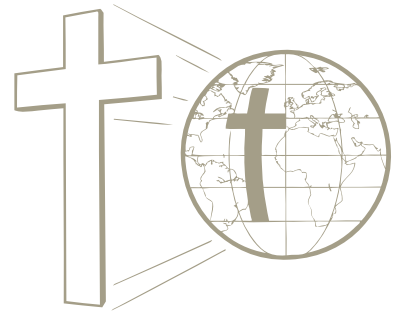


# Foundation of Faith



**REFORMATION**

*November 2013*

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## REFORMATION

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## Editorial

The change of the seasons brings us to a moment of reflection. The harvest has been gathered, the fields are bare, and the wind is separating the last remaining leaves from the trees. Nature is reminding us that everything eventually perishes and fades away.

We read in the Word of God: “The voice said, ‘Cry out!’ And he said, ‘What shall I cry?’ ‘All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever’ ” (Isaiah 40:6-8).

Everything in nature is transient, but there is one thing that remains forever: the eternal Word of God! This includes God’s everlasting promises, and the eternal life that is offered to us through Jesus Christ.

Yet we see changes not only in the seasons. People change and cause changes to happen. In Jeremiah 2:11 we read, “My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit.” It’s true: Every effort is made today to get rid of God’s Word, to obliterate His commandments and warnings. With wicked abandon, people commit the very sin we read about in Isaiah 5:20: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Dear reader, we are in desperate need of the solid principles that we find in the Word of God. Let us take a firm stand for God, for truth, and for righteousness, for no matter what happens in our world today, one thing is certain: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

H.D. Nimz

# Mission Field: Germany

*Startling statistics that should wake us up!*

With a mere 4% self-professing Christian population (and certainly even fewer evangelicals), Germany has become a greater mission field than many third world countries. The magazine *Idea Spectrum* reported on the annual meeting of the working group for evangelical missiology (Korntal). They noted that the various states of Germany belong to the most unchurched areas of the world.

Still, evangelical Christians prefer rather to involve themselves in foreign evangelism than to share the gospel in their own country. However, more and more missionaries from all over the world are coming to Germany. For example, there are officially 778 American missionaries and 351 Korean missionaries who are working in Germany (unofficially probably more).

A fitting cartoon illustrated the report in *Idea Spectrum*. Two foreign missionaries gazed upon a German city scene of grand buildings emblazoned with advertisements such as “Banking”, “Cinema – Satan’s Revenge”, “Horoscope”, “Sex Shop”, “Gambling” etc. Looking at the crowds of people, one missionary said to the other: “If we teach them the gospel, we will probably destroy some of their cultural identity...” This shows that “culture” is not actually neutral; it has religious ties. The former cradle of the Reformation is becoming an increasingly wicked cultural environment.

- from *Bethany News* No. 12, January 31, 2004

## Old Customs

*Customs can become entrenched. What is the meaning behind our ways of worship?*

It was the custom in a church in Jutland that everyone who walked through the door of the church respectfully bowed to the left. The seniors had done so, and the young carried on the tradition, year after year. Many times people had inquired about the reason for this custom, but to no avail, until finally the answer was discovered during church repairs. An old image of the virgin

Mary was found on the wall next to the church door which had been there from the time of the Reformation. The Catholic church members had bowed before this picture according to the custom of the time. When the church became Protestant, the image was painted over. Though meaningless, the custom of bowing remained.



# A Church in Ruins

*Is it really the delapidated state of a building that most grieves the heart of God?*

An artist was commissioned to paint a picture of a church in ruins. To everyone's amazement, instead of painting abandoned ruins, he painted a beautiful, pristine church. Through a grand doorway, people could see an ornately carved pulpit, a beautiful organ, and colorful light flooding the sanctuary through brilliant stained-glass windows.

However, in the alcove next to the entrance, a spider had woven a web. The web covered the church coffers that

bore the inscription, "Donations for Missions."

How insightful! Is a church in ruins one where offerings for God's work are forgotten, one where more emphasis is placed on maintaining a beautiful building than on spreading the message of Jesus Christ, one where nothing is missing except a living faith and an active love? Wherever such a church stands, there stands a ruin. Such a church lies dormant in a luxurious coffin. Where sacrificial giving ceases, spiritual life ends.

# The Power of a Gospel Tract

A young Frenchman was wounded in the Battle of Saint Quentin. As he lay recovering in the hospital, he saw a Bible tract on his blanket. He read it and sought the Lord Jesus Christ. A statue of this man with a Bible in his hands still stands in front of the Temple Protestant de l'Oratoire du Louvre in Paris today. The man was Admiral Gaspard de Coligny, leader of the Reformation in France.

However, the work of this short tract did not end with Admiral Coligny. The admiral's nurse, a nun, read the

tract and was convicted. She brought the tract to her abbess, and both the nurse and her superior found Jesus. She fled from France to Rhineland, where she met a young Dutchman whom she would later marry. The virtuous influence that she had on her husband would bless all Europe, for the man she married was William I, Prince of Orange, a champion of faith and freedom in the Netherlands.



# The Last Reformation

*“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him [not the beast nor his image] who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’ And another angel followed, saying, ‘Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.’ Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.’” (Revelation 14:6-10)*

## The Call to God’s People

The message is the same from both of these final angels and in both cases the two-part message follows the same order. First is the call: “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city” (v. 8). Then the people are warned about worshipping the beast and its image with the threat of severe punishment, the wrath of God. We find the same in the 18th chapter. The first angel calls, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen” (v. 2). Thereafter John heard “another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues’” (v. 4).

The results are given to us in chapter 15:2-3: “And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!’”

Although the woman – who represents the pure and holy early church – was driven into the “wilderness”, we thank God that she did not need to stay there forever. In this final reformation, she comes out of the wilderness

and returns to Zion as the bride of Christ. “Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” (Song of Solomon 8:5) “Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?” (Song of Solomon 6:10) It is the church of God.

The prophecies describing the last reformation are not restricted to the Book of Revelation. Zechariah, for instance, speaks of it: “It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the Lord – neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light” (Zechariah 14:6-7).

Daniel also saw the formation of the papacy and its long reign of darkness in a prophetic vision. He had the desire to understand these things and asked the question:

*‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. (Daniel 12:6-7)*

“A time, times, and half a time” is a prophetic expression that is equal to 42 months or 1260 years, the exact length of the reign of the papacy. This was followed by a time of dispersion that started when Protestantism came into being. The people of God were scattered into hundreds of sects. But, to God be the glory, this dispersion had an end when the people of God received new light and insight.

*Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, ‘My Lord, what shall be the end of these things?’ And he said, ‘Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end.’ (Daniel 12:8-9)*

In the “time of the end”, the people of God should understand all these things, for they have already happened. It is at this time that the dispersion of the children of God has its end as well. This points to the last reformation. The following verse shows what will happen: “Many shall be purified, made white, and refined” (Daniel 12:10).

This spiritual movement was also foretold by the

prophet Ezekiel. In the 34<sup>th</sup> chapter he compares the people of God with sheep: “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture” (v. 31). The sheep of the Lord are portrayed as oppressed, driven away, misused, and scattered by false shepherds. Indeed, God says, “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill (from one sect to another); yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them” (v. 6).

We need to carefully read the whole chapter in Ezekiel. It first gives a complete picture of what God’s people experienced while being scattered in the dark and cloudy days of Protestantism. The final reformation movement is foretold however in the 11th and 12th verses: “For thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.’”

Having acknowledged this truth and having heard the voice of God calling for unity, the people of God cannot stay in these places to which they were scattered and still retain true spiritual life. Babylon has fallen, and they who remain in her will also fall. To remain there and to be joined with the godless and graceless lovers of the world only means the ultimate loss of spiritual life. The apostle Paul spoke words containing a principle that is applicable here: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)*

The call of God commands all in these last days to leave Babylon, for she has fallen. Dear Reader, have you already heard this heavenly call? Someone says, “I don’t believe it!” Jesus says, “You do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. [...] My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:26-27). These are those of whom the Lord spoke through the prophet Ezekiel:

*As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. (Ezekiel 34:12)*

### **They Will Be Called to Zion**

Now that the people of God have heard this heavenly call to come out of Babylon, and they have heeded this voice, where then should they go? Should the children of God wander around in the spiritual wilderness of the earth, independent of one another? No! Let us allow the Word of God to direct us in this matter as well.

The experiences of Israel in the Old Testament are in many ways similar to the experiences of the church of the New Testament. Just as Israel was captive to Babylon, so the church of God was also captive to a spiritual Babylon. And just as the physical Babylon was defeated and fell, thereby freeing the Jews, so the spiritual Babylon has also fallen. The same challenge is issued to the people of God that are inside: “Come out from her!”

Now what did the people of Israel do once they were freed from Babylon? – They returned as one to the mountain of Zion, to the City of God, where the temple in all its glory had previously stood. They also immediately began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and reconstruct the temple, and the blessing of God rested on their actions. The construction project in Jerusalem made good progress, for “the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6). It should be the same way with those who have fled from the spiritual Babylon: “And 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 35:10). The goal of such a movement is the re-establishment of a pure church – a holy spiritual temple of God, as it was in the days of the apostles – a church that is moved by the Holy Spirit, filled with Him and attired in the power and glory of God.

All believers had unity at the time of the apostles, and now the special message from God calls for a return to such a unity. The reformation is now in progress, and the truly spiritual are already working, as they have received a “mind to work”. They are now co-laborers with God. “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matthew 12:30).

F. G. Smith (1880-1947)

# Thoughts Concerning the Last Reformation

*At a Christian conference in Chicago in 1979, Dr. Jerry Falwell said that the second generation of every reformation movement tends to lead the movement back to the place from which it emerged. We should ask ourselves if this is also true for the reformation movement of the Church of God.*

Logically, this begs another question that needs to be answered: “Do we have the right to call ourselves the Church of God if we leave the biblical foundation on which the pioneers based the movement?”

In his book *The Last Reformation*, F.G. Smith writes: “the final reformation is on. ‘Final,’ I say, because it leaves nothing to be restored as regards either doctrine, practice, or spirit. It stands committed to the restoration of the whole truth and the harmonious unity of all true Christians in one Christ-ruled, Spirit-filled body. In short, it stands committed to the restoration of apostolic Christianity in its entirety—its doctrines, its ordinances, its personal regenerating and sanctifying experiences, its spiritual life, its holiness, its power, its purity, its gifts of the Spirit, its unity of believers, and its fruits. This reformation will continue until it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth” (p. 254).

He continues: “This reformation is the movement of God. It is not a humanly organized movement depending for its success on the ability of men to persuade people to leave other churches and join them. God Himself is breaking down the barriers that divide, and in response to His call the redeemed are forsaking human sects and creeds, and their hearts are flowing together. The center of this movement is not a particular geographical location, nor is its nucleus a particular set of fallible men: the center and nucleus of this world-wide movement is OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, and its operative force is the SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, which draws the faithful together in bonds of holy love and fellowship” (pp. 255-256).

When we read the history of the reformation move-

ment, when we examine the doctrines that the pioneers preached and compare them to the Word of God, when we see the fruit of their labors in the lives of individuals, we need to become reflective. We need to be wary of accepting so-called new truths, repeating without discretion what others may advocate.

The biblical name “Church of God” is important, but we must remember that the name alone does not guarantee that we are saved, because it is written: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). The church in Sardes had the correct name, but was dead. How about us? What would the Lord say about us personally? What would He say about the congregation we attend?

If we want to be the church of God in its biblical sense, then we need to be familiar with the Bible. Few people that go to church today read their Bible in a systematic manner. Even pastors who recite Bible verses by memory may not read the Bible regularly. Let us live in the Word of God, then we will not go astray.

Prayer is as important as reading the Word. A personal prayer life for every child of God is vital for spiritual life. Though someone says a prayer every morning and evening, and perhaps prays in church on a Wednesday or Sunday as well, this does not necessarily mean they lead a life of prayer. Many people claim that they do not have a lot of time to dedicate to prayer. These opinions should not deter us. Let us, genuinely and in faith, abide before the throne of grace, and the Lord will strengthen our faith, and signs and miracles will follow.

The aged prophet Samuel gave King Saul an important prerequisite for spiritual growth. He said: “Has the LORD



as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). The danger for Saul and for us is that we want to decide which of God’s commands we wish to obey, and which are no longer relevant today. Saul came to ruin through disobedience. Let us not forget that!

Experience shows us that God, in His Word, gives us laws which can protect us if we follow them. The Apostle Paul writes: “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

In the world we find proud rulers. Extravagance and impressing others is the norm. If we wish to be the church of God and be led by the Holy Spirit, so that God can be glorified among us, then we need to heed this Word of the Lord. If humans set themselves up to rule, then God will be against them. What a terrible state to be in!

In a world of infidelity and false doctrines, we can still walk in the way of holiness through the grace of God. We need not fear because Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). He also gave his us this important promise: “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

With God’s help we want to proclaim this wonderful message, so that many might still leave darkness and confusion and find salvation!

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Smith, F. G. (1919, May 6). *The Last Reformation*. Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet Company.



# Counterfeit Conversions

*There is great joy in heaven when a sinner repents, when a person is born again. Sadly, however, there are conversions that are not healthy, not life-bringing. A counterfeit conversion deceives not only the one who professes, but often those with whom he worships.*

*“They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a treacherous bow.” (Hosea 7:16)*

There are people who have made an experience that is similar to a conversion. However, because the reason for seeking conversion was not pure, the power of God to live a holy life is absent. Their bow is drawn, but the arrow, when released, falls rather than flies. Their aim is not directed toward God. They desire the benefits of salvation more than salvation itself, and are therefore never truly converted.

## *Emotional Conversions*

Emotion is certainly an important element in the conversion of a soul. But if conversion is the result of feelings only, it is a false conversion. Such people soon fall away when faced with tribulation or persecution (Matthew 13:21). Others can eloquently and emotionally relate their conversion story in the audience of God’s children, but little or nothing of a truly changed life can actually be seen. These people are a great detriment to the church, and many are prevented from coming to Jesus because of them.

## *Rational Conversions*

There are people who understand with their minds what conversion is. But that’s where it stops. Conversion remains a matter of the mind for them; they never experience it with their heart. True faith is more than offering mental assent. It is a childlike trust that comes from the profound awareness of one’s sin and one’s complete and utter dependence upon God.

## *Half Conversions*

Half conversions are observed where a life has been changed to a certain degree, but radical repentance has never materialized. Some may have renounced major sins, but continue to indulge in minor, private ones. Others neglect to consecrate their money and possessions to

the Lord, their hearts unable to relinquish what satisfies them most. They will experience what Judas did unless a deep, intense change takes place in their hearts. Some neglect to order their past life, which includes making restitution for ill-gotten gains or reconciling with one’s neighbors. All of these duties are a necessary part of a complete conversion. They relieve the conscience. Nothing and no one can any longer bring up an accusation.

## *For-Profit Conversions*

These are conversions for a profit, often a sinister one. Simon the Sorcerer converted only because he too wanted to bestow the gift of the Holy Spirit on others – but his heart was never touched. Some people see material gain in being spiritually converted. They may, for example, hope to dump their financial debt on the church by becoming a Christian. Any and all of these types of conversions are doomed. The booklet *Thoughts about Marriage* contains the following story:

*A bachelor showed interest in a wealthy, godly widow who had a sizeable annual income. He pretended to be godly, led devotions, and prayed on his knees until finally he captured the heart of the widow. But already on their wedding day (after exchanging vows) he started physically abusing her. And thus began her life of misery with this man. She was forced to leave him eventually, receiving only meager financial support from him.*

There are many more for-profit conversions like this.

## *Conversions, But Not to God!*

Let us read this verse in the English Standard Version: “They return, but not upward.” These people do not aim for God in conversion. Some may convert to the minister of the gospel instead of to Jesus. Others think that by joining a local church they are converted, but they detour true reconciliation with God. Some believe they are converted on account of being faithful members of a church. Jesus alone must be the goal of our conversion. We are to seek those things which are above and not below. Con-

# Church Membership

version is a return to the most high God!

## *Emergency Conversions*

We often find this type of conversion among those who are gravely ill. They are seldom genuine. A nurse remarked: “Most of the young men on my ward are converted when facing death; but when they get well I tremble. A young man was converted here and everyone believed his conversion was authentic. He did not die after all and got well instead. When he left the hospital, he went straight to a bar to get wasted with his friends.”

Spurgeon kept a record of a thousand people who, while facing certain death, expressed sorrow over their ways. When their health was miraculously restored to them, only three exhibited the marks of a changed life. Many people turn to prayer when faced with adversity, but only a few continue to follow God when the hardship has passed. Dear reader, can you see the risk in depending on a “deathbed conversion”? Seek the Lord while you are still in good health. The time to accept salvation is when you are able to act soberly and deliberately. The younger a person is, the easier it is to be saved.

## *Why are there so many false and unhealthy conversions?*

Often, false teaching is the reason. A person can only be as genuinely converted as he has received genuine light about the nature of conversion. Another reason is that many simply do not want to break from their former lives. They balk at complete surrender and the humility required for repentance and faith.

Dear reader, may this article serve as a warning sign for you to seek true salvation. If you identify yourself as a counterfeit convert, repent and turn with your whole being to God so that you will not be eternally lost.

The pastor of a church said to me one day, “I am hearing that the church of God has no membership and does not believe in it.” I answered him that he had been misinformed, that we do indeed believe in membership, but only according to the New Testament.

The Holy Scriptures are unmistakably clear in the area of church membership. He who attentively reads the New Testament acknowledges that the church is a divine organism that consists of saved people. The single requirement of its membership is the new birth.

In Acts 2:47, we read, “the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”. This text expresses two important points. First: “the Lord added”; and second, it was “those who were being saved” that the Lord added to the church.

The church is not a human organization such as a fraternity or club that you can officially join. Many people believe this and they are mistaken. We become members of the family of God by being born again spiritually.

Paul said that the church is the body of Christ: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27). If this is true, then there can only be one way to become a member of the body, “which is the church” (Colossians 1:24), and that is through salvation.

Only those who are saved, who have been freed from sin, and have become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) are the true members of the church of the New Testament.

Because the Bible teaches that the church is an organization of saved people, no one should claim to be a member of the church who is not saved. He who does brings shame to the body of Christ. He who testifies to be a member of the church must be able to sincerely say that he is a Christian, for membership without salvation through Christ is impossible in the true church.

Yes, the church of God believes in membership, but only in the kind that bases its foundation on a relationship with God. Only they whose names are written in the Book of Life are members of His church.

# What Happened to Solomon?

In his early adulthood, Solomon was noted for his deep piety and fervent love of righteousness. When he became king, he found a great work ready for his hand, and he set about the task with a glad heart. To build a temple for Jehovah was his delight, and he threw his whole strength into it. His prayer at the dedication of the temple shows a deeply reverent and submissive spirit.

As the years went by, he increased in riches and honor. His name became synonymous with wisdom. Many nations paid him tribute. Yet despite all these successes, his heart held true to God. It seems that during these years he had no intention but to continue in the same manner until the end, that he should live out his life as a true servant of Jehovah, and that his life's sun would go down in a blaze of glory. Sadly, however, it was not to be so. We who know his history know the dark shadow that came over his life. We know how its radiance faded away into the night. We do well to analyze the factors that led to his downfall.

Let's be certain first that there was no change in Jehovah. Neither was there a change in Solomon's duty toward Him. The change that led to the disaster was in Solomon himself. For political reasons, Solomon married princesses of the royal houses around him. These women were idolaters. They regarded Jehovah as only the national god of the Hebrews. They still clung to their old religions, and worshiped the gods of their nations. Their feelings and sentiments were all in favor of idolatrous worship. Solomon withstood these influences for a long time. His heart held true to God, but these influences kept on working. He was in daily contact with them; and consequently we read, "It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father" (1 Kings 11:4). As a result, the

man who had been so honored by God and who had so honored God became an idolater, put his Lord to an open shame, and was drawn away into the same net of idolatry as many of his people.

What a lesson there is in this for us! What a warning there is in his example! When young Christians marry sinful partners, the final result is generally the same as it was with Solomon. But it is not only through such marriages that hearts are turned away from the Lord; there are many other alliances that will influence us likewise if we are not careful. We are strongly influenced by the actions of others. That influence is constantly working, whether we are conscious of it or not. In the life of Joash we see an example of the power of influence. He was brought up by Jehoiada, the high priest, a man who feared God, and as a result of his godly influence upon the young king, Joash grew up to be a man who feared God. During the lifetime of Jehoiada, Joash did that which was right and good in the sight of the Lord. He was a good king as long as he had a good teacher and was under proper influence. But when Jehoiada died, other influences were brought to bear upon the king. He yielded to them, and instead of continuing to be a godly king, he became a wicked one. Thus, his life experience is parallel to that of Solomon. They were glorious in their youth and young adulthood, but in their old days they dishonored their God and themselves, and in consequence their sun went down in darkness, and their lives were blighted and sullied.

With these two examples before us, we do well to heed what the Scripture says, "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). When we are serving the Lord, it is natural for us to suppose that we will continue on to the end. We do not think that we will yield to any wicked influence that will draw us away from the Lord. But sadly, how many, like Solomon, have their



*"Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)*

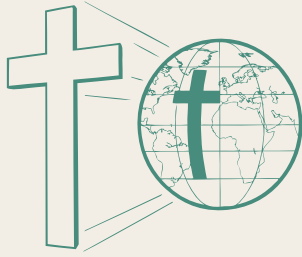
hearts turned away by the influences that are brought to bear upon them! Solomon himself said, "Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23), but he failed to do this. The silent and subtle workings of those evil influences worked in his heart something that he did not know was taking place. He did not realize that he was being alienated from God, that his love had become cold, and that his zeal for Him had cooled. To him, the God of Israel became only as one of the other gods.

There are influences brought to bear upon you each day and each hour, my friend. Do you know what these influences are? Do you know how they are working? Do you know what effect they are having upon your heart and your life, upon your thoughts and your soul's attitude? Are you diligently guarding yourself against every evil influence? Look into your life and see if there is any evil influence to which you have been gradually and unconsciously yielding. Has the world been getting closer to you through the years? Does it have more attractions for you than it had in the days gone by? Do its pride and vanity, its frivolity and ungodliness seem less obnoxious

to you than they did before? Does the Word of God take less hold upon your conscience now than formerly? Is the voice of duty speaking in your soul in the same clear terms as before? And does it find your soul as ready to respond? Are the service and worship of God still so sweet and satisfying? Is it your delight to give what you can for the spread of the gospel? Or has covetousness, little by little, been working into your heart until it has taken root there? Do you love material things less or more than formerly? Is your consecration just as real and just as complete as it was?

If you are coming short in any of these things, what has been the influence that has worked to bring it about? Make a good, careful examination of the situation. If you have been drifting, beware lest your heart be entirely turned away from the Lord. Find out what influences are working. Watch and defend your heart against them, overcome their influences, counteract their powers, and stand for God. It is only in this way that you can serve Him faithfully to the end, and that you can be triumphant when the call comes for you to stand in His presence.





# Radio Broadcast

## The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs  
Kitchener, Ontario

# Spiritual Shallowness – What Does It Signify?

*“Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men. They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak.” (Psalm 12:1-2)*

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.” (2 Timothy 4:3)*

A preacher described the spiritual status of the early church in a booklet. He wrote, “I continually look back on the biblical account of the early Christians. They had the Spirit, power, and life! Everything seemed so different than it is now. Sometimes I am overwhelmed by the fear that we as Christians are just acting out a play. I wonder if our entire Christian walk is just a show.” Then he asked: “Have our lives truly been changed? Have we really left sin behind? Have our relationships been transformed through Him who has promised to ‘make all things new’ (Revelation 21:5)? Will our spiritual state be sufficient for salvation if we had to face death today? Do we radiate this conviction?”

The writer paints a woeful picture with these questions. He describes a situation where there is no progress, only decline. We sense his great concern, and are aware that it was obviously warranted.

If we apply this description to our time, the outcome is very similar. The spiritual state of many who call themselves “Christians” does not align with the biblical truths and teachings of the New Testament. The root of the

problem is the lack of a strong spiritual foundation, and the result is lukewarmness.

In a recent conversation I heard someone talk of her past experiences. Among other things, she said, “For a number of years I attended a church where everything was very orderly. One noticed the humble and reverent attitude of the people. The preaching was good and was accepted prayerfully. One felt at ease in the trusting relationships within the church. But today everything has changed. A distinct attitude of indifference and superficiality has crept in. Even the preaching is different. One no longer feels connected with others or drawn to be there.” What an unfortunate situation! A few days later I received a phone call from someone who shared a similar story. —The cause of this trend is spiritual shallowness!

Spiritual shallowness is the opposite of spiritual depth. If a group or church is experiencing spiritual shallowness, then the Holy Spirit is hindered from working. An inner shallowness, no matter how it becomes evident, can only stem from a spirit of lukewarmness and indifference.



In contrast, the Holy Spirit will always lead a spiritually-orientated church, family, or individual deeper into truth. This is why it is so important for the Spirit to have unrestricted freedom to work in the church, in our homes, and in our personal lives. Only this will allow one to experience inner growth and the protection from spiritual shallowness.

Our Bible texts describe the reality of spiritual shallowness as well. In Psalm 12, where David mourns the disappearance of the faithful, he is not only referring to their physical death. Taken in context, he is describing the pride, hypocrisy, and divided hearts of the people. Such conditions are disabling. However, whoever is under the power of the Holy Spirit will have the strength to withstand. The Holy Spirit works against all spiritual decline and falling away. This is why the righteous will not fall; instead, “the righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar”(Psalm 92:12).

In the second Bible text, Paul describes a time when people will no longer “endure” sound doctrine. They will turn away from the truth and go back to following fables. They will find their own teachers according to their desires. These are the reasons behind spiritual shallowness. And such a trend, where it is detected, is to be taken very seriously!

In the third chapter of the book of Revelation we read of a shallow church that did not even recognize its own spiritual condition. The church had been blinded by self-satisfaction and self-deception. They had fallen completely into a lukewarm mind-set and they had cast Jesus out! The warning they received forced them to make a decision: either return to God or be removed from Him forever. Their only hope for salvation was true repentance.

What then does spiritual shallowness signify? It points to some underlying failings: the lack of clear, biblical preaching; the failure to admonish, to instruct, and enlighten; and the failure to be vigilant and concerned with helping others. These failures are often perpetrated by those who are responsible for preaching the Word. The elder of the church in Sardis was commanded to “be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Revelation 3:2). What a serious and clearly necessary admonition! If a disease is not diagnosed early on and treated accordingly, it can spread past the point of remedy. The danger of spiritual shallowness is equally grave.

The cause for spiritual decline can also be attributed to the congregation. This can happen when listeners neglect to be attentive, obedient, willing, and discerning. James writes, “the wisdom from above is...peaceable [and] willing to yield”(James 3:17). This offers a remedy to shallowness.

Spiritual superficiality is also the result when the Holy Spirit is absent. We can be assured that wherever the Holy Spirit cannot work there will be shallowness and decline. We must remember that the reprimand, “be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Revelation 3:2) applies to us also.



# A Holy Life

*Do we become like the angels?*

*“Not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

This passage teaches us that God expects a holy life. “Be holy, for I am holy” is a quote from the Old Testament when God was speaking to Moses. Jesus reiterates these words in the Sermon on the Mount when He says in Matthew 5:48: “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

We are to be holy and perfect like God! Is this even possible? How can we as weak, mortal men be holy and perfect like the eternal, almighty God? In the above quoted passage, Peter gives his readers the testimony that they are holy in their walk with God. This provides us with clear proof that the Christians living during that time when the letter was written were leading holy lives. Through this we can be certain that it is also possible to lead a holy life in our time.

But what does a holy, perfect life mean? Is it a sinless perfection like the holy angels have? That is not what the Scriptures are suggesting. Paul directs 1 Corinthians at those “called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2) and warns about grievances, which would be unthinkable among the angels.

So what kind of holiness and perfection does God expect of us? It is first the perfection of a new life. When we are truly born again, we are, to a certain extent, holy and perfect. Dear reader, have you ever held a tiny baby in your arms? Although this little being is capable of almost nothing, he is in a sense perfect. He is a true, complete person because there is life in him. Being born again is similar to this. Because this new, eternal life is of God, it is also holy and perfect. This new life from God has features and characteristics by which we recognize that it is truly of God.

The principal characteristic of a holy life is the freedom

from sin. Through salvation we are freed from the power of sin. We no longer have to sin but can have victory in every temptation. Yes, God's expectation of us is that we no longer sin. Please read Romans 6:2, 18 & 22; 1 John 3:9; John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:34.

The holy life bears fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in us. It is, practically speaking, the denial of ungodliness and worldly lusts; a chaste, righteous, and god-pleasing life in this sinful and corrupt world (Titus 2:11-12). It is a love for God and man; it is joy, coming from a strong belief in God's goodness and the assurance of our salvation. It is peace with God, with ourselves, with our relatives, and our neighbors; it is patience towards those who slander or misunderstand us, or towards our enemies. It is goodness, which emanates from our character, and faith in God during periods of trial; it is gentleness that provides serenity in the face of grievances. And finally, it is temperance in all things (Galatians 5:22). We understand a holy life to include the faithful keeping of promises; freedom from greed; freedom from pride in the heart, as well as in our lifestyle and daily walk; a calm temper; honesty; diligence; and love for lost souls. It also means to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39).

Dear reader, the Bible shows us a life that is completely different than the life we had before our conversion. It is a new life; a life that a godless person cannot live; a life that we are to live presently (not just in eternity) in the midst of an evil and perverse generation; a life that gives all honor to Him who gave it to us in the first place - a holy life.

Robert Witt  
Gifhorn, Germany



# The Morning of the Reformation

*In his book, "Pioneer Evangelism", H. M. Riggle (1872-1952) recalled how the truths of the Bible were first introduced to his region in the winter of 1888 – 1889.*

I was a boy sixteen years old, and the first night of the service walked four miles to the meeting. I went mostly out of curiosity. Brother Clayton (1852 – 1904) preached. I think he read about fifty texts of Scripture. The reference method of preaching was generally used among the brethren then. He presented a point, then proved it by a text out of the Bible. It seemed that each text explained the previous one. I never before heard such preaching. That first sermon made a deep impression on my mind. I said to the boys on the way home from the meeting, "That man preaches the Bible. He proves everything by the Word of God."

I went the second night. Brother Koonce preached on the subject of the church. My wife (or the girl who later became my wife, then a girl of fourteen) and her father rode horseback several miles to this meeting. They were holiness people who belonged to the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. At the close of the sermon an invitation was given, and my wife's father went forward to the altar. I watched and listened. Brother Clayton asked him, "Have you come to be saved?"

"No," he replied, "I am saved."

"Do you desire to consecrate for entire sanctification?"

"No, I am sanctified."

"Then what are you here for?"

I shall never forget the reply: "I am here to consecrate out of sect-Babylon."

That night settled it for him. My father-in-law was the first one in the neighborhood to take a firm stand outside of human organizations, and soon his entire family and many others followed. During that meeting a considerable congregation was raised up for the present truth.

A few weeks later Brother D. S. Warner and company

came. They arrived in spring-wagons from Blanco, PA., a distance of about thirty miles. I was working with my father in the field when they passed down the road singing, "The River of Peace" and shouting "Hallelujah." We never before witnessed such a scene. I attended all the services. The spiritual singing from *Songs of Victory* and *Anthems from the Throne* simply captured us. We had never heard such beautiful singing. Brother Warner's preaching was all doctrinal. During his sermons, sometimes nearly all those who believed as he did were on their feet with uplifted hands and shining faces shouting and praising God. It was not unusual for Brother Warner to leap and shout in the pulpit. All this was new and strange to us; but I was never able to shake off the convictions that fastened on my heart, that these people had a genuine heart-felt religion, and preached the clean, Bible truth. In my heart I said, "I want their kind of religion."

Later, other companies of evangelists came, among them Brothers A. J. Kilpatrick, S. L. Speck, J. A. Dillon, and W. G. Schell. I attended all their meetings, and became more and more convinced of the truth they preached. But all this time I was a Lutheran in form. To keep in with the popular crowd, I even made light of these new preachers and people, and professed to be against them, while deep in my heart I admired them and their teachings, and longed to cast my lot with the true church of God. I am certain there are thousands just like I was. In their hearts they are convinced of the teaching, but are ashamed and afraid to acknowledge it publicly.

H.M. Riggle

Excerpted from *Pioneer Religion or Experiences and Observations at Home and Abroad*. In the public domain.

## TESTIMONIES FROM THE BIBLE COURSE IN AYLMER

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

We look back with great joy and gratitude on the Bible Course that took place in Aylmer from August 12-23. We discovered what great treasures are to be found in God’s Word. There were a total of 56 students registered. Brothers F. Friesen, M. Kehler, H. Klinger, G. Mielke and R. Taron presented different topics in their sessions. We received various practical pointers for our personal Bible study and also how one can memorize Bible verses better. Through the study of the book of Revelation and the end times, we learned the needs and problems the church has been confronted with throughout history. But a look into the prophesied future showed us that God is the victor and will preserve His church.

Our faith was strengthened and placed on a firm foundation. We discussed various biblical truths: Jesus’ Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension; Pentecost; the church of God; and Jesus’ return. These truths are fundamental elements of our faith. We also found Scripture passages that defend Bible truths against critical questions and anti-biblical hypotheses.

In the course entitled “The True Nature of Grace,” we rediscovered God’s love and His plan of salvation for man. We also went on a journey back to Moses’ time to look at the symbols of the Old Testament (i.e. the Tabernacle, the Priesthood and

the Feasts) and recognized in them a foreshadowing of the New Testament.

Finally, we studied the practical topic “Relationships and Marriage.” We saw the importance of preparing ourselves for this great life decision by seeking God’s guidance.

God was present in each class and blessed us. His Holy Spirit revealed to us the awesome depth of His divinity.

Theresa Vogt  
Gifhorn, Germany

The 2013 Bible Course in Aylmer was the first such event I attended, and I found it to be a very rewarding experience. Spiritually, I was refreshed every day. I found it to be a great blessing to be around God’s people for a prolonged time and to really feel His presence. Even though we had a very busy schedule, I was able to get a lot of spiritual rest. I really thank God for letting me attend the Bible Course and, really, for sparking an interest in me to attend it in the first place. The experience has given me a new thirst and hunger for His Word and for His presence in my daily life. If God permits, I am planning to attend the Bible Course again next year!

Julia Guse  
Winnipeg, MB

The week before coming to the Bible Course we had a Youth Conference at our local church. God started to show me how shallow my Christian life really was. I thought that not doing



wrong, studying the Bible, helping other people, and so on were the fundamentals of being a Christian. At least that is how I acted. Also, the church or local congregation seemed to not be so important anymore. I mean – we can still follow Jesus Christ without going to church, right?

At the Bible Course, I was shown how beautiful, motivating, and encouraging it is to have fellowship with other Christians, and that it is very important to fellowship with people that follow Christ. The student testimony and prayer meetings were such a blessing! I realized that as Christians we are not alone with our problems.

God also showed me that I need to surrender my all to Him and need to be sanctified so that He can truly work in my life. I was especially impacted by Pastor Kehler's dedication to God and the Bible, and I thank God that He let us have him as a teacher.

The topics that we studied were a great help. Since mid-2012, I had been struggling with some doctrinal questions, and was very confused at times. I used secondary materials more than the Bible and jumped from one conclusion to another. Learning how to study the Bible, and studying the Old Testament Symbols has greatly helped me in searching for God's answers.

I thank God for letting me attend the Bible Course this year, and for blessing me so richly. I am also thankful for all the pastors and their sacrifice, for the Aylmer congregation, the kitchen staff, the hosting families, and my fellow classmates.

Hilda Neufeld  
Neustaedt, Mexico

I feel very privileged to have been able to participate in the Bible Course again this year. It was such a blessing to be immersed in God's Word with a group of like-minded people for two weeks. For me, this Bible Course was a time for refocusing on what is important, and for solidifying biblical truths. After spending four years at university and being so loudly preached at to be tolerant and politically correct for fear of offending someone, it was refreshing to spend time with godly people who are more focused on what God thinks than what others think. I was reminded that God's truth stands even when everyone else has blurred the lines. The teachers were a great blessing as they presented the material God had laid on their hearts, and I'm so thankful that they let God use them to show us His truth.

Heather Ens  
Aylmer, ON

Going to the Bible Course in Canada was such a blessing for me. I used to read the Bible and I couldn't get much out of it; so I read it very little and was usually quite discouraged when I did. I learned so much more than I ever expected. Hearing about parables and their meanings was such an eye opener. It made reading the Bible so much more interesting. I also learned quite a bit about Biblical symbology (different scriptural symbols) and what they mean. This has helped me to understand what I'm reading in a whole new way. I am so thankful that I had this opportunity.

Jon Neufeld  
Seminole, TX

*(Continued on page 26)*



# Experiences with God

*“I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds.” (Psalm 77:11, 12)*

The apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, recalled the genuine faith of the young minister’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (1 Timothy 1:5). I, too, have many fond memories of my grandfather Reich.

The economic and political distress that followed WWI aroused a longing in many people for a “land of milk and honey”. Thus, my grandfather and his young bride, together with their two little daughters, decided to board a large ship that was destined for Canada. More than once he told me: “The honey grew on the blossoming trees, and the milk came from the cows.”

Still, the beginning was extremely difficult. Fortunately, he brought his axe and pickaxe along from the old country. With these hand tools and a lot of sweat he was able to clear the trees and tree trunks from the small parcel of land that he had purchased.

Grandpa valued my grandmother. He would often remark that God, our Creator, wisely arranged for her to become his faithful and hardworking helper. She worked on the field, milked the cow, and often worked for hours at his side.

My grandparents raised ten children and enjoyed nearly 62 years of married life. My grandmother was a woman of few words, but she exemplified what we read in the Scripture: “She will be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Proverbs 31:30, 31).

One particular experience lives on in my memory. My grandmother usually had an extra place setting ready on the already filled Sunday dinner table. Grandfather had a habit of inviting guests. I once asked her why she did this. “It’s for the Lord Jesus; He is our guest at every meal,” she replied. Often, there were additional plates set out for visiting pastors or other guests.

My grandparents loved the Lord Jesus. Often, I was able to sit with my grandfather. He would take his large, black-covered Bible and answer my questions with examples from the Scripture. His favourite hymn, which we would sing stanza after stanza, was “Ich geh den schmalen Lebensweg” (I Walk the Narrow Way of Life), by Katharina Goerz. What a blessing all of us received from our dear grandparents! What an example in word and deed they were for us!

I had the privilege of spending the last hours of my grandfather’s life with him at his bedside, providing my grandmother and aunt with some much-needed respite. A few years earlier he had suffered a stroke and was no longer able to speak. Yet even these last silent hours with him blessed me, and I will always remember the moment he was taken on to his final, heavenly home.

I ask myself often: How will my end be? How will I meet my Savior? How much time do I still have left?

Grandfather’s Book, the large black-covered one, showed me the way to Jesus. Jesus wants all of us receive salvation, for it is written: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Karen Betjan *Chilliwack, BC*

## Who is Rich?

“Laura, do you think you could bring Alina her homework on your way home from school?” Laura’s teacher handed her a large envelope. “Alina is home from the hospital, but she won’t be able to come back to school yet. Do you mind stopping at her house with these assignments?” Laura didn’t mind. Although Alina lived near her own house, she had never been there before.

When she got to Alina’s address, her eyes grew wide with wonder. The house was huge, with a large yard and a swimming pool. She rang the doorbell and was invited in, only to find that the inside of the house was even more beautiful than the outside. Alina’s room was decorated with plush, colorful rugs. It was overflowing with books, CD’s, toys and games. Laura could not even take in how much stuff Alina had. And she was so smart! Even though she had missed a lot of school, she understood the homework immediately. Alina’s parents were so happy to meet Laura and delighted that she would be bringing assignments each day. They arranged to have their chauffeur pick Laura up from school each day so she would

not have to walk. Laura was stunned by their wealth. One day, as she sat in the car with the chauffeur, she expressed her wonder. “I would love to trade places with Alina,” she sighed.

The chauffeur looked at her in the car’s mirror. “You really do not need to be envious of Alina,” he commented quietly. “All the money in the world is not going make her well. She has a disease in her blood and does not have very long to live.”

Laura was shocked. How terrible! Up until now she had assumed that being rich and smart were the most important things about Alina, and she wanted to be just like her. And suddenly she realized that those things did not matter at all. Her envy disappeared as quickly as a bubble pops in the wind. “Dear Jesus,” she prayed. “Can you please help Alina?”

It is easy to be envious of others instead of being thankful for the things we have. The people who are thankful are the ones who are truly rich. Remember to thank God for what He has given you.



# Encouraging the Church in Kazakhstan

## Astana Tentmeetings

As in previous years, the tent meetings in Kazakhstan took place in the city of Astana. This year, Brother and Sister Vogt from Gifhorn, Germany and Brother John Reimer from Barrhead, Canada were invited to share God's Word at the meetings. In preparation for these meetings, a larger, more permanent tent was built. This tent will also be used for other special services such as weddings.

This year the summer was unusually wet and cool in northern Kazakhstan. The amount of rain that had fallen made some of the roads to the different villages impassable. This was a major prayer concern for the brothers and sisters, because poor roads would hinder guests from coming to the meetings. But God worked a wonderful miracle just before the meetings began. Until two days before the meetings it rained almost every day, so much that there was water in many basements. But beginning with Thursday, the last day before the meetings, God sent clear skies and warm temperatures of up to 27°C that lasted until the following weekend, when services were held in Karaganda. God answered our prayer and no one had to stay home because of the weather.

The tentmeetings began on Friday night, and on Sat-

urday and Sunday there were two services each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. There were many brothers and sisters and visitors from the different congregations in Kazakhstan, as well as some from Germany. Our guiding theme was, "You Are the God Who Sees" (Genesis 16:13). God blessed us together and we sensed His presence and help during the services. Even though we don't speak the Russian language, we were richly blessed through the fellowship with the believers. It is a marvelous privilege to meet people who have the same goal, who serve and love the same Lord, and are guided by the same Holy Spirit. This creates a bond of unity.

In the Sunday morning service there were about 180 people present, and after the services everyone was invited to take part in the delicious meals that were prepared. The services were enriched through the singing of hymns, songs from different choirs, presentations from the Sunday School children, poems, and testimonies.

## Prison Ministry in Astana

In the past years the brothers and sisters in Astana had been visiting a prison in the capital city and holding ser-

TENTMEETING IN ASTANA





**THE FEST CONGREGATION IN KARAGANDA**

vices for the prisoners. This work brought fruit for eternity that we were able to see during our visit. Souls were set free through the power of God, and left the prison as new creations, able to start a new life. Some of those brothers and sisters come to the services in Astana and diligently help along where they can. In recent years, the government of Kazakhstan changed some laws, and unfortunately this mission had to be put on hold. It is the goal and the prayer of the church that God will re-open the door to this ministry in the future. There are also other changes in the laws that have placed increased restrictions on the services. Let us pray that God's work there would continue to grow, and that sinners would come out of bondage into freedom.

**Karaganda Meetings**

The following Friday, accompanied by Brother Viktor Zivzov, we took the train to go to Karaganda, which lies about 3 hours south of Astana. Special services were also planned here, and we gathered twice on Saturday and once on Sunday morning. Some of the young people from Astana had also come for these services. Just as in Astana, the sermons were translated live from German

into Russian.

During the last year, Pastor Harry Reinick suffered an accident that caused severe burns over a large part of his body. After a lengthy stay in the hospital and loving care at home, God restored him and he is able to minister to the congregation again.

For many years the congregation in Karaganda had their own printing press where they printed a periodical called *Евангельская труба* (Evangeliums Posaune). Due to changes in regulations, they were forced to close the printshop and subcontract the printing to a local printer. This printshop employs several of the brothers from the congregation in Karaganda. We thank God that the publication can still continue.

At our departure, we promised one another to remain connected and united in the Lord. We also promised that the churches in Germany and in Canada would continue to pray for the church in Kazakhstan. Let us continue to pray for the work that God is doing in Kazakhstan.

John Reimer  
*Barrhead, AB*



**MEETING IN KARAGANDA**

**PASTORS (L-R): H. REINICK (KARAGANDA, KZ), W. ADLER (ASTANA, KZ), H. VOGT (GIFHORN, DE), J. REIMER (BARRHEAD, AB)**

# Topics for Prayer Week 2014

*The prayer topics for 2014 focus on the Holy Spirit. Jesus earnestly prayed to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples. He knew the great need His disciples and all people had for the Holy Spirit. We can clearly see the great love of God and His deep commitment to our salvation by His sending of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The collective teachings of the Bible about the Holy Spirit indicate that nothing in this world can replace Him. Let us therefore thank God for sending the Holy Spirit, and deliberately include Him in our prayers.*

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## **MONDAY, JANUARY 6**

*A Deeper Knowledge of the Holy Spirit is Necessary*

The Holy Spirit is a part of the Trinity. His attributes must therefore be of a godly nature. His foundational characteristics are righteousness and holiness. All that proceeds from Him can only be godly and holy. Consequently, it is of great value to immerse oneself in a deeper understanding of the Holy Spirit.

1. His nature is equivalent to that of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of His omniscience, omnipresence, infallibility, etc. (Romans 8:26-27).
2. He is the Co-creator of the universe, as well as the Co-creator and Sustainer of the kingdom of God. He is a Leader and Teacher, Witness and Judge, Illuminator and Comforter, etc. (John 16:7-14).
3. He is the Spirit of grace, life, and power (Zechariah 4:6; Ephesians 1:15-19).

## **WE PRAY:**

- a) For new outpourings of the Holy Spirit among God's people around the world.
- b) For a right relationship with the Holy Spirit, according to Jesus' teaching in John 14-16.
- c) For personal encounters with the Holy Spirit that lead us to a deeper knowledge of Him.

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## **TUESDAY, JANUARY 7**

*Revival and Assurance of Salvation by the Holy Spirit*

1. One office of the Holy Spirit is the working of a genuine revival (Ezekiel 37). Only the Holy Spirit can revive the soul of man. No human method can replace His work.
2. Spiritual awakening by the Holy Spirit is critically important and must be wrested in prayer. It includes godly sorrow and repentance, which are required for the continued existence of the church (Matthew 3:9b; Acts 2:47).

3. God's love and compassion work true spiritual revival and conviction, resulting in salvation, sanctification, and eternal life (Matthew 18:11-14).

## **WE PRAY:**

- a) For faith, recognition of one's spiritual condition, godly sorrow, and repentance among the people (Hebrews 11:6).
- b) That people would recognize their need of Christ, be convicted of their sins, and be born again (John 3).
- c) For revival-igniting, fearless, and Spirit-filled preaching of the gospel. (A good example of this is Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost!)

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## **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8**

*The Working of the Holy Spirit in the Church*

A special field of labor for the Holy Spirit is the church. While capable workers are advantageous, the healthy spiritual condition of a church is dependent on the free-





dom of the Holy Spirit to fulfill His mission.

1. Without the Holy Spirit no church can maintain a clear, biblical course. Its road map is the Word of God alone! From the letters to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 we can see that some churches had not remained on course. The Lord was forced to call them to repentance!

2. Without the Holy Spirit no church can experience a spiritual renewal. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul compares the parts of our body to the members of the church. Our bodies can become tired, weak, or sick. If this condition afflicts a church congregation, only the Holy Spirit can remedy it and prevent its “death”.

3. “You have the name that you are alive, but are dead” (Revelation 3:1ff). Spiritual death had already partially afflicted this congregation. In this situation only a revival by the Holy Spirit can make a difference. In every case, it must be desired and prayed for. See John 6:63; Hebrews 12:12-13.

**WE PRAY:**

- a) For God’s people who are struggling and discouraged, in danger of just ‘giving up’.
- b) That God would uncover the fruitless, lifeless condition of nominal Christians.

c) That the fire of the Holy Spirit would burn and become evident in all churches (Luke 12:49).

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**THURSDAY, JANUARY 9**

*The Fruit of the Spirit*

Fruit is attractive. It garners attention and gives pleasure. Just as fruit adorns a garden, spiritual fruit beautifies the church. In like manner, a garden or field that bears no fruit is lamentable (Isaiah 5:1-7). The Lord of the church expects fruit! (Luke 13:6-9).

1. In Christ, God has created the necessary environment for the bearing of fruit (See John 15:2). Good fruit is proof of healthy life. It is the “treasure in earthen vessels”, the good treasure of the heart, through which God is glorified (Matthew 12, 35).

2. The hidden spiritual fruit is actually the real adornment of God’s people (1 Peter 3). This fruit is vital. It is treasured by God and man.

**WE PRAY:**

- a) For fruit of the Spirit in the hearts and lives of all children of God.
- b) That God would show us possible hindrances to bearing spiritual fruit.
- c) That we would give the Holy Spirit freedom to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in us personally.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 10**

*The Holy Spirit in our personal life*

Psalm 143:10; Romans 8:14

1. An essential element of a genuine desire to serve God is a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit.

2. Our personal relationship to God is dependent upon our relationship to the Holy Spirit.

3. We need to consecrate our whole ear, our whole heart, and our whole obedience to the Holy Spirit.

**WE PRAY:**

- a) For a close relationship with the Holy Spirit, so that we can constantly determine His will (His leading).
- b) For spiritual enrichment and personal revival by the Holy Spirit.
- c) For protection from the influence of foreign spirits and from an inner desolation or being led astray.
- d) That we never lose the live connection with the Holy Spirit, and that our young people would gladly and sincerely open themselves to His influence.

May the Lord bless us with rich benefits and growth during this Prayer Week!

Friedrich Krebs  
*Kitchener, ON*



(Continued from page 16)

This Bible course gave me a strong spiritual boost in a very special way. It's so encouraging to study God's Word with other believers. I feel that I have been drawn much closer to God and that I have a better understanding of His Word. Some of the different topics gave me a completely new perspective on many Bible passages. I also gained clarity on a few questions I have struggled with in the past.

The lessons not only helped me to understand the Bible to a far greater extent, but they also pointed out what God is trying to tell me personally.

I would encourage anyone who has the desire for spiritual growth to attend the Bible course.

Tobias Mirau  
*Barrhead, AB*

I thank God for giving me the wonderful opportunity of attending the Bible Course for the second time. I can say that God truly blessed us beyond what we could have ever asked for, and for that I am so grateful!

I often hear people say that attending the Bible Course is not for them, or it's "not the cool thing to do". The truth is that especially in today's society we young people need to be firmly grounded in God's Word. Spending two weeks intensely studying God's Word drew us closer to God and planted our feet on higher ground. When we are surrounded by fellow Christians, we can encourage one another, share struggles, and bear each other's burdens. God's Word clearly teaches us this.

I entered the Bible Course with one goal in mind: to grow closer to God and become more like Christ. My prayer throughout the two weeks was: "Lord, speak to me and show me areas in my life that need to change, and where I need to improve and do better." Without humbly asking God to change us, our pride and will always get in the way, and we certainly cannot expect to change. I was open to anything that God laid on my heart and was willing to change, because that is the only way to truly grow closer to God.

Pastor Klinger presented us with the seven pillars of faith:

The Incarnation, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Day of Pentecost, Church of God, and Jesus' Return. We realized that all seven of these pillars work together. You cannot simply remove one pillar and expect the others to remain standing. If one pillar of faith is removed, it is no longer faith and truth. God made the pillars, and no one has the power to change or destroy them. One Pillar of Faith that God showed me that was not as evident in my life as it should be was Pentecost – the filling of the Holy Spirit. As I dedicated my life to Christ, I thought I had surrendered everything in my life for His service, allowing for God to lead. In these two weeks, God showed me certain things in my life that I had not completely surrendered to Him, and that my own will was standing in the way of God presenting His perfect plan for my life. It is the personal control and will that is often hardest to let go of, but God showed me that I needed to give everything over to Him, so that I could be used for His service effectively. So I placed everything on God's altar and asked Him to take my life and let it be completely consecrated to Him, that I would be a willing servant, and that I would allow the Holy Spirit alone to control and lead my life.

Giving everything over to God and being sanctified is the best decision I have ever made. It is a difficult one because it requires you to let go of the things that you want so badly to control. But when you give everything over to God, it is as if a weight is lifted, and you can rest knowing that God will lead and that He has a wonderful plan for your life. You see, when our own will gets in the way, we work so hard to make things go our way. But when we give everything over to God, serving God becomes easier. We are not using our own strength any more; rather, we are being supplied by God's sufficient grace. Praise God that He has made it possible to live a victorious and most abundant life.

My prayer is that every Christian would truly desire to give their all to Jesus and let Him take complete control of their life.

Nicaela Wermann  
*Edmonton, AB*



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## *Experiences with God*

I had no idea what the Youth Conference would be like, as this was my first time in Tuningen. I would like to share a small portion of the blessing that I received there. God's blessings increased noticeably from one day to the next. I can only thank Him with my whole heart that He was present and that we could experience His goodness. I would also like to thank all the brothers and sisters who supported us with their prayers.

The first sermon was already wonderful. The theme was "Becoming Like Jesus". Before the conference, I had never thought that to best honor God is to become most like Jesus, who is like His Father. And the blessings only increased after this first day. With God nothing is impossible when we ask. You simply had to be at the conference to understand it. There were also wonderful prayer times, which I cannot describe in words, where we prayed together for others and also for one another. I had never experienced this before. A very special sermon for me was "The Humility of Jesus". How truly humble was Jesus and how humble am I comparatively? Can I esteem myself lower than other people? To be able to do this requires the grace of God. We have to pray to become much better examples for others.

Another topic that really spoke to me was "The Saving Attitude of Jesus". If Jesus did not have the desire to save us, what would become of us? Could we then have Jesus in our hearts? No. This is His genuine love for us! We too need this desire for the salvation of others. We need to continually pray that God will give us this longing and sorrow for lost souls, for prayer truly does help.

Adrian Freiter  
Herford, Germany

### *The Owl and the Lark*

Sitting alone at night in the darkness, in a deserted place, the Little Owl begins singing a mournful and melancholy song, and continues its sad song throughout the night.

The Lark on the other hand can be heard singing early in the morning. It is well known for its displays of flight and melodious singing. It sings throughout the day and until evening comes.

Which of these two birds do you wish to resemble, the Little Owl or the Lark?