).

See Gary C. Miller’s other articles at:

[Miller, Gary C. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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<http://www icyahweh.org/>

**Reminder to Exercise Increased Caution in Kenya**  
**(09-14-2024) Sent by Rebecca Wise (United States)**

Hi Laura, Bill sent this yesterday. Forwarding to you in case you haven't seen it. Asking for prayers for Bill's (William P. Goff) protection and safety (and for all the brethren there). Thank you! :-)

**U.S. EMBASSY NAIROBI**



**Alert: Reminder to Exercise Increased Caution in Kenya**  
**September 13, 2024**

**Location:** Kenya

**Event:** The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi reminds U.S. citizens in Kenya that they should exercise increased caution due to the risks of terrorism and kidnapping. Locations frequented by U.S. citizens and other foreigners and tourists in Nairobi and elsewhere in Kenya continue to be targets to terrorists. Terrorist groups could attack with little or no warning, targeting hotels, embassies, restaurants, malls and markets, schools, police stations, places of worship, and other places frequented by foreigners and tourists. While attacks can occur at any time, concerns are heightened in proximity to anniversaries of prior terrorist attacks, such as September 11th, the September 21st Westgate Mall attack, and the October 7th Hamas attack against Israel.

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**Actions to Take:**

- Stay alert in locations frequented by tourists/foreigners.
- Review your personal security plans.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Monitor local media for updates.
- Avoid protest areas and demonstrations.
- Avoid crowds.
- Keep a low profile.

**Assistance:**

- U.S. Embassy Nairobi, Kenya  
United Nations Avenue, Gigiri  
+254 (0) 20 363 6451  
[U.S. Citizen Services - U.S. Embassy in Kenya \(usembassy.gov\)](https://usembassy.gov)
- State Department - Consular Affairs  
+1-888-407-4747 for calls from the United States or Canada  
+1-202-501-4444 for calls from overseas (Kenya)
- [Kenya Country Information](#)
- Enroll in [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive alerts
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and Twitter: [@USEmbassyKenya](#) and [@CDCKenya](#)

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**See Rebecca Wise’s other articles at:**

<https://church-of-god-bismarck.org/category/article-authors/wise-rebecca/>  
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## What Are True Values?

(Copyright 09-15-2024) by Rod Reynolds (Wentzville, Missouri)

Not infrequently in public discourse we hear the word “values” mentioned. Many of the issues we face as a nation and a world boil down to a question of values. For example, the questions of abortion, human rights, women’s rights, homosexual rights, religious expression, family, out of control government spending and national debt? Do these issues have anything to do with values?

Nearly every political and social issue you can name touches on the personal values of citizens and the public values of the nation. There is a sense among many people that the United States, as well as other nations, has abandoned sound values and that fact accounts for many of the problems the nation faces, along with the world in general.

The profound changes that have occurred in recent decades in the nation’s values are seen reflected in pathologies such as the dramatic increase in out of wedlock births, incidence of drug abuse, proliferation of pornography and social changes such as legalization of abortion, same-sex “marriage,” dramatic increases in criminal activity, and many other aspects of personal behavior and public life.

What are values? Are values important, and if so, why? Does it matter what your values are? Finally, what are the “true values”? The Bible has answers to the question of values that may surprise you.

**Sermon Link: [What Are True Values? | COGMessenger](#)**

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**See Rod Reynolds other articles at:**

[Reynolds, Rod – The “New” Church of God Messenger \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](https://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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## Holy Days 2024

Passover – April 23, 2024 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 23-29, 2024

Pentecost – June 12, 2024

Trumpets - October 3, 2024

Atonement – October 12, 2024

Tabernacles –October 17, 2024, to October 23, 2024

Last Great Day – October 24, 2024

## Notes