



# COMPASS CHECK

Helping you turn your spiritual compass toward God

# The Fall Festivals Are Coming!

How God's Fall Festivals  
Reveal His Love for Humanity

Living  
Forever

How I Learned to Get the Most  
Out of Serving at the Feast

Questions About  
Homosexuality

How to Prepare Now for Your  
Future Marriage

Creating Light Out of Darkness

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## COMPASS CHECK

*Compass Check* is a biblically based magazine for young people of the United Church of God, an International Association (UCGIA) aged 12-19. Our name, *Compass Check*, describes youth pointing their spiritual compass toward God.

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The goal of *Compass Check* is to inspire Church youth, ages 12-19, to respond to the gospel message.

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## Compass Corner



**N**otice God's emphasis on rejoicing at the Feast of Tabernacles in Deuteronomy 16:14: "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and *your son and your daughter*, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates" (emphasis added).

"Rejoice" means to brighten up and to be glee-ful. It implies that we should cheer up, be glad and be joyful.

God has given you and your entire family the upcoming gift of the Feast of Tabernacles. All the festivals of God are for the entire family: you, your brothers and sisters and your mother and father.

Why do you think God tells us to rejoice at His Feast of Tabernacles? You guessed it—because God has an incredible future for you, for all your family and all of humanity. The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the coming Kingdom of God, with Jesus Christ ruling on the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It will be a time of joy and abundance, with no war, only peace and love abounding for all of humanity being called to God's way of life. Satan will no longer be the god of planet earth. Instead, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will rule from Jerusalem in love and perfection. He will serve humanity and care for their needs.

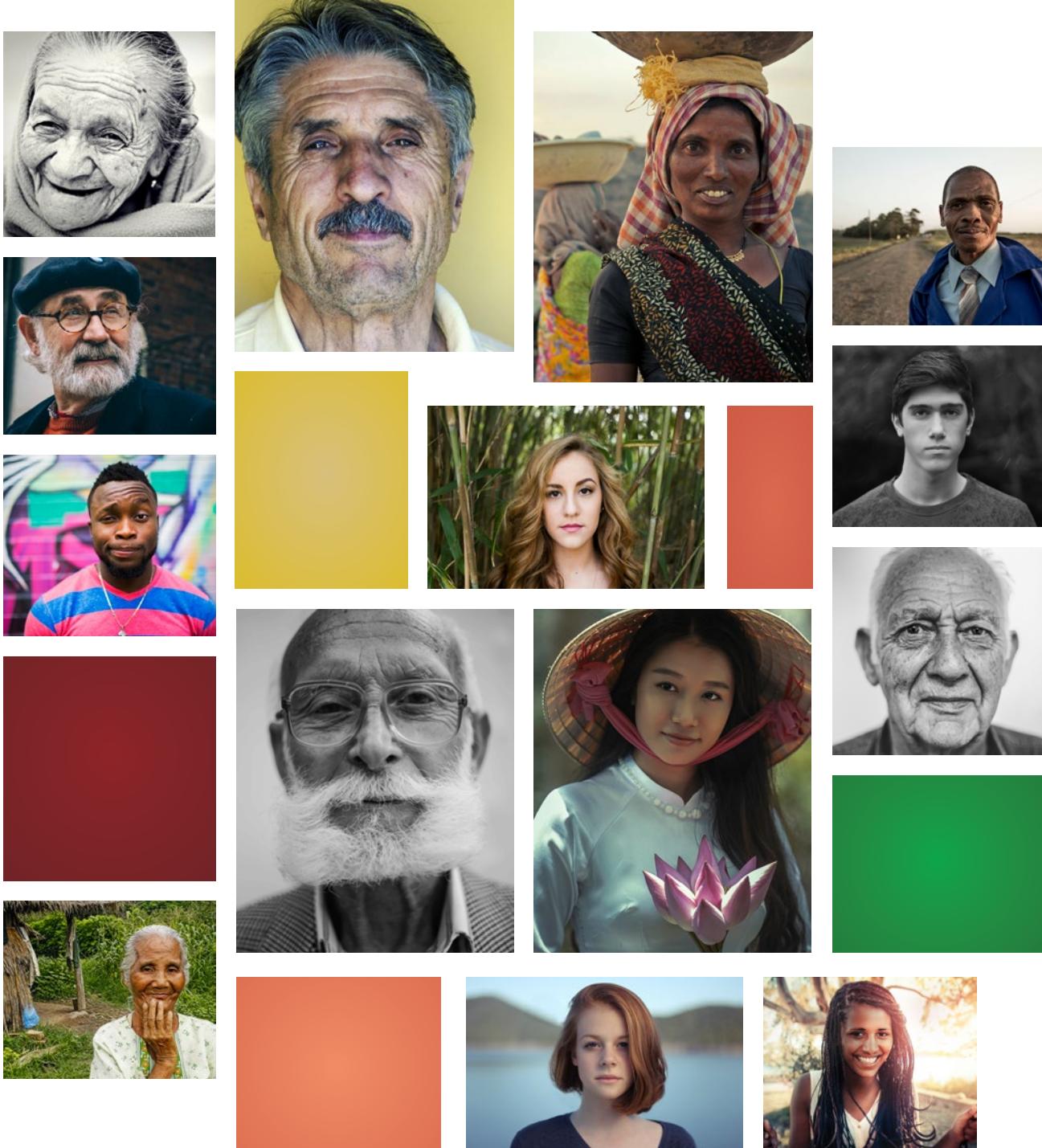
So rejoice this coming Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day (also known as the Last Great Day) and give of yourself during this joyous time! Think of how you can serve others during the Feast—help your family and help out at your particular festival location. Can you sing in the teen choir? Volunteer to help at the senior's luncheon. And be sure to attend the teen activities and to make new friends.

Yes, rejoice! Please have a spiritually positive festival season and enjoy our pre-Feast issue of *Compass Check*. As always, feel free to e-mail me at [compasscheck@ucg.org](mailto:compasscheck@ucg.org) with comments and any suggestions. CC



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# How God's Fall Festivals Reveal His Love for Humanity





# G

od's four fall\* festivals teach us about His plan of salvation for you and all of humanity. They express God's love for you. God greatly desires for you to be a spiritual child in His family. They also teach us the fate of Satan the devil and how God will work with each person so they, too, can be in His Kingdom.

Did you know there is an order in which humanity's eyes are opened to truly understand Jesus' message and our incredible purpose? God's festivals show this plan. Please read Leviticus 23:23-44, where the festival commandments are found.

## The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25)

First, the Feast of Trumpets depicts nothing less than the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God!

Through this festival we learn how those whose eyes are opened now have an opportunity to be in the first resurrection, to eternal life. This will begin a 1,000-year period symbolized in the Feast of Tabernacles. These firstborn members of God's family will be given a vital part to play in God's great work.

Raised to glorified eternal spirit life at Christ's return, they will reign with Him as kings and priests on the earth, assisting in the teaching of God's truth to all humanity (Revelation 5:10; 20:6; Isaiah 30:20-21). God intends this life we live now to be a training ground so that we will have the good character needed to teach and guide others.

## The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32)

The Day of Atonement involves not only the forgiveness of sin due to Jesus Christ's sacrifice but also the removal of the primary cause of sin, Satan.

It pictures an essential step that must take place before humanity can experience true peace on earth. After the first two chapters in Genesis, we are introduced to a serpent whose real identity is identified in Revelation as that of a fallen angel (Revelation 12:9). Satan tried to destroy God's relationship with the first human beings and ultimately with you.

Satan doesn't care whether people believe in no God at all, worship a false god or are deceived into a false view of the true God and His plan for us; he still has them where he wants them—"alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:18).

Paul explains that "the god of this age" has

\* in the northern hemisphere

blinded those "who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

But God is committed to the success of His plan and His creation! Through the prophetic fulfillment of what the Day of Atonement pictures, He will lay a hold of that old serpent and bind him for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:2).

## The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-35, 37-44)

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the 1,000-year rule of Jesus Christ on this earth, known as the Millennium (Revelation 20:4-6).

Many human beings will live through the Great Tribulation into the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ. This period is pictured in the Bible as a time of peace, plenty and joy. All nations will follow God in His wonderful way of life.

An incredible spiritual change will take place among people. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened . . ." (Isaiah 35:5), and the Spirit of God will influence people to willingly and enthusiastically obey God from their hearts. People will begin to place the interests of others before their own. They will begin to think of others as "better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3, King James Version).

With the coming of world peace, countries will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).

## The Eighth Day (also known as the Last Great Day) (Leviticus 23:34-36, 39; Revelation 20:11-13)

This festival points to an incredibly important phase of God's plan, which is the resurrection and judgment of the vast majority of all the human beings who have ever lived.

What about those who are not raised first? Who are they? And what will happen to them? Are those billions of lives lost forever?

Revelation 20:4-5, answers those questions: "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished."

The "rest of the dead" are those to whom it was not given to understand in their lifetime. This group represents the majority of all people who have ever lived. Many of the people standing before God in this second resurrection will have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ, much less believed in Him.

Others will be surprised to learn that they had been misled by a counterfeit Christianity.

The "rest of the dead" points to the conclusion of God's master plan, the great harvest illustrated by the Holy Day referred to as the Eighth Day or, traditionally, the Last Great Day. A merciful God, not willing that any should perish, will reach out to everyone to whom the "books" of the Bible had never been opened in terms of understanding (Revelation 20:12). He will bring them back to life, offering an intimate relationship with Him by pouring out His Spirit on them—a powerful demonstration of God's love for all of mankind.

## He who has ears, let him hear!

God is calling you now to be part of the first-fruits and to be resurrected in the first resurrection. Don't let your opportunity to rise first be taken away from you.

"Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:3-9).

Will you prepare yourself as good ground in which the seed of understanding may grow now? We all have a part in determining the destiny of the seed of understanding we've been given. And so we are faced with a weighty question: What will you and I do with God's generous offer to be part of His first resurrection?

As you come to worship God at His appointed festivals, remember: Blessed are your eyes, for it has been given to you to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Live a life of purpose—to rise first at Jesus Christ's return! CC



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## **Answering Some of Your Questions About Homosexuality**

*Has anyone ever asked you how you feel about homosexuality?*

**Eventually you'll likely be forced to address the issue or even defend your position on it. Like many of us, perhaps you've already had to do so. This might leave you with a surplus of difficult and emotionally-charged questions but a shortage of answers. Together, let's examine some of your most common questions regarding homosexuality.**

**Q** *A few of the students in my classes are gay or lesbian, as is one of my managers at work. How should I interact with them on a regular basis?*

As a teen in the Church of God, you are called now—but this is not the case for everyone. God has not yet blessed everyone with the understanding of His expectations for them as explained in Scripture. The result is that many people are blind to the wrongness of their actions and can't see any need to change (2 Corinthians 4:4), but we are thankful their eyes will be opened when Jesus returns (Micah 4:1-2).

You probably already interact with a fair number of people who unknowingly break a variety of God's laws. They might go to church on Sunday, eat unclean meats, celebrate Christmas and Easter, or do other things that we understand are unbiblical. In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 the apostle Paul says: "I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you

would need to go out of the world" (emphasis added). Christ's remarks in John 17:14-19 place us squarely in "this world." We have to live in a society that is contrary to God and interact on a daily basis with those who do not live by God's standards. Still, we must stand out and be a "light" by following His Word (Matthew 5:14-16).

We can apply this instruction by not condemning people who do not yet understand all that God requires of us. However, the Bible is also clear in saying that we should not become too close and comfortable with sin, or with those who live in an ungodly manner (Psalm 1:1). In living by God's Word ourselves we have a unique opportunity to be a godly example in the life of someone who otherwise may never have contact with God's Church again in this lifetime. We recommend interacting with gay and lesbian individuals with the same discretion and concern for your own purity as you do with anyone else whom God has not yet called to salvation.

**Q** *One of my closest friends from school came out as gay a few days ago. How should I respond to him? Can we still be friends?*

If this person is very close to you, he probably already knows your beliefs regarding homosexual lifestyles. If not, it's possible that your friendship is not as close as you may have thought. In any case, now that he has chosen a new lifestyle your differing

beliefs and standards will become more obvious. While loving the person as a friend, you cannot approve of his actions.

Depending on the situation, in the normal, daily routine of school, you may or may not have to treat him any differently now than you did before. You will still have the opportunity to be friends and have a positive influence—but make sure that it does not pull you toward such lifestyles too. Many people are engaged in all kinds of sinful activities, and we pray you have not let yourself become involved in any of them.

As a result of your friend coming out, you may find that your friendship will decline regardless of what you do. This is because of your differing value systems. In many cases, once a person chooses an active gay lifestyle he or she becomes intolerant of those who will not accept that lifestyle as valid, and your friend may choose to spend time with people who share those standards rather than your own.

**Q** *I don't know what to say when people ask me about homosexuality. I want to share my beliefs and answer their question, but I also don't want to offend or hurt them. What's the best way to do this?*

Let's see how God advises us to discuss our beliefs with those whom God has not yet called to salvation. You might be familiar with 1 Peter 3:15 which reminds us to respond to others "with meekness and fear." "Meekness" means that we should answer with humility, not arrogance or condescension. "Fear" refers to the fact that we need to show respect and concern for those we answer. While we should answer without attacking them, we may still explain that the Bible does not support their beliefs. Further, we should strive to "become all things to all men" by accurately communicating at a level others can easily understand (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). Read and carefully consider Paul's response to the Athenians' inquiries in Acts 17:16-34. He completely nails all three of these guidelines and provides an example we can all emulate.

You might start by explaining that you believe in God's clear teaching on a wide range of matters, and that the Bible does not allow for much of what is commonly acceptable today—including extramarital and premarital sex, homosexuality, getting drunk, doing drugs, envy and extortion (common examples

as listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Make it clear that while you may disagree with people's choices, you strive to treat everyone with fairness, respect and compassion (Luke 6:31, 1 Peter 2:17). Finally, be sure to pray about these conversations. Ask God to give you conviction along with wisdom and the best words to say to cause others to have open, understanding ears.

**Q** *At lunch recently week some of my classmates asked me about gay marriage, so I shared my beliefs. They made fun of me and haven't talked to me since then. What do I do next?*

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18). God tells us we need to pursue peace with everyone, which personal experience shows is very hard to do. If your classmates are making fun of you, you can't do so back to them. If your coworkers are lying about you, it means you can't lie about them. Rely on God to help you through this challenge. The key is to remember to do everything in your power. You can't control their actions, but you can influence them by always being open to peace. There's a great chance that they'll start talking to you again once they see that you are really a great person with whom they just happen to disagree. Remember, Jesus promised blessings for those who are persecuted for righteousness sake (Matthew 5:10).

To conclude, let's consider Romans 12:21: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Don't let cruel, negative people get to you, but pray to God and strive to be your best. The obstacles may seem insurmountable at the time, but when you see it through to the end, you will be more rooted in your faith and have stronger character than ever before. **CC**

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# *How to prepare now for your* **FUTURE MARRIAGE**

# g

rowing from a teenager into a young adult is an exciting time of life. As a girl-crazy teen, I had fun saying, “I was a Boy Scout, and now I’m a girl scout.” And Will Rogers, the famous entertainer, was known for saying, “I never met a man I didn’t like.” I used to quip, “I never met a girl I didn’t like.”

Like me, most of you will eventually want to be married, so you should begin making mental and spiritual preparations for marriage *now*.

Following creation and the establishment of the Sabbath, the very next thing God instituted was marriage!

To summarize, God told Adam and Eve to get married (“be joined”), enjoy sex together (“become one flesh”), and have kids (“be fruitful and multiply”) (*Genesis 2:24; 1:28*). How about those priorities?

If you choose to not get married for good reasons, that’s okay too. The apostle Paul explained some of the valid reasons for choosing not to marry (*1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 25-35*).

## **Protect your future marriage**

God’s Seventh Commandment—*You shall not commit adultery*—shows how passionate God is about protecting marriage. When something pure becomes *adulterated*, it means it is polluted and partly spoiled. In fact, by its definition the seventh commandment includes *all the other* laws regarding sex—laws forbidding fornication, polygamy, homosexual sex, incest and bestiality. Also forbidden is sexual lust, which means God wants you to never view pornography (see *Matthew 5:27-30*). In God’s sight, sex within marriage is a wonderful blessing, but sex before or outside of

marriage is sinful and destructive (*1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:4*).

Don’t think: “It’s my body. I can do with it what I want.” Our bodies and minds belong to God for two reasons: God created us, and we were “bought at a price” by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*). The only sexual activity that God permits with His property is within a marriage.

Furthermore, you are not even *second* in authority over your body—your wife or future wife is (*1 Corinthians 7:3-4*). In part this means you should think of your sexual organs as belonging to your wife or future wife.

Clearly, God’s plan is for everyone to remain a virgin until marriage, but this goal is increasingly rejected and mocked in today’s society. The word “virgin” has a wonderful meaning—“unused, unspoiled, untarnished, pure”—as in virgin forests, virgin soil, virgin snow, virgin wool, and virgin olive oil. So don’t let other people confuse you or sidetrack you from this priceless goal of remaining a virgin until your wedding night.

When you get married, the most important gift you give your wife (or husband) is not the ring: It is yourself—*your whole mind, heart, and body*—unused, unadulterated, pure, virgin; not second-hand or third-hand. By saving yourself just for her or him, you will be saying: “I have loved you with true love my whole life even though I had not met you.”

## **The most damaging sin**

Of all the various kinds of sins, the most self-destructive are sexual sins. In *1 Corinthians 6:18*, Paul was quoting from Proverbs 6:32 when he wrote: “So run away from sexual sin. It involves the body in a way that no other sin does. So if you commit sexual sin, you are sinning against your own body” (Easy-to-Read Version). In this scripture, the word “body” does not only mean the physical body, but also takes into account the state and health of one’s mind and heart.

Moreover, the destructive consequences of immorality are emphasized in Proverbs 2:10-20; 5:1-23; 6:23-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; and many other scriptures. In fact, nearly every New Testament book has a warning against any immoral activity.

## **Flee from temptations!**

In this day and age, countless young people make a common and costly mistake—they think it is okay to



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engage in passionate embraces and kissing, as long as they have the good intention of “not going all the way.” Well, one temptation leads to another, and those good intentions often fail.

Instead, God wants us to think of passionate kissing and touching as the “foreplay,” the first stage of intercourse. That means He doesn’t want any non-married couple to engage in “making out” (passionate kissing, etc.), as it can stimulate a craving for full intercourse.

On top of all this, engaging in foreplay may be likened to playing with fire! Proverbs 6:27-28 asks: “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared?” This passage is referring to the automatic bad consequences of immoral sex—scars to one’s mind and heart, and sometimes physical consequences such as pregnancy or even a sexually-transmitted disease.

So what is the solution? To *avoid* and *stay far away from* temptations to commit sin! God wants you to “flee sexual immorality” and “flee also youthful lusts” (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22, emphasis added throughout). Pray regularly for God to help you to do this, especially when confronted by a specific temptation.

#### **Secondary virginity**

In the event that you ever *do* make a mistake and lose your virginity outside of marriage, it is possible for your mind and heart to experience gradual healing from some of the damage by dedicating yourself to reaching “secondary virginity.” You can look up this term on the Internet.

The healing begins to take place as soon as you are deeply sorry and repentant for your actions and ask God for His forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9).

#### **Choose a compatible partner!**

If you and your wife (or husband) are highly compatible and have a lot in common; such as the culture to which you are accustomed, the easier it will be to have a harmonious and happy marriage. It’s especially important to have similar spiritual values, principles, and goals. This means you must

*Remember that God wants the very best for you, so trust His guidance completely. He wants you to be able to “live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your . . . life”*

get to know a potential lifetime companion very well.

Of course all compatibility factors should be considered, but according to the Bible, God only *requires one* type of compatibility—*spiritual compatibility*. If you are in God’s Church and you want to get married, God expects you to only consider those who are also in God’s Church. Why? Because it’s an even greater advantage if both you and your spouse are baptized and have the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit.

Numerous scriptures in the Old Testament place great emphasis on not marrying anyone of another religion (Deuteronomy 7:1-6; Judges 3:5-7; 1 Kings 11:1-4; Ezra 9:1-2, 12-14; 10:1-18, 44; Nehemiah 13:23-27). Even in the New Testament, Paul plainly says in 1 Corinthians 7:39 that a woman “is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, *only in the Lord.*”

In other words, if you have been called (John 6:44, 65) by God (and if you grew up in God’s Church, you automatically have been called, as has been explained in United Church of God articles), God doesn’t want you to consider marrying anyone who has not also been called by Him. For more great information regarding having a godly marriage, feel free to read through 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and Ephesians 5:1-17.

When both spouses are in God’s Church, there are many practical benefits. You both will have the same ultimate goal of God’s Kingdom, so you will be true partners in that spiritual journey (Matthew 6:33; Amos 3:3). You will be less likely to have been scarred by past sins. You will be attending the same church services and social activities. When children come along, you will be in agreement as to what to teach them. Finally, you two will enjoy discussing the Bible *together* for the rest of your life, and there will be many other benefits.

Make your promise and keep it! Remember that God wants the very best for you, so trust His guidance completely. He wants you to be able to “live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your . . . life” (Ecclesiastes 9:9), without having to regret past sexual sins. And finally, God wants you and your future spouse to be equal partners in preparing to become part of His great family in the Kingdom of God! CC

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s	c	r	a	m	b	l	e

*Each of the following sets of letters can be rearranged to spell out one of God’s annual festivals found in Leviticus 23. They are not in proper order. Beside them are spaces which may be used to enter the letters, spelling the festival’s name.*



MTERPTUS

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HEDIYCTAH

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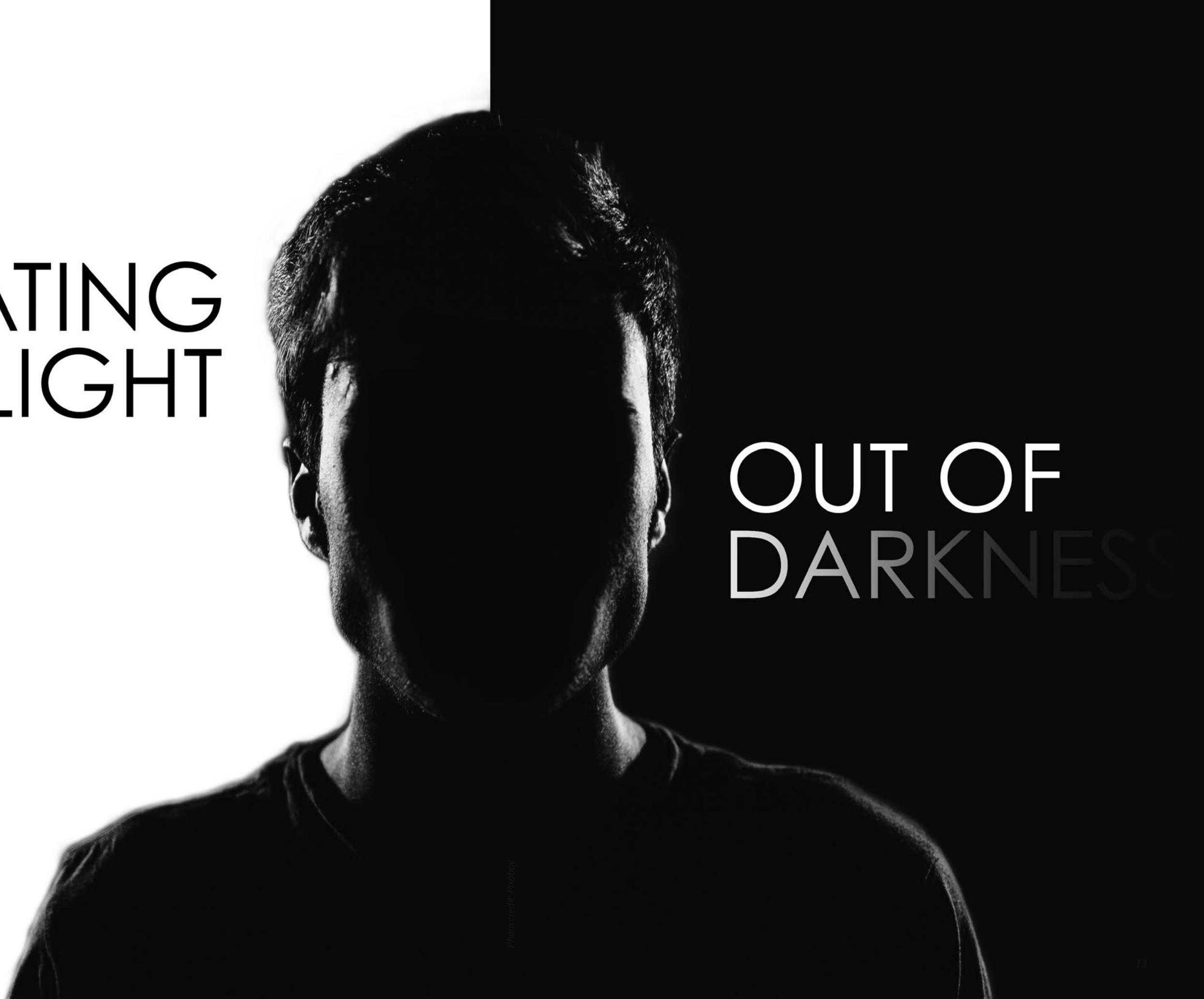
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# CREATING LIGHT



# OUT OF DARKNESS

Photo credit: Pixabay

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

—Dylan Thomas



son's plea for his father to fight death a little longer. As children of God, we have a similar calling to fight darkness—to not allow God's light in us to die out. We are called by God to be lights of the world. Unfortunately, it's easy for us to be tempted by the world and surrender our light to it.

The word "light" appears more than 300 times in the Bible. Light has over 30 definitions in the Hebrew and Greek languages alone. Being a light is obviously an important concept!

God created light out of darkness on the first day of creation—the word in Hebrew means to "illuminate." We've come to understand that this is referring to a restoration of light. This means that on the first day, God cleared the atmosphere in order for sunlight to shine on earth's surface. On the fourth day, He set two great lights in the firmament. This word for light refers to "bodies of light" that God perfectly aligned for signs, seasons, days and years (Genesis 1:14-17).

In English, the word "light" describes a

range of particles and waves traveling through space. The particles are called "photons," and the waves spread the photons out. The four basic properties required to create light are amplitude, wavelength, polarization and frequency. Using scientific concepts, let's see how these properties can illustrate aspects of God's calling!

#### How bright is your light?

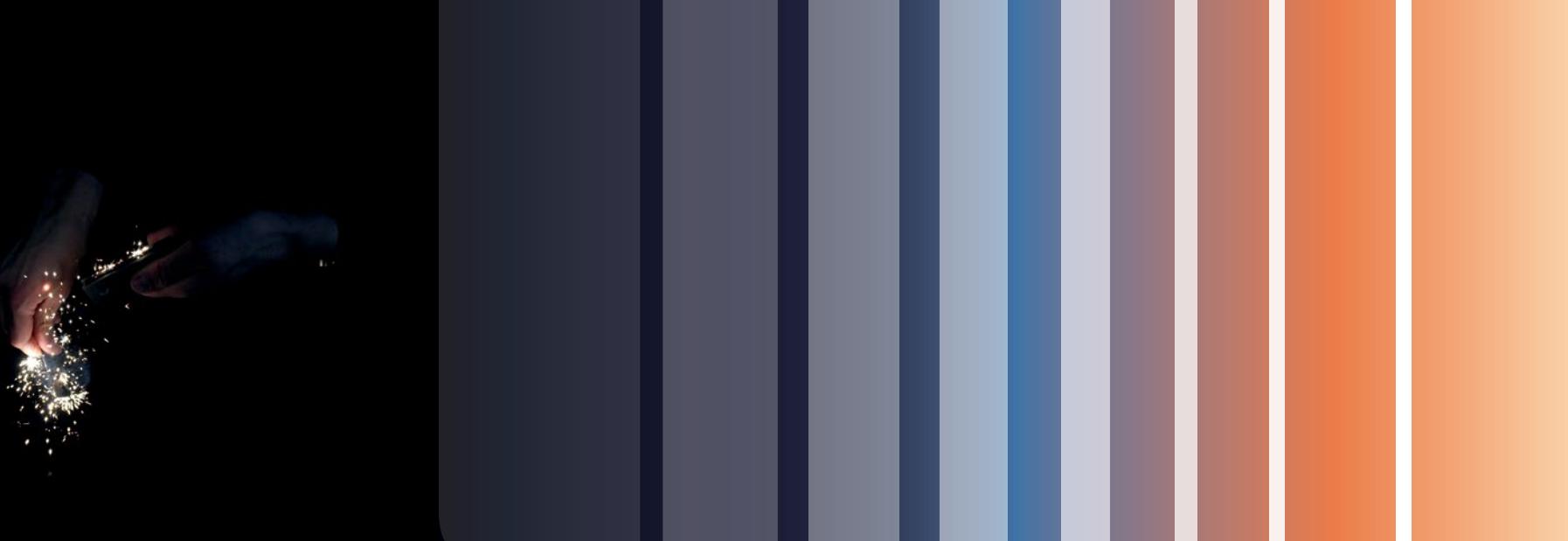
Photons are packets of energy that move at the speed of light (186,282 miles per second). Each photon travels along a wavelength, and the wavelength's energy determines the brightness of the light—its amplitude. The amplitude is measured by the amount of energy found in each wave.

As God's children, we can measure the light that we put off by the fruit that we produce. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)" (Ephesians 5:8-9). By walking as children of light, we are setting an example for others by intensifying our focus on God's truth.

#### What color is your light?

To understand lights of different color, we can measure the length of a light wave and the energy of each photon carried along that wavelength. The color of light changes based on the length of the wave. This enables us to differentiate between lights with different colors, along the visible spectrum. This is also true for us if we compare white light and colored light.

The color white signifies purity throughout the Bible. David was a man after God's own heart because he was constantly searching for purity. In Psalm 51:7 he cried out: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." How often do we actively pursue God's forgiveness and cleansing? Like David, we should be doing this daily.



An example of colored light is the rainbow. A visual promise that God will not destroy the earth again with a flood. I think we all get a little excited when we see a rainbow—especially if it's a double-rainbow. For me, I think of God's promise every time I see one. And that reminds me to be a better light for others.

What color is your light when you are at school or coming home from work? Are you a light of purity or a light of promise? As young people in the faith, we should learn to be both! If we are actively searching God's will in our lives, He promises to take care of us and never leave our side. And that includes you!

#### Can you alter your light?

Light polarization is most often shown as a line moving up and down. In reality, light waves can move in any direction. The angle the wave is moving off the path is called polarization. This makes it possible to reduce glare and increase clarity.

Think about the way you approach others throughout your life. I often find it beneficial to adjust my approach based on the person I'm communicating with. Jesus Christ was flawless in this area. In Luke 10, Jesus approached Martha with humility and deep concern by saying she was upset about too many things. In Matthew 16, He confronted Peter bluntly by saying, "Get behind me Satan: you are an offence to me"—this shows His perfect diligence in God's work.

To shine our lights more effectively, we must be ready to approach others in a manner that is most fitting for them. This requires us to get to know others better. But it also requires us

to pray for humility as we approach others so that we can shine our light from many different angles.

#### How abundant is your light?

The frequency of light has a direct connection to the wavelength. Frequency is the number of waves per second—the more waves there are, the higher the frequency. As a result, a shorter wavelength has a much higher frequency.

When we give of ourselves according to God's plan, He blesses that gift and multiplies it. Christ instructed His disciples, after watching a poor widow place two mites in the treasury, that she had given more than all the others because she gave from her poverty (Mark 12:42-44).

We can give many small gifts that will influence others in enormous ways. One of the biggest ways I've been influenced is by the Church camp program. No matter what role you're in at camp, watching others succeed in God's way is inspiring. We can spread this inspiration by tactfully explaining God's Holy Days to others, by declining an invitation to Halloween or Christmas parties, by saying no to peer pressure, by standing up against bullying—the list goes on and on.

In conclusion, consider Genesis 1:5, where God called the darkness "night." The word night in Hebrew means a "twist from the light." Satan tempts us with a path of darkness, but "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). We should strive to walk as children of light! CC



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“Living is hard,” a thoughtful 14-year-old student of mine once told me . . .

# W

e were in Bible class at a private school where I work as a substitute teacher, discussing eternal life. She had just realized that after death, which the Bible describes as “sleep,” it will be almost as if she’d never stopped living. The moment we fall asleep will seem connected immediately with when we wake. Surprisingly, she didn’t seem thrilled by this truth.

Many would grasp onto living longer as a precious gift of more time. You probably agree, since life is full—usually too full. I’m always wishing I could fit in another good deed or worthwhile accomplishment. But the limit to our life-span also motivates us to accomplish things. Imagine, given endless tomorrows, if we’d ever buckle down and do something today.

We know that eternal life in God’s Kingdom will not be like our present life in the flesh. The plan of God describes a first resurrection, a Millennium, a Great White Throne judgment and then a time when all of those who have turned to God are blessed to live as eternal spirit beings in the New Jerusalem. We know few details about that distant eternal life, but we do know that it will be a world of good, and only good, because it is designed and managed by a loving Almighty God. There will be no war, or pain or sorrow when God the Father gives His family the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:4). But today in our world, so many people suffer in hunger, oppression, disease and war because of sin and because this is Satan’s world.

But for a young person in a prosperous country, those aren’t the things making life hard. It’s the daily expectations of attending school, chores, making future decisions, and getting along with friends. For a sincere Christian young person, there is a duty to living life right that can feel like a tremendous burden. What if I make a mistake and ruin my life? How will I make a living? Will I ever meet someone I can marry? Anxiety seems like a constant companion.

We wouldn’t want to live an eternal life in fleshly bodies, and we also cannot live an eternal life with

a carnal mind. Today we willfully insist that we are right. We desire selfish activities rather than delayed gratification. We worry about the future. These would be poor companions in eternity. We feel burdened because of our internal struggle to choose right over wrong.

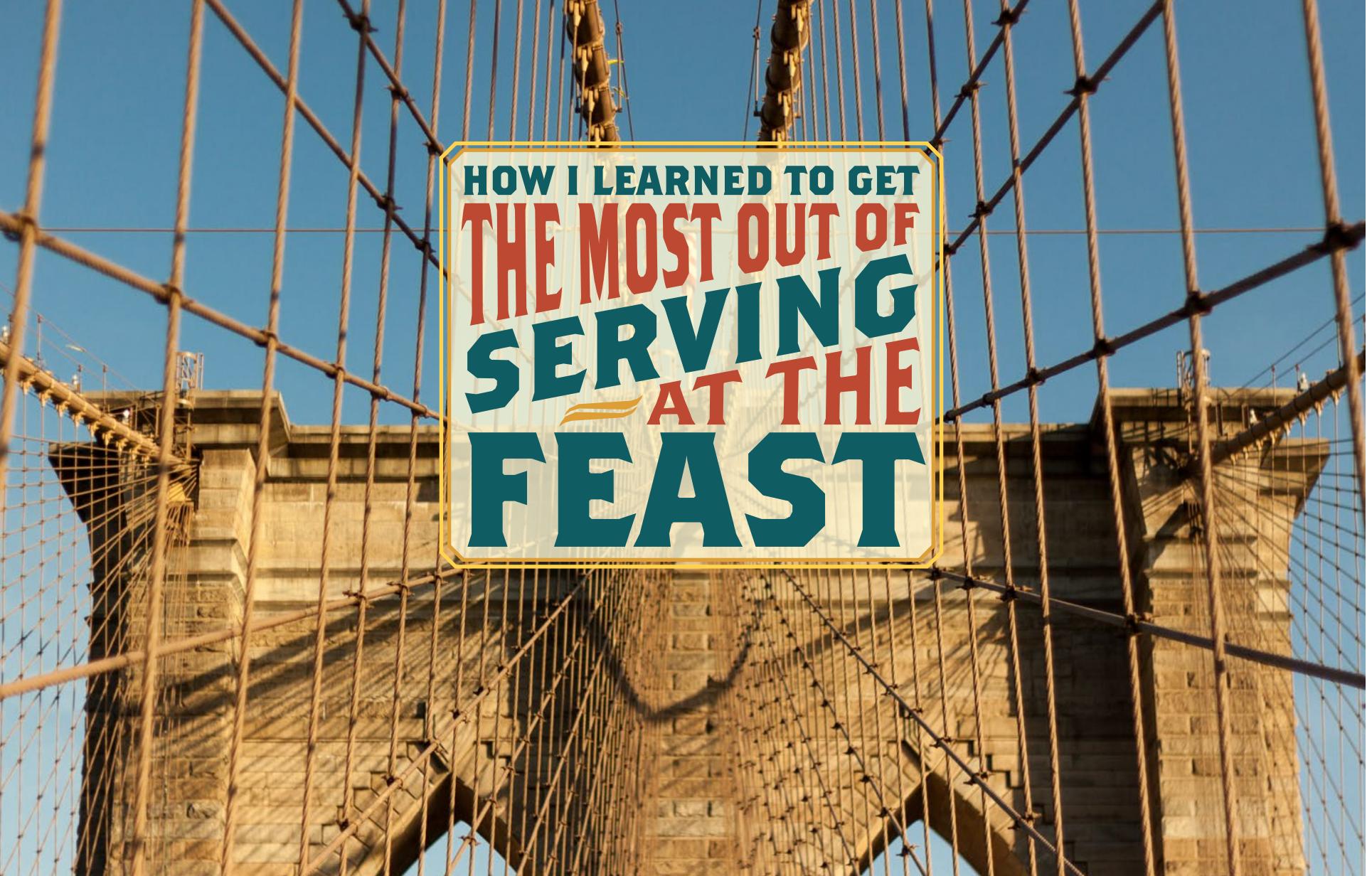
Living eternally will only be pleasurable because our minds will completely be like the mind of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Because of God fully in us, we will completely fulfill the will of God, always and perfectly. Consider some of our future tasks. We’ll work alongside and be under the leadership of other spirit beings. Most likely we will also be working with the angelic realm. Cooperative work, such as a group project, can be the most challenging type of work today. But as spirit beings in God’s Kingdom, we will have no conflict. We will know perfectly how to present our requests in the best possible way. We will be willing to submit to others’ ideas and not desire recognition. Amazing but true!

It’s hard for us to see the strength that comes from suffering or be content not knowing why events happen to us. It can seem that others intentionally cause hurt. We often feel that others want to see us fail or put us down unjustly. It will be so much different at the end of the third resurrection, when all those who have submitted to God are spirit beings in the Kingdom of God. Notice this in Revelation 21:4-5: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’”

Those with God’s Holy Spirit today overlook offenses, and as spirit beings in the Kingdom of God no one in eternity can ever sin. There is so much to look forward to because of God. God will emerge victorious over sin by changing each of our minds and hearts. When the entire family of God has the mind of God and is fully a part of His eternal family—life will no longer be hard. Life will be ever so much easier than what we face in this physical life. There will be no comparison! **CC**



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With the Feast of Tabernacles coming up so soon, you may have volunteered to serve. Whether you help with ushering, mother's room, singing in choir, or one of the many other areas, service adds a meaningful dimension to the Holy Days. Last Feast, I was given an amazing opportunity to help out, and I learned a valuable lesson: Serving *with* others is more rewarding than only serving *for* others.

For the past several years, I'd sung in festival choir. One year in choir, I met a girl about my age who not only sang with the rest of us, but accompanied one or two of the choir pieces. I guess

before that I really hadn't thought that much about helping out as a pianist at the Feast. At my local congregation I sometimes played hymns, and I'd taken many years of piano lessons. So I decided to volunteer the next year. Amazingly enough, they didn't have a choir pianist yet, so before long, I was practicing a handful of pieces for the Feast.

Well, as I learned the new songs, it seemed that many of the page turns were strategically placed where my hands most needed to stay on the piano. To fix this, I ended up making myself a very long, spread-out version of the music to play with. It barely balanced on the piano stand. "Do you need a page turner?" my mother asked. "No, I

*It's totally okay to ask for help. In fact, it's not just okay, it's biblical.*

can do it," I replied. Sure, huh?

One of the first things I wanted to do when my family arrived at the Feast was to try out the piano. It was just being set up, so as soon as it was in place, I tested it. There was no built-in music stand on the electronic keyboard I would be using. One member of the sound crew provided two music stands side-by-side and placed them right against the piano where I could read my long snake-like sheet music. It was a pretty good setup, except that in the somewhat dim light, I could barely make out the notes on the outermost pages, which draped off the edges of the music stands. I just grinned and bore it. But at the next practice, I found one of the music stands missing. It was needed elsewhere. Now what? This is when panic set in. I couldn't do this myself. "Do you need a page turner?" my mother asked again. "Okay, yes," I said, swallowing my pride. It was actually a relief to admit that I needed help.

It's totally okay to ask for help. In fact, it's not just okay, it's biblical. Take Proverbs 27:17, for instance: "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend." We are also taught to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

Well, there was this one girl who really wanted to join choir, but she was still young enough to sing with the children. She wasn't in adult choir that year. Being a page turner was an opportunity for her to participate. At first when I met her, it was kind of awkward to know what to say or do. And as I talked to her, I learned that she wasn't comfortable with reading music, though she was good at singing. However, she was a great help and learned quickly. It took us several rounds of practicing to get a good system going, but we eventually worked well together. She would follow along with the words and hold the page, ready to turn it as we neared the end. I would nod slightly before I needed it flipped.

Come to think of it, this all reminds me very much of an incident from Moses' life. The Israelites were fighting a battle, and it was soon discovered that whenever Moses held up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, and when his hands dropped, their enemies succeeded. Moses was getting weary, and there was just no way he could continue to hold his hands up for hours. We come to Exodus 17:12, which says: "But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun." Our friends are part of our strength!

Even more importantly, the real source of strength isn't really human. Psalm 28:7-8 points out: "The LORD is my strength and my shield," and, "The LORD is their strength." I should have kept that in mind all along.

Serving others is great, but I've learned that serving *with* others benefits even more people. The girl I learned to work with wouldn't have had a part in choir that year if I had insisted on working without a page turner. And as a side benefit, it helped me to get along with others better. This is not to say that we shouldn't ever get a job done by ourselves—it's just that at times it's better to get others involved. So as you serve at the Feast this year, look for ways to work for and *with* others. **CC**



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# COMPASS CHECK

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