

The Unified

Fall 2011

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Triple Fit

Mind, Spirit and Body
By Heather Pereault

"Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

-1 Corinthians 6:19-20
How often do we remember this verse when we are sitting on the couch in front of the television, stuffing those custard-filled doughnuts in our mouths? (Cont. p.U6)

Summer 2011 Flashback



Above: Camp Outreach workers after a long day of service.

Reaching Out to Others By Reaching Into Your Heart

By Kayla Snyder

It's mid-July and I'm covered in soot and sweating profusely. I've had little to no sleep and I'm sore from painting an entire house the day before. Cleaning up shingles during a roofing project is hard work, but as I wipe the sweat from my brow and smear the dirt across my forehead a smile spreads across my face. There's a certain satisfaction that comes from doing manual labor and an even bigger satisfaction knowing that you've helped someone in need and helping those in need is our main goal at Camp Outreach. (Continued on p. U4)

What "The Feast" Means to Me

By Garrett Gonzalo

When I was growing up, the reason I kept the Feast of Tabernacles was simple: I had no other choice. My parents kept the Feast, so I went. It was my parent's religion, my parent's church and my parent's Holy Days. Growing up though, I began to get questions from friends, teachers and employers about why I believe what I believe and I had to be able to answer for myself.

Now, as an adult, I keep the Feast of Tabernacles because it is a part of the masterful plan of my Creator and my God. It isn't simply that The Bible tells me to - which is good enough reason in and of itself - but it is because my heart yearns to keep the Feast. I feel compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to the Feast, to keep the Holy Days and to serve in whatever capacity possible. (Continued. on p. U8)

Class of 2011

There are plenty of Congratulations to go around! So many grads this year and we are so proud. Some grads were kind enough to open up about their high school days and plans for the future! (See p. U3)

Coming Together

This summer has had its good moments as well as grief and loss. As we recall good, we can't leave out the life changing moments this summer.

For some this summer left a permanent scar, a missing part of our life. Many people have suffered with loss as well. I have found so hope in listening to others share with me what helps them cope and what they believe. Having someone to lean on or talk to can be one of the greatest things when living with the loss of a loved one. It is always comforting hearing from others their hope of seeing their loved one once again. (See p.U10)

Grief By Kim Snyder

"The Best Way Out is Always
Through."
--Robert Frost

I did a presentation on Grief in 2009 in Lexington, KY shortly after LeeAnn passed away. The response was very positive afterwards. I want to share part of the presentation. Here is a statement that I think offers some comfort in the struggle with grief:

"Grief isn't something you GET OVER, it's something you EXPERIENCE." This can make all the difference in the word to someone grieving. How do you "get over" the death of a loved one? You don't...you experience it, and you learn to develop (and accept) a "new norm." (Continued on p. U11)

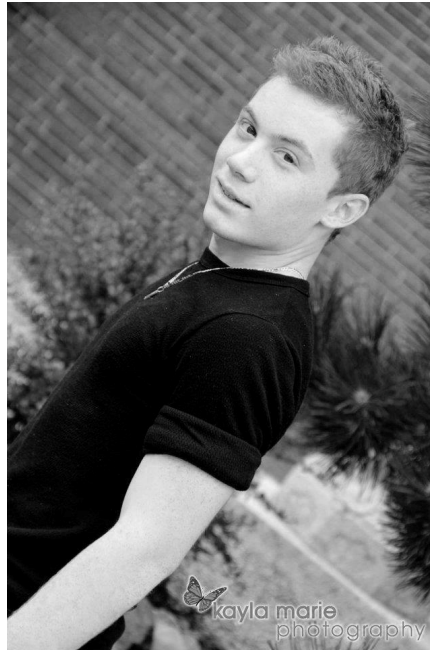
A Passion For Knowing God...

Through Music



Performing music, for me, is one of the best ways I can communicate with God. I feel like especially when I play cello on a worship team, I am in my own world telling God exactly what is in my heart, without needing words...singing worship music uplifts me, it makes me feel light and free. Listening to it makes me yearn for something deeper, something more meaningful.

-Kim Bredehoft



Because music is such a colossal part of my life, it doesn't surprise me that I hear God talking to me through music. I could have the best sermon speaker in the world give a message that can make me think, and realize something about myself I didn't know before, but put soft music behind his words and his words will pull on my heartstrings ten-fold. That's why worship services are more my sermons than anything else. I hear His voice and feel His presence through the words of the songs and the accompanying music. He invented every language, and He speaks to me in the one language that is closest to my heart. And that's music.

-Corey Snyder



"Singing is so huge for me! When I sing praise I just feel the holy spirit rushing through me. Its in those moments that I feel closest to God. Music can be so influential and vital in a relationship with God. Listening to Christian music has a huge influence on my day. God can truly speak to you through your passions, whatever they are. If there is something you are passionate about because of God please let us know about it. We want to hear from you!"

-JoAnna Gonzalo

Important! 😊

Please Read!

The Unified is a collaboration of young adults in Sabbath keeping churches.

Please feel free to send anything that you feel would be inspirational or encouraging! If you have a story of service, personal experience, something you are doing, a question, thoughts, poems, stories, pictures, *anything!*

Please send them to xukcorllix@gmail.com or facebook message JoAnna Gonzalo or send them to 2620 W Coon Lake Rd. Howell MI 48843.

Bye Bye High School!!

Class of 2011 says "hello!" to the real world!



Class of 2011, you are done! What a great feeling. You have made it! Now what? LOL. I graduated three years ago, and let me tell you the summer was great! Then, it was time to figure things out and get started with the rest of my life. For me I had to figure *a few* things out before I found where God wanted me to go. Even still, I have to pray daily that I am going in the direction He wants me to go. It's a hard thing to figure out for some of us! These years have been the craziest most eventful years of my life. BUT this is not about that very long story. This is about our recent Grads!!! I was fortunate to get to speak to two 2011 grads about a few things! I asked them what their plans are now, how god influenced their high school experience and how they planned to serve God in the future. They had some great answers I want to share. **Here's what they said:**

This Fall I am attending Henry Ford Community College (HFCC) and I will be working towards an Associate's Degree in Arts with a Music Major. I will be studying the cello as my primary instrument as well.

This question is a weird one. I can say that during high school, God was always with me. But to say that I was with God throughout the entire course of those four years won't be accurate. I struggled everyday with being able to "fit in" without fitting in so much I lost myself. I can say that He carried me through those four years because there is no way I would have made it on my own. He never put me into a situation I wasn't able to handle, but it took a lot for me to realize He was in control all along.

In this next chapter of my life, I will need God more than ever. I am attending college in Dearborn, MI. The most Muslim populated city in the nation. I will be facing so much adversity, that to not have God in the heart of everything I do there will be setting myself up for destruction. At least spiritually. I just plan on doing whatever I can to stay strong in my faith, whether it be reading the Bible every day, praying without ceasing, meditating when I have a moment to myself, etc. These are all things I need to start doing.

With the career(s) that I want, I primarily want to become a Christian/Pop singer. Sing songs that are either about God and worshiping Him, or songs that are about life and carry a message with them. If that doesn't work out I'll continue my studies in hopes of becoming a film composer, and write the musical scores to big movies!

-Corey Snyder

As far as being graduated, it's definitely nice to be done with high school! Everyday life hasn't changed a whole lot for me, cause being homeschooled it just never was a huge part of my day, so I was still working and all that before, still nice to be done though.

Fall plans, well, I'm not going to college right away. Planning to pursue my racing career and continue working for my dad's plumbing company. I figure I can always go to college, but if the racing thing is gonna happen it's gotta be now.

And for serving God in this next chapter, well, if I am successful in going pro and having a racing career, I feel like there's so many opportunities to serve God, and get the word out there. There's a few top pro racers I really admire.. Trey Canard, Andrew Short, Tucker Hibbert, etc.. who are professing Christians and I just think it's awesome how they give God the credit for their success.

-Andrew Lindholm

Advice from a Friend

This is some great advice from a current college student who asked to remain anonymous, for their own reasons. New Freshmen take notes! ☺

I wish I could tell you that when I went to college I prayed every day, or even read my bible daily. But I can't. I could lie to you and tell you I did and make myself look like the perfect example of a religious college student, but I'll be the first to admit I wasn't. I didn't come home most weekends to go to church with my parents and I spent most Saturday's writing papers and reading books for my classes. Now this isn't to say that God wasn't a huge part of my life while I was at school, he definitely was, but I regret to say that there were times where I let myself forget to pray. But that's okay, the big guy knows that I love him and he knows where I stand and we all know he'll forgive us if we slip up now and then. So on that note let's talk about how you can keep your faith at school.

Find friends who think like you. Finding Religious friends at school can be hard, especially if you're looking for someone who thinks just like you, but when you find someone understands where your faith is coming from hold on to them. Having people around you who share even a few of your beliefs or ideals is incredibly helpful and I can't explain to you how much people like that help you stick to your moral standings. Being away at college grants you more freedom than you'll know what to do with and by surrounding yourself with people who think like you and have some of your same morals helps you stand strong where you are personally. Most campuses provide groups for people to get together and be with people who are interested in the same things they are and the same applies to religious groups. If your campus offers something like that, try it. Go and meet the people see where they stand and if you feel comfortable around them. If you do you have somewhere to go and people to be around who you can relate to on a level deeper than an interest in a sport or television show.

Have a Bible in your dorm room. Possibly two. Put them somewhere that you'll see every day. Even if you don't pick it up in the morning and read it it'll be good to know you have it where you can get it easily. I had my bible right next to my cell phone on my desk, so every morning as the cell phone blared an alarm to wake me up my hands brushed on my bible and it's a good feeling to know it is there. Some of my best days were ones where I woke up and read from my bible, it may have only been a chapter or two but I felt good all day afterwards.

Keep in touch with people from the church. We have so many ways to do this and you should take advantage of all of them. Having the line to the people you love is comforting and helpful. Some of them know you incredibly well and if you have problems or just need to vent they're probably MORE than willing to listen and they're fantastic moral support. I wouldn't have made it through my second semester had it not been for a church friend talking to me daily.

Talk to your professors. They're surprisingly understanding of different religious beliefs and you won't have to stress about leaving for things like the Feast. Just keep up on your work.

All in all keeping to your faith is really up to you. You have to find time to do the things you want to do in your faith and the time to do the stuff required of you at school. It can be hard at times but I'm confident you'll be just fine.

Summer 2011!

A summer of service,
fellowship and
friendship

Reaching Out to Others By Reaching Into Your Heart

By Kayla Snyder



It's mid-July and I'm covered in soot and sweating profusely. I've had little to no sleep and I'm sore from painting an entire house the day before. Cleaning up shingles during a roofing project is hard work, but as I wipe the sweat from my brow and smear the dirt across my forehead a smile spreads across my face. There's a certain satisfaction that comes from doing manual labor and an even bigger satisfaction knowing that you've helped someone in need and helping those in need is our main goal at Camp Outreach.

Camp Outreach was started by the president of Common Ground Christian Ministries, Guy Swenson, and his wife, Jennifer, six years ago in 2005. Originally, the camp was held in different cities across the country every year, but three years ago Guy got in contact with a man named Troy in the Stringtown community in the inner city of Indianapolis. Through his contact with Troy, Guy realized that there was a desperate need right in his own "backyard" and from then on, Camp Outreach has remained stationary in that neighborhood and the volunteer effort has continued to grow substantially every year.

A few months after my first Camp Outreach experience, I moved down to Indiana to live with Jon and his family. That's when I started to become more involved with the actual planning of the event that is Camp Outreach. Before camp even begins, there is a huge amount of effort that goes into the planning and preparation and in order to make Camp Outreach a success, there is a lot of funding that is needed. Coming up with ways to advertise camp to volunteers and donors is a huge undertaking before July comes around. In years past, we've made fliers, sent out mailings, done presentations at the Feast of Tabernacles, and even contacted local TV and radio stations about Camp Outreach. Spreading the word about camp is crucial to its success.

Another important part of the planning process is organizing the event. One of the major elements of Camp Outreach is a ministry to the children of the neighborhood called First Outreach. First Outreach is like a vacation Bible school where the kids from the neighborhood can come and spend the day learning about God, participating in fun activities, and getting probably one of their only meals during the day.

Deciding what the kids learn at camp that year can sometimes be challenging, but God always seems to lead us in the right direction every year. Planning the work projects can be equally as challenging. Each year we normally take time to go into the neighborhood a few months before camp to find some good projects for the volunteers to work on that year and it never fails that we add on additional projects as Camp Outreach gets underway!

Becoming more involved with Camp Outreach has led me down an even more unique path of service. Since I'm a photographer, I volunteer now to document the week of Camp Outreach. I still do the manual labor volunteer work, but being able to serve in a way that is more unique to me and my gifts as well has really been a blessing. Guy and Jennifer have always been supportive of people finding their own unique gifts and using them to serve at camp in the best way possible. It's important to remember that we are all given different spiritual gifts and you should never limit yourself in what you think you can contribute when it comes to volunteering.

This year's camp was a huge success. We worked on over 11 projects, including replacing cabinets, repairing a roof, dry walling a house, and painting. In addition to the work projects, we had a huge turnout of children from the neighborhood at First Outreach. The kids learned about what it was like when Jesus was a kid and they got to do tons of great activities like breaking open rocks to find treasures, making bread, and making oil scrubs like they did in Jesus' time. Growing from 40 volunteers to 80 volunteers has really opened up new doors for where and how people can serve. If you'd like to participate in Camp Outreach next year, in July of 2012, or even if you would just like to donate, please visit www.campoutreach.com!

When it comes to serving, you can join an organization, like Camp Outreach, or even start your own organization. Never limit yourself about what's possible. If you have idea for serving others, make it happen! God is calling us all to serve, so use your gifts and let your light shine for everyone to see.

Summer 2011!

Was There Anything Spiritually Moving In Your Summer?

"I had a great time at Whiskey Creek. It was awesome seeing everyone, riding, canoeing, hanging out on the beach, great conversations, mad-lib. So good.

Working with the kids at Camp Outreach was interesting and moving. They were adorable, and really sweet.. it made you thankful for how you grew up, and what you have. It was so nice to see at the end of the day some of the parents who appreciated us taking care of their kids so much. I remember one mom in particular, after the end of every day, she would come over and give me a bug hug and say thank you. Another thing, it was so sweet, one of the little girls I helped take care of was sitting in my lap and told me she wished I could come home and live with her. Those moments were so precious of course, that doesn't mean we didn't have our fair share of hard times too.. what with kids not listening, a few actually try to run away, but those other little moments were definitely moving for me."

- Chantal Lindholm

"Whiskey creek was fantastic! I'd give it a 12 on a 10 point scale. My favorite parts were playing the word association game, canoeing, Mad-Libs, swimming in Lake Michigan--and late night deep talks with friends!

I did not get to attend Camp Outreach because of my big-girl job, but it looked like a lot of fun from the pictures I've seen!

Whiskey Creek definitely had its moving moments. Any time I spend with company like that, company that encourages and challenges me to be a better person, to be a person who more closely follows the example Christ gave us, cannot fail to move me."

-Kait White



A group picture taken at the Whiskey Creek Retreat. 2011.

Me, God, and The Beach

By JoAnna Gonzalo

Many people have commented to me that the Whiskey Creek Retreat was one of the highlights of their summer. It was one of mine as well. Words fail me when I try to describe how wonderful Sabbath was out in the lake spent in simple meditation. It was beautiful. I felt so calm, so relaxed and so at peace. Isn't that a huge component to the Sabbath? To rest. Of course we love the fellowship on the Sabbath, which there was plenty of at the retreat, BUT to have a truly restful Sabbath is wonderful. Think about how often we rush around all day. Okay, maybe it's just me. My average Sabbath I rush to get ready and *eat breakfast*, rare find. Then we zoom to church as quickly as possible, generally because we are running behind. Once we get to church I generally rush to help prepare the stage and music for worship, then lead worship, then relax while I listen to the message given before I am back up on my feet. Busy busy busy. So you can see how this relaxing restful Sabbath meant so much to me. Also the worship that morning was awesome. It was so nice to have all of our voices raised as one in harmony. It was a wonderful experience and only one of the many at the retreat. I can't wait for next year.

Triple Fit

Mind, Spirit and Body

My Body = The Temple?



By Heather Pereault

“Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

How often do we remember this verse when we are sitting on the couch in front of the television, stuffing those custard-filled doughnuts in our mouths? How can we honor God with our bodies if they are filled with garbage? A sedentary lifestyle makes the body weak and the mind muddled. But an active lifestyle, along with a balanced diet assists in providing the body and mind with clarity, awareness, discipline, and motivation.

Often Paul uses athletic terminology when describing a spiritual concept; in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul equates the Christian life to a race we run to reach the “prize.” The prize we are seeking is a spiritual prize of eternal life, but because we are physical human beings, if we understand the physical aspect of running a race, we will have a better understanding of the spiritual. If we are able to remain disciplined, physically, how much more will that help us to remain disciplined, spiritually?

In improving our physical health we will possess more physical energy that

Ways to improve physical health:

- Drink plenty of water In improving our physical health we will possess more physical energy that
- Eat many vegetables and fruits
- Look at the ingredients (Even if the product’s advertisement says something about health- it doesn’t mean the product is healthy)
 - Usually the less ingredients, the better.
 - A very high percentage of food intake should be raw foods.
- Exercise daily (this doesn’t mean a full one hour, push yourself to the limit, workout every single day) – but stay active... if you work in an office go for a walk on your lunch breaks. If you work in a multiple-story building, take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Stay disciplined. If monthly goals become too long and you find yourself getting off track – make weekly goals instead and reach them.
- Have an accountability partner- this works wonders. (Two is better than one ☺)

What do you do to keep your body healthy?

“Health and fitness is super important to me. These are both hobbies for me and just a way of life. In my diet I start with drinking around a gallon of water per day. On a normal day, I get up do 50 pushups then drink a glass of water. I then make breakfast, usually consisting of a cup and a half of oatmeal, 4 eggs, 2 pieces of toast, yogurt with pecan, and a glass of orange juice and milk. After breakfast I do 50 more pushups and drink another glass of water. For the rest of the day (work - I have a physically demanding job, removing boat docks and boat hoists) I pack a lunch with a few sandwiches, nuts, and other natural snacks. I also bring along a gallon jug filled with water. Throughout the day I do multiple more sets of push ups.

As a rule for my diet, I eat foods that are 100% natural (preferably organic) rich in protein, simple carbs, complex carbs, and vitamins, along with the necessary limited healthy fats. For fitness I do workouts in the gym or outside of the gym 5 times a week, alongside multiple sets up pushups through out the day. The key for me is constant exercise and a disciplined food regimen.”

-Miles Gonzalo

I don't have a ton of advice to give for healthy living, but I try to follow a few simple guidelines. I avoid processed food like the plague, I go for a decent run (probably 3-4 miles) two or three times a week, and I try to get consistent sleep. Praying is a good way to avoid getting too stressed out, which is always a good part of staying healthy.

-Eric Ledy

Hmm.... Well, I try to do at least 10 min of work out in the morning, just kind of whatever I feel like doing that day. Also, I usually just do a few random 5 min workouts throughout the day and a little longer one before I go to bed.

I drink lots and lots of water to help keep hydrated. Oh, and my soccer coach said if your pee isn't clear, than you're dehydrated! Incase you didn't know that.

For diet, I just try to eat a good healthy breakfast for the most part. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Usually I try to eat a bowl of healthy cereal and a grapefruit (or another fruit of some kind). I try to keep lunch and dinner decently healthy, although that's not always an option at [Spring Vale Academy].

When I'm hungry for just a random snack or something i like to have lots of fruit and vegetables around so I won't snack on junk food. Which is okay sometimes, as long I keep it healthy for the most part. I think it's better to not really have set diet cause then it just get stressful. Just kind of be chill about it, but at the same time make sure you're getting lots of protein and drinking lots of water!

-Cathryn Caswell

Media Moment

Have you seen any good Christian movies you would recommend?

"Hmm my fave "Christian" movie is One Night With The King. It's the story of Esther... it's awesome."

-Sara Elizabeth Boyer

"My favorite Christian movie is definitely Facing the Giants... I get inspired and so pumped up every time I watch it."

-Kayla Marie Snyder

"I've always loved the ten commandments and ben hur with charlton heston. I'm not really sure if it counts, but recently I watched the secret of kells, which is about a young irish monk who finishes up an illuminated manuscript of the four gospels. it was really good."

-Joseph Isaiah Hein

"No Greater Love" and "Fireproof"

-Clay Baker

"I absolutely love the movie "Soul Surfer". If you haven't seen it yet, you have to!!! It is really inspirational. It's one of my favorite movies."

-JoAnna Gonzalo

What is your favorite Christian song right now?

"My favorite Christian song is definitely Waiting Here for You by Christy Nockels. such a powerful song..."

-Kayla Marie Snyder

"Favorite Christian Song: Lead Me - Sanctus Real"

-Josh Edwards

"My fave song would be I Dont Know Up by Michael Shamblin."

-Sara Elizabeth Boyer

"...One good one is "praise you in this storm" by Casting Crowns."

-Clay Baker

Are there any Christian Athletes you look up to?

"As far as Christian athletes definitively Heather (Dorniden) Kampf."

-Josiah Sattler

"Christian Athlete: Aaron Rogers - Super Bowl MVP"

-Josh Edwards

What boundaries do you set when watching and listening to non-Christian media?
When listening or watching, are there any lines you won't cross?

"I wont let myself watch anything that has and excessive amount of swearing or a lot of sensual scenes in it. as far as music goes I wont listen to it if it talks a lot of sex, drugs, alcohol, etc."

-Clay Baker

"...I often don't enjoy movies with tons of cursing or lots of gore.. I mostly just don't find it necessary..."

-Kayla Marie Snyder

"I don't watch excessively scandalous movies."

-Josh Edwards

"As far as boundaries, I refuse to watch something if its only rating is for Language or Sensuality. I feel like God has more of a purpose for us than to be sitting on the couch watching something so against His will."

-Hannah Rebekah Chesney

"If something makes me uncomfortable that's the point at which I turn it off. If I had other people to worry about (ie kids or something) I would probably have more obvious boundaries. - There are certain lines I will not cross but I have to think about what they are so I can (what is word...) expound (?) upon them."

-Sara Elizabeth Boyer

"If there's violence or language, or crude humor, I usually stay away, unless there's a VERY good excuse for it ("for the sake of art" is not an excuse) when it comes to anything, really, I stick to Philippians 4:8 "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things." it doesn't necessarily have to be Christian, but it should very well be something that follows these guidelines."

-Joseph Isaiah Hein

The FEAST!

2011

What The Feast Means to Me

By Garrett Gonzalo

(Continued from FrontPage)

If I were to answer the question – “why do you keep the Feast of Tabernacles?” – I would first start off by turning to Leviticus 23:33-44. Reading those verses makes it very clear what I should do as a follower of God and of Jesus Christ: observe the Feast of Tabernacles. There are numerous other scriptures (Deuteronomy 16:13, Nehemiah 8:14 and others) that support that the Feast of Tabernacles are a commandment by God, but for me, the observance of the Feast goes farther than the commandment itself.

As I have observed the Feast – especially for the last five years – I have grown to see a greater spiritual purpose in the Feast days. The Feast, for me, is a time of spiritual rejuvenation, of sharpening one’s knowledge and of building bonds of love with fellow believers in Christ. I feel moved by the Spirit to reach out at the Feast and to challenge my friends – both older and younger – about their spiritual lives. More than any other time in the year, I am uplifted and strengthened in my spiritual relationship with God and Jesus Christ through the seminars, sermons, songs and conversations that are had at the Feast. I feel that every time I go to the Feast, I take away even greater knowledge and greater zeal to serve God and become more like my Savior Jesus Christ. The Feast is a time to celebrate and look forward to Christ’s return to Earth and the thousand-year that it pictures. As much as the Feast is a celebration, it is a time of learning and a time of helping others to learn more about Christ.

The Feast of Tabernacles has been an incredible blessing to my life through the greater spiritual relationship with God built through it and through the friendships formed with fellow believers in Christ at the Feast. I strongly feel that the Feast of Tabernacles, if used as it is meant to be, is a powerful, Christ-filled environment for strengthening ones beliefs and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.



Garrett Gonzalo at the Feast of Tabernacles 2010.

Serving up Soup!

I asked a few Feast of Tabernacle observing young adults a few questions about their beliefs and experiences pertaining to The Feast.

1. What are you looking forward to this Feast of Tabernacles and where are you going?
2. Why do you think The Feast is important?
3. How has the feast spiritually impacted you in the past?

Here’s what they said:

“This year I am keeping the Feast in Destin FL. I am looking forward to leading worship with a great group of musicians, as well as having the opportunity to give a seminar on the beach!

The Feast is important on many different levels. The biggest reason is that it is commanded of us by our Heavenly Father. But it is also important in other ways, because without the feast and other get-togethers around the country, we wouldn’t have the opportunity to spend time with distant friends and maintain strong bonds with those people. The Feast is also a huge recharge for many people. Throughout the course of the year we are all bombarded with worldly things, or the trauma of loss, among other things that all can take a toll on the strength of our faith. But after two weeks spent with like-minded people who share in the same beliefs as you, it feels like your strength is renewed and you are ready to go take on the world again!

Every year something happens that affects me at the feast. Whether it was a message that just really struck home with me, or an incredible worship service that spoke to my heart. Every year the feast makes me realize that no matter what mistake I have made, or will make, that God has forgiven us of all our sins, and it makes me feel on top of the world. I forget about my life back home, and my eyes are forward and fixed on the Kingdom!”

-Corey Allen

Fall Feast Schedule

Sept. 29- Feast of Trumpets
Oct. 8- Day of Atonement
Oct. 13-19 -Feast of tabernacles
Oct. 20 – Last Great Day

“Iowa. I’m looking forward to the seminars, definitely the group of people that are there and the sort of Godly vibrance they all put off. They hold each other accountable and love and care about each other so much that when someone is struggling or doing something not advisable, wise, or right (especially the silly preteens/teens)... the group (young adults are who I’m specifically referring to) will reach out and go talk to them or pull them out of the situation. Our site in Iowa just.. flows. We all love one another so strongly... I always go there and its like I get a real smack of clarity and reality and warmth and comfort and recharge. I was always emotional and slightly exhausted emotionally and spiritually (or frustrated) when I’d leave other sites.

It was commanded. That should be enough. But of course, that’s really not enough for me either. it makes sense God would ask us to take off 8 days and focus somewhere separate from home on him. I think He knew that doing this once a year is difficult enough so he didn’t ask for us to do it for the other feast (days of unleavened bread)... or any other time. But when we leave our home, we are of course making a sacrifice, that’s always good for us to do for God because it makes us put our faith and trust in him. We are joining fellow godly people working towards the same goal of life. Its like a vacation in the way that we’re there for similar purpose and we’re told to feast and drink and be merry. It’s good for the human body to break... I’ve heard studies that physically our body takes a sort of regroup and needs a recharge once every 7 days. (Sabbath support). it forces us to focus on the small idea of the feeling of the kingdom so that we have at least SOME little idea of what a glorious place and time that we’re holding ourselves accountable enough to make it there and it reminds us what we’re hoping for and excited about. It excites us! It’s like in a marriage; they say you should have a date night every so often. And you should leave your stressful monotone life once a year or 6 months and not just respark that fire but toss some lighter fluid on it, drench it in gasoline, and put some fireworks deep down inside and then light that sucker on fire... (I would imagine it’d be like your honey moon all over again.. but to relive that one day(or several?) that the two stay in bed all day and... ahem.. ya know... ALLLLLL DAYYYYY. yes I’m comparing that to feast. lol. we have to reignite that fire like crazy strong and give ourselves hope.

Absolutely. Every time I went to our little IL feast. in fact both times I showed up and I was dating a guy back home.... well after a day and a half, it was like the same feeling as when you completely fast... I had this clarity you don’t find often (except we ate great every day!!) and I realized I needed to break off those relationships.”

- Kristen E. Girouard

A Calling

The relationship between God and you

In the past couple years we have had quite a few young people choose to be baptized. Locally I knew of a few and wanted to ask them about their experiences and reasons to give a more personal view to others considering it. I often feel afraid that people are turned off from baptism because they don't understand it. They feel that they will no longer be able to have fun or must be serious all the time. To one extent you do need to be serious about the fact that you want to take God's gift of love. On the other hand, God is Almighty and Powerful but He is also loving, beyond compare, and has a sense of humor as well. Just look at a few of His creations, such as monkeys. Choosing to be baptized is choosing life eternally. You also are choosing a relationship with Jesus. You are being washed clean of all things you have done to pretty much hurt yourself or others (sin) and chose to live the way God has chosen for you. Here is where I go back to WHO God is. See, He has chosen a life of adventure for you. How do I know this, because the Bible is full of stories that are examples of God's way of life, and none of them are boring. Secondly, God loves you more than anyone on this earth ever could or ever will. In saying that, He wants what is completely best for you, and since He is all knowing, He knows exactly what that is. Baptism is taking God up on his offer to let Him in and love you for all eternity. Simply put. Granted you do have your part, a relationship goes both ways. But let's move on.

Now each person has their own view, of course, on baptism and reasons (etc etc.), which is why I asked a few recently baptized individuals their thoughts.

1. Has your relationship with God grown since you were baptized?
2. Why did you choose to be baptized?
3. What would you say to a friend considering baptism?

"Well to be honest, I haven't really felt so (that I have grown), because I haven't really focused on God and I feel terrible for it.

Jack Sexton gave an inspiring message to alot of people. It was about how everyone seems to have a fake side towards God and God knows it. And we should be true to him. And not act like we're someone else towards other people.

I think I'd tell them, just keep praying to Him... and to believe in Him, and make sure to thank him everyday for what he has given you, sure you have your hard times, but everything happens for a reason, and He will always be there for you. I was baptized on Saturday, July 2nd 2011.

I think if I stop focusing so much on what other people want me to do and start doing what God wants me to do, I could focus more on him."

-Sarah Chesney

"Yes, my relationship with God has with out a doubt grown since I have been baptized, but even so that is not to say that my relationship with God has not had it's weak points and times where I have fallen. But even so, every time I get up I am stronger than before! I pray more, I thank God more, I praise God more, I TALK with God more. Almost everything I do now has something to do with God in one way or another.

What lead me to make the decision to be baptized was that my relationship with God was very weak. It had gone through a slow fade that was slow enough to the point where I didn't realize it until it started drastically affecting my life and others in it. I wanted to regain my foothold with God and become close to him again, so that's what I did.

I would definitely say take the challenge and do it! But it is crucial that you KNOW what you are getting yourself into and(...)UNDERSTAND what it means. You also need to make sure you are doing it for a good reason (not for a reason such as, you feel a little out of place because your friend is baptized and you aren't) (...) Do not be discouraged about it because you feel that you don't know enough to be baptized yet. Talk to your elders and tell them your reasons, ask them if they feel that they are good reasons and if they think you truly understand not necessarily the history behind it, but the meaning of it and if they feel you are ready.

Be ambitious and persevering about it. If you truly are ready, God will let you know and he will call you. (not literally lol, although he could if he really wanted) I was baptized on 3-6-10."

-Clay Baker

"Since my baptism on October 23rd, 2010, my relationship with God has really become real. The biggest difference I would have to say, is that I felt a real moving of the holy spirit since then. I feel more close with God, and my prayers seem more relevant, intimate, and meaningful. I've learned to listen to God, which for me has literally meant praying and just trying to calm my mind, which is nearly impossible, as my mind races very fast, but in those moments of my effort to listen, sometimes peace will come, sometimes working. This is an intimacy I had scarcely touched before.

There was a long period before I was baptized, that I really felt the call to do so... about 5 years I think...I probably would have never done it, but I was finally led to do so after meeting a very beautiful woman. Upon meeting her I had a very distinct thought: if I ever wanted to be with anyone like her, I needed to be the real deal. The first thing I did was buy some new clothes, next an enticing fragrance by Bvlgari, then began looking at myself as a person. I thought of the ideal person that I would want to be, and made goals to be that way. Being kind to others, respectful to my family, giving more, etc. This went on, and after some challenging sermons I heard, and a beautiful Pentecost weekend where I felt God's love through his people, I began addressing an old calling, one to be closer with God, my life to mean more, and my body to be purged with holy water. I faced a lot of questions next, am I ready? When is the right time? What does this really mean for the future? What if nothings different afterward? A big hesitation I held, was that i didn't want to be baptized if I wasn't ready to live a totally different life afterward...Not in the sense that I didn't want to give things up, but I felt that I wasn't prepared to be a different person, and that things wouldn't really be different. I wanted to fix more things in my life, minister to others, and serve God in a greater way, all before I was going to be baptized. Then I could be ready for the baptized life, right? After some long prayers, and talking with some close friends, I remember a particular conversation solutions, but I almost always feel God with Heather, I learned the following:

God is really really after your heart...and loves you more than you know. A real, living love. If you are wanting to be closer to God, and seeking for more in your relationship with him, find out the next step, and take it.

For me at the time, taking the next step was getting baptized. I was complicated the situation for myself, by trying to skip a step.

Sometimes the next step is very clear, sometimes its not so much. But between, praying and taking your thoughts to those you respect, I feel like everyone can learn what the next step is for them. So take it!"

-Jesse Edwards

Coming Together

“...a certain peace can come from sharing and knowing others are with you.”

Many people are dealing with the death of a loved one. It is hard to cope when you have a million questions running through your head and few answers. It is also hard to wrap your mind around something as abstract as death. When grieving it is easy to feel alone, but there are others out there grieving as well. I have found a certain peace can come from sharing and knowing others are with you. I posed this question to other Sabbath keeping Christians, below are the answers they gave me.

"Is there anything that has helped you deal with the loss of someone close to you that you would want to share with others going through something similar?"

"I first lost a friend at age 14, and since then, I've faced a pretty constant stream of funerals for people who left this Earth before we feel their time is up. Through these years, I have learned one very important thing: life is not ours. Because it is all we know, we feel like we have a right to it; anything that takes it away from us is mean, unjust, unfair, evil, and a myriad of other ugly words. But that's not really the case: life is a gift, a "loan," if you will. We're supposed to do something with it. We should love it and enjoy it and be grateful for it. But it is not ours. The Lord gives all life. Its departure is not evil-spirited or mean -- it is just a part of its cycle. All life must come to an end, and it is anything but in our hands. Acceptance of death as a part of life is a huge part of truly putting your life and your faith in the Lord's hands, or accepting that you do not control everything. Only once you can accept death into this life and place it in God's hands can you truly find inner peace. Death is relief, and it is not to be pitied, but instead to be rejoiced as a final rite of passage. It is unifying, in a way, to reflect upon a passed one with others who remain living; it is a reminder that everybody you encounter on every day of every year will someday pass on, as well.

That being said, death IS an unfortunate consequence of sin and imperfection in the world. Nobody enjoys encounters with death. We take it and we move on, but we never reflect fondly on the experience. The powerful Jesus wept at the death of his friend Lazarus; Jesus, who bore all of death on his shoulders on the cross, wept at the death of one person. That, too, is a comfort, to know that Holy Beings are saddened by death."

-Jennifer Marie

"...I have had a couple inspiring things cross my path recently. Liz died. Last month my 16 year old nephew drowned and it has been a tough time for my family, and a friend's little 6 year old daughter died. Three funerals in three months.

The other day I was reading Psalm 23. "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...." The footnote of my Bible said, notice that we walk through the valley, not just into it. There's something on the other side, and we don't need to fear the journey because "Thou art with me." God accompanies us, whether we are personally facing and eventually experiencing death, or whether we're in the valley because a loved one is dying/has died.

Then I was listening to a CD by a man named Hugh Ross (from Reasons to Believe). He was talking about the anthropic principle, how everything in the universe and the earth seems to be fine tuned for the survival and benefit of mankind. He was talking about how humans showed up on earth at the just-right time in dozens of categories: the sun is at the just right temperature and brightness; the solar system is placed in the just right spot of the galaxy (not in the center--too hot, not further out on a spiral arm--too many collisions); the climate is just right--glaciers have receded; we have the just right amount of oxygen and other gasses; gravity is just right...on and on. Anyway, he also cited that God says in the Bible that He has determined the number of our days, and so we should trust that the timing of our life and death are just right. It was encouraging."

-Robin Deraas Clary

"Dealing with loss is something I struggle with a lot. It's something I think about a lot actually. What if I were to lose my mom, brother, sister, dad, best friend? The older I get, the more I realize how fragile life is and how much I really care about people and honestly, I also realize more and more that there is nothing I can do to change the course of life so that the people I love don't have to die... It's just something we are all going to experience, whether we like it or not... The main thing that helps me cope is to just do anything and everything I can to remember people I have lost in healthy ways (i.e. making and buying shirts, donating to the cause if that's something that they passed away due to, creating scrapbooks or memory books, making memory quilts, anything really to preserve their memory, and most importantly re-centering myself with God). Loss is not easy. It's never going to be easy. It's not something that you just get over. It really is just something you learn to accept as a part of you and that part of you can either change you for the better or change you for the worse. It's all about what you decide to do in order to cope. Journal your feelings daily, pray daily, and remember them daily. Moving on doesn't mean you forget the one you love.. It just means that you keep going on with your life and that you don't let it hold you back from experiencing things fully. Let it help you to remember that you don't have control over when your last day will be or when anyone else's will be so live and love with your whole heart as best as you can and remember that you're never alone in dealing with loss. God is just a prayer away and your friends and family are just a phone call away. If you need more than that, there are tons of support groups you can join. There's no one way to deal with loss, just make sure you make healthy choices. "

-Kayla Marie Snyder

Asking the Experts

On the next page we ask a few experts about grief and dealing with death. Please welcome to the stage Kim Snyder (MS, LLPC, NCC, DCC), Sharon Ledy (MA, LPC, CAADC) , and Carol Boyer (MA, LPC, Creative Change, LLC).

Asking the Experts

Kim Snyder, Sharon Ledy
and Carol Boyer

Grief

By Kim Snyder

(cont. from FrontPage)

Be patient with yourself or with someone else who is grieving. Remember, we all experience things differently, including grieving. Healthy grief is "moving." There will be moments, events, holidays, birthdays, etc that will create some regression, so expect it. I often think people associate "moving on" with forgetting about their lost friend or family member. You will always love them, you will never forget them. Moving on is developing and accepting the new norm of this person no longer being in your life.

One thing I find interesting about grief is it affects people differently, yet there are some very common patterns of grieving. In fact, there are 7 different stages of grief. Some people pass through all of them fairly quickly, others move forward and then back again, and others just plain get stuck in one of them and have difficulty moving in any direction. Here are the 7 stages of grief. Perhaps you can find yourself in one of them:

1. Shock and Denial
2. Pain and Guilt
3. Anger and Bargaining
4. Depression, Reflection, Loneliness
5. The Upward Turn
6. Reconstruction and Working Through
7. Acceptance and Hope

Another interesting thing about grief is realizing when someone grieves; it isn't just for that one thing. We suffer loss for lots of things throughout our lives. Not everything is as monumental as death, but it's a loss none the less. You can suffer loss over a lost opportunity, such as a job, or a position at work; maybe a lost point in a game, making that winning touchdown or basket. We might feel a loss over some reality of life, such as not having enough money for something, or maybe not having enough friends. The point is the list is endless. However, many of these things you don't try to figure out or spend much time working through, so you suck it up, stuff it down and go on. BUT...it's in there..."brewing."

Eventually, there will be an event, such as a death or some other monumental loss and the flood gates will open. You will begin to grieve, but your body doesn't have a filter on it that only grieves for the loss of this last thing. It begins to grieve for "everything!" Once the flood gates are open and the grieving process begins, you begin to purge out all those things you sucked up and stuffed down for so long.

Now I know many will say the answer lies in prayer and they are correct. Prayer can and does do wonders for helping us NOT stuff it down or suck it up. We are to take all our concerns and problems (and disappointments) to God. However, many of us don't have a solid prayer life. Even still, others may pray a lot and lay their troubles at the feet of the Lord, only to pick them back up as soon as they stand up and walk away. They leave with their hearts just as full as when they started.

I'm addressing this part of the grief process because some of you are still struggling with what seems like only the loss of Liz, yet you might not be aware of the other things you are grieving over besides Liz, and it's being glossed over and unrecognized.

What can you do to help yourself, or someone else?

- Be Patient
- Take a walk (get back to nature....God feels very close there)
- Embrace supportive loved ones
- Put yourself first - Focus on what you need
- Journal Your Grief
- Stay close to your Faith
- Join a Grief Support Group

Avoid Numbing the Pain (Alcohol, Drugs, Prescription Drugs) Numbing the pain of grief only prolongs the inevitable. Once sober or straight, the pain is still there. Remember "straight through it" is the shortest process toward recovery.

HOPE IN GOD'S WORD

NKJ John 11:23-25 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

1Pet 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Friends should comfort each other (Job 2:12-13)

God comforts us in our darkest times (Job 35:9-10)

God promises to comfort those who grieve (Matt 5:4, II Cor 1:3-11)

God's Holy Spirit is our comforter (John 14:16)

The Holy Spirit Comforts us (Acts 9:31)

All Grief will end (Rev 21:3-4)

"Grief is hard. It's like getting punched in the gut over and over and over. And then it happens the next day. And the next. Grief and sorrow and loss make us cry or scream or sing or run or write.

And then, sometimes, it makes us mad. Mad at Liz for dying. Mad at God for letting it be so. Mad at anybody who looks at us. Mad at anybody who is happy.

Anger is a normal part of the grieving process. It's okay to feel angry and it's okay to tell God that you are angry at Him. We may feel angry when we feel helpless, powerless or abandoned. Anger may help us deal with our softer, more vulnerable emotions for a time. It may even give us some energy for a while. It may help us to not feel so powerless after Liz' sudden death.

Our softer, more vulnerable and difficult emotions may be fear, guilt, sadness, hopelessness and frustration. We may try to avoid these emotions by holding on to our anger. But holding on to anger can lead to bitterness and depression. Ask yourself what you would feel if you chose to let go of the anger. Allow yourself to take time to fully experience all your emotions. Talk to a trusted friend, pray, journal, make a memorial.

Anger is just one of the stages of grief. Other stages include shock, denial, isolation, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. And round and round it goes. It is not a linear process, but a circular one, experiencing these feelings over and over. Mourning is hard work and is meant to be shared. Allow yourself to grieve, to mourn, to feel sad and to feel angry. And allow yourself to get help when you need it. Asking for help, sharing your feelings, joining a bereavement group can be very helpful and move us toward acceptance.

-Sharon Ledy

"One of the things that often comes to mind when I consider the grief process is our cultural attitude toward death. It seems to me that the grief process in American culture is impeded due to our tendency to avoid the subject of death. While it may not be a pleasant subject, death is a part of life. Physically, we are supposed to die.

Accepting that death is part of life doesn't imply that we should not be sad when someone dies. The sense of loss when that hole is created in our lives can't be ignored or minimized. The hardest part is accepting the experience and not trying to avoid the grief process.

Grief as a process may look different for each of us but there are some similarities. Some degree of denial and possibly anger is common as is depression, before reaching a level of acceptance. To integrate the loss of someone near to us is said to take at least two years for adults and four or more for children. Integration includes finding a new normal for our lives without our loved one. It includes experiencing all the milestones of the year without them for the first time. Each holiday, each anniversary and birthday, may bring up new aspects of loss.

As we experience and re-experience our loss we come face to face with our deepest values and beliefs. The death of someone dear to us can cause us to question and re-examine our beliefs. I think this is one of the gifts of grief. It causes us to look at the things we have accepted with new eyes and ask deeper questions about why we believe what we believe.

Sometimes this process can take us to dark and painful places. But the deeper the pain, the deeper God is drawn into us for healing. Such concepts can sound cliché...until we have reached the other side of the grief process and realize we know God in a new, different and often deeper way.

When walking through the process with a friend, offering these concepts may not be helpful. Usually the best way to support someone who is grieving is to simply be a loving presence. Healing takes place in loving presence and that is what is needed when walking through the valley of the shadow of death."

-Carol Boyer