

A Winning Combination **Teamwork and God's Holy Spirit**

*Throughout the ages God has worked with teams of people to accomplish His work.
With the Holy Spirit we can serve the Church and also humanity as a whole.*

Consider the biblical characters Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Elijah. Were they lone warriors battling to serve God in a sea of ignorant people and bring His word to a world of ungrateful heathen? Or were they actually part of a team that accomplished His work?

Let's see how God worked with these individuals. We can learn important principles that apply to the work of the Church in this 21st Century.

Working with families

What about Noah? We know he was a preacher of righteousness and a man faithful to God (2 Peter 2:5, Hebrews 11:7). For 120 years he worked with his grown sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, to build the ark. To do this also required men to cut and transport the wood. Engineers with ship-building experience were important for assembling the craft. They were being paid to create mankind's lifeboat and they needed co-ordination, supervision and motivation.

Although Noah's team was cut to eight after some 120 years, it expanded rapidly after the flood was over. As a servant of God, despite human weaknesses, Noah also had the guidance of God to help him, essential in building a team with an important mission (Genesis 6:13-21).

If we look at the life of Abraham, we find he also had personal discussions with the Eternal God (Genesis 18). As he followed our Creator's will he worked with his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. This teamwork is reflected in

*Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they succeed
(Proverbs 15:22,
New International Version).*

how Jesus Christ links these men together (Mark 12:26).

Jacob's household survived because of family teamwork and his reliance on God to provide. He sent his sons to

Egypt for food, where God had already prepared faithful Joseph as a leader and saviour of Egypt.

God gives needed organisation

To establish His nation, God trained Moses and gave him a team that included Aaron as spokesman and priest, and Miriam as a role model for the women, about 50 percent of the population. God as the Leader of the team, was always available for Moses to counsel with (Exodus 34:34). Added

help came from a structure suggested by his father-in-law. Captains over 1000s, 100s, 50s, and 10s took care of many of the needs of the people of Israel (Exodus 18:24-27).

God later gave Moses additional team players to fashion a nation from a slave people and a mixed multitude. The 70 elders of Israel were allowed to share a meal with the God of Israel (Exodus 24:9-11) – reminding them that He is the real Leader of Israel.

To help in the Spirit-led teamwork, God shared the Spirit given to Moses with the 70 elders (Numbers 11:24-30).

God leads: We must follow

God never, however, relinquishes His position of being the leader of Israel or of His Church. Imagine if the cloud or fiery pillar went in one direction and Moses decided to go another. Which direction would God expect His people to go? In the desert, Israel would quickly find out Who was giving them the manna (John 6:32). Spiritual Israel too needs to be fed the correct diet of the bread of life.

Human leaders die, but God is always there to gather and guide those He calls into His team.

King David sought advice from and listened to the prophets like Nathan and Gad, who were spokesmen of God. Yet the true leader behind the scenes was the Eternal God. David also worked with certain mighty men such as Benaiah and Joab, and with other dedicated servants like Asaph to organise the tabernacle and its associated spiritual work (1 Chronicles 24, 25). The king

of Israel was to administer the nation by knowing God's law (Deuteronomy 17:18), and by accessing God's will through the Urim and Thummim (see 1 Samuel 28:6; Numbers 27:21).

God changes leaders of the team

We find that God also passes along a team from one leader to another. One example is how He promoted faithful Joshua, who then worked with many of the leaders of Moses' time (Numbers 27:18-20). Moses was not to go into the promised land, so God provided effective leadership for Israel through Joshua (Judges 2:7).

This also occurred with the transfer of God's work from the prophet Elijah to his assistant Elisha. At one time Elijah thought he alone was serving God in Israel. Yet the Eternal Creator and leader of the team showed the discouraged prophet that there were another 7,000 who had remained faithful (1 Kings 19:10, 18). By the time Elijah handed over responsibility to Elisha there were 'sons of the prophets' serving God at Bethel, Jericho and

Gilgal (2 Kings 2:3-5; 4:38). When they saw Elisha part the river with his mantle, they saw fruits of God's involvement, just as Christ commanded His disciples to look for in Matthew 7:15-20. God had given Elisha His Holy Spirit, essential for true spiritual leadership (2 Kings 2:14-15).

In His lifetime on earth, Jesus Christ trained men to be part of a team. The majority had already been prepared by His cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus sent the 12 and the 70 (Luke 9:1-2, 6; 10:1, 10), who went before Him like an advertising team, preparing the way before Christ arrived in a town or village. People needed to listen. We are told these men represented the Kingdom of God even before Christ arrived (verse 9).

Only one Leader

The leader of the team doing God's work never changes. Christ is Head of His Church (Colossians 1:18) and always will be until He hands all over to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). Team members on the human level have come and gone through the ages. We do not always do our best, and the Bible records serious mistakes made by Noah (drunkenness), Abraham (lying), Moses (anger), David (adultery and murder), Elijah (lack of faith), Christ's disciples (fear of men). But these sins and shortcomings were forgiven and overcome. The Church today is part of the team God is using to prepare humanity to receive the Messiah – the Saviour and the King of Kings – at His return.

We see that it was an illusion to think that these servants of God were on their own. At the very least they had the help of the One who became Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14). Even the twentieth century leader God worked with for nearly 60 years, Mr Herbert Armstrong, was not alone. He had many trained and highly motivated people working with him. Each team member added to the overall effectiveness – His wife of 50 years, Mrs Loma Armstrong, had a gift

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Why Is Teamwork Important?

- Involving more people adds resources, ideas and energy.
- Challenging questions from team members help to minimise mistakes.
- It maximises a leader's potential and minimises his or her weaknesses.
- Strengths and weaknesses of team members are more apparent.
- Teams provide multiple perspectives and thus several alternatives for each situation rather than one single viewpoint.
- All share the credit for success and blame for failure, promoting humility and co-operation.
- Respect for different personalities and temperaments helps develop skills with people.
- Teams keep leaders accountable to the goal of the team's existence.
- Teams can accomplish more than individuals.

A Pentecost Message to Young People: *It's Your Church Too!*

This biblical Holy Day has special significance for young people.

When I was a small boy, I would sometimes get up early Sunday morning, sneak into my parents' bedroom and turn off their alarm clock, so they would oversleep. You see, my family didn't know about the seventh-day Sabbath. We went to church on Sunday; thus the alarm would be set for that morning so the family could get up and go. My plan was that if the alarm didn't go off, they would oversleep, and by the time they woke up, it would be too late to make it to church.

Obviously, church was not something I looked forward to. And amazingly, my little ploy worked on numerous occasions! (Let's keep that secret between us, okay?)

At that young age, going to church was not important to me. Looking back on those experiences now, I realise that it was because what happened at church had little or no impact on the rest of my life. And it seems that my experience was not unique.

According to a 2003 survey by the Barna Research Group, most children who were brought up attending a church had a similar experience. 'For most teenagers who have spent years attending church activities, their faith is not integrated into who they are and how they live. Most of the young people who claim they developed an understanding of the Bible . . . show no evidence of using that understanding in relation to the core beliefs and lifestyle

choices that we studied' www.barna.org).

In other words, these young people did not take ownership in the church. They did not see that religion, faith and church had any real relevance to the rest of their lives. It wasn't their church. It was their parents' church.

Does this sound familiar to you? Do you view religion, faith and church as just something for your parents? Do you feel the principles taught at church have no real bearing on the choices you make in life? It doesn't have to be this way!

Dramatic beginning

In the year Jesus Christ was crucified, the Festival of Pentecost (or Feast of Firstfruits) came with some rather dramatic events. First there came a sound like the roaring of a tornado. Then it looked like each of the disciples had fire dancing on his head. They were



David Fenney

each filled with God's Holy Spirit, and by God's power they were able to preach to the people so that every man understood what was said in his own

native language (Acts 2:1-12).

The Church of God had begun! Jesus Christ promised that His Church would always exist (Matthew 16:18) and that He would always be working with His people to fulfill the will of God the Father.

A special promise

On the first Pentecost in the New Testament Church of God, Peter said something of tremendous importance: 'For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, *as many as the Lord our God will call*' (Acts 2:39, emphasis added).

What promise? The promise of God's Church and His leadership within it, the promise that with maturity and repentance, the people of God can be baptised and receive His Holy Spirit. This promise is to the adults and to their children. The Church of God isn't to be just your parents' Church. God wants it to be your Church too!

When Paul wrote to the Church members in Corinth, he noted that the children of God's people are 'holy' (1 Corinthians 7:14). To be holy means to be set apart or separated for a special purpose. To the Jewish people, this came through the covenant God made with Abraham and Abraham's descendants. To the Church (the Israel of God, Galatians 6:16), this means accepting the offer to have a special, close relationship with our Creator. In both

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Fifty Years On **Berlin Celebrates the Treaty of Rome**

Twenty-seven chiefs of state, representing half a billion people, attended the commemoration in Berlin on 25 March amidst enthusiastic crowds on a glorious sunny Spring day. There were celebrations on the Brandenburg Gate to highlight the event, which proved to be a great success for the German government which currently holds the EU Presidency. John Schroeder and I made a visit to Berlin for the occasion.

On this visit to Berlin the question arose about how European-minded the German people are some 60 years after World War II, prior to which a sinister form of extreme nationalism held sway over millions of Germans during the Third Reich of the Nazi regime (1933-45). In fact, it is a generally accepted fact among political observers in Europe that the German people today are perhaps one of the least nationalistic-minded in the European Union. There is, however, a desire among some mainstream politicians to encourage the right type of pride in the nation's achievements since World War II.

German population cool to EU

Since nationalism isn't that visible a problem in today's Germany, does that mean that the German population is accepting the concept of a United Europe without reservation? Not at all, as shown by a recent poll taken by



All photos by Gerhard Marx

Bellevue Palace, where EU leaders dined

Germany's foremost news magazine, *Der Spiegel*. When asked, 'Do you personally see yourself first as a German rather than a European?' 65 percent answered German and only 28 percent answered European, with six percent seeing themselves as both German and European.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, in the German magazine called appropriately *Deutschland* (June, 2006), indicates the lack of enthusiasm among his people and others

for the EU. 'Now and again I have the feeling that the creation of the European Union from the ruins of two world wars has made a greater impression on people outside Europe than on the Europeans themselves.'

Germany today has no apparent political ambitions of its own outside the umbrella of the European Union. The government itself is much more zealous for Germany to play an important role in the EU than the people are.

Germans in general

almost take the EU for granted. It just happens to be there. They don't generally talk it down, but very few wave the 12-star EU flag, although EU governments did hoist the flag on government buildings during the celebrations. Germany as a nation needs to be seen as being supportive of the EU, and the people back their government, even if not with great enthusiasm.

On the question of reviving the EU constitution which was rejected by France and the Netherlands, the German

Foreign Minister had this to say, ‘In June 2007 it will be up to the European Council to decide what will happen next with the European Constitution. The Constitution would make Europe more democratic, more transparent and more efficient. Our position is therefore unambiguous: Germany supports the Constitution.’

Germany’s Guilt-Ridden Past

From the very beginning of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, when Germany was a founder member, the nation has been reluctant to get involved in pursuing any political initiatives on its own. This is understandable, seeing what happened under the Nazi regime with its policy of ethnic cleansing. The Holocaust in particular put the brakes on Germany taking political initiatives in Europe. Today the German government is still somewhat apprehensive about introducing political agendas on account of world public opinion that might be critical of such moves. Rather let France or Britain be the initiator, is a prevalent feeling among Germans.

When John Schroeder and I visited Berlin for the commemoration celebrations recently, we included a train jour-



National Library in Berlin

ney to Dresden as well. When visiting these cities, one is reminded of the 20th century folly of autocratic human leadership which leaves no room for the biblical approach to leading a people and nation. In an attempt to speedily bring to an end the ambitions and policies of Nazi leadership in Europe, the Allies practically razed Berlin to the ground and dealt Dresden a devastating blow by massive bombing which turned much of the city into a firestorm.



John Ross Schroeder in Berlin with security protection behind.

In comparison with Berlin, Dresden understandably does not reflect the same degree of cultural richness that Germany’s capital does. The centre of Dresden has been rebuilt, although not as quickly as Berlin’s, seeing that after World War II Dresden came under Communist control until the

Berlin Wall fell. The reconstruction has, however, gained momentum since German reunification and John and I enjoyed our visit to Dresden, taking in the free and relaxing atmosphere of the city. Of course, almost everything in downtown Dresden is pretty much brand new, as the accompanying photo of the city shows.

Attractions in Germany

Visitors to Germany like much of what they see in the unified country. It is democratically run like any western democracy. It’s economically sound, even though it has a high percentage of unemployment – although that figure is decreasing steadily. The people are very



The spectacular Oberbaum Bridge spans the river Spree, linking Kreuzberg, formerly in West Berlin, and Friedrichshain, formerly in East Berlin.

friendly and their country seems to be firmly aligned to the West, even being reluctant to send their troops into any battlefield. Although encouraged by both Britain and the United States to get militarily more involved in Afghanistan and elsewhere, Germany is somewhat reluctant to do so – perhaps partly on account of the image of the German military during World War II.

There is, however, apprehension among some EU countries that Germany will dominate the EU more and more in future years. Being the most economically sound economy on the European Continent, and exporting more to other nations than any other EU country, Germany could easily play a dominating role in the European Union. Not everyone would welcome that. When Germany was reunited, the then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher publicly congratulated the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, but whether she fully welcomed reunification, seeing that it would add economic



Dresden Shopping Precinct

clout to Germany, perhaps at the expense of Britain, is another matter.

Whichever political direction the EU will go in future years, there is no doubt that Germany will play a major part in how the European Union develops. Undoubtedly France will as well. In political science it's a certainty that the economically strongest nation will be in a good position to dominate other nations.

End-time biblical prophecies show that Germany, finding herself in the heart of Europe, is destined to play a major role in Europe's future in the years to come. Request our free booklet *Are We Living in the Time of the End?*

Gerhard Marx

A Winning Combination

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of understanding and discernment of people. After she died in March 1967, a valuable member of his team was missing.

The Church today

The servants of God today will continue to teach and explain the importance of God's values. His disciples will bind up the law, and as children of God will carry out His will (Isaiah 8:16-18). They will promote the Gospel of the Kingdom and feed His sheep.

In AD 31, the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost which brought together a team of God's firstfruits to do His work. Today with God's leadership and His Spirit to help us work together, there is nothing that will stop His work being done.

Let's be grateful for God's calling and put our efforts into reaching out to the world with the message of hope – the gospel of the Kingdom.

Peter Hawkins
Co-ordinating Pastor, British Isles

Your Church

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cases young people are included.

So the door is open to young people too. Yet you have to decide whether or not you will accept and act on the opportunity God has given you. Will you make the Church of God your Church? Will you find out which one is *The Church Jesus Built?* (Request our booklet by that title.) Will you listen to and learn the biblical principles taught at church services and use those principles to guide the choices you make in your life? Will you respond to this priceless opportunity?

Choosing right values

Responding to God's offer means making the values and teachings of His Church your values. It means using those values to guide your decisions regarding the use of drugs and alcohol, sexual relations, music and entertainment, romantic relationships, how you dress and even how you manage your finances. It means you make the words of your Creator the guiding principles for everything you do.

When I was a small boy sneaking in to turn off the alarm clock on Sunday mornings, I didn't know about the Feast of Pentecost, much less understand it. I certainly didn't know there was an opportunity offered to me.

If you want to find out more about the meaning of Pentecost and the promises God makes to you, request your free copy of *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*. The Creator never intended that His Church be just for your parents. He wants it to be your Church too!

Tom Clark

Tom is a husband and father and the pastor of United Church of God congregations in Liberal, Salina and Wichita, Kansas, USA.

Questions & Answers

Q How does the United Church of God stand on the question of men having free will to accept or reject the free offer of salvation through Jesus' atoning act? Please give me some Bible references.

B H, Switzerland

A A number of key scriptural references for man being a free moral agent are found in the five books of Moses, commonly known as the Pentateuch. In this beginning section of the Bible, men and women are given sound spiritual advice as to how to conduct themselves towards their neighbours, and even more importantly towards their Creator (see Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

Notice a basic scripture pertaining to the heart of your question. 'See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God and to keep His commandments, His statutes and His judgements, that you may live and multiply . . . But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are driven away and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish . . . I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you, that *I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live*' (Deuteronomy 30:15-19, emphasis added throughout).

The words in italics can only allow

us to draw one conclusion. As a basic principle of life, God doesn't force us to act against our will. Yet as another matter of general principle, obedience brings blessings, and disobedience, curses. God advises us to go the right way, but allows us the option of going wrong – while warning us of the inevitable negative consequences. His great spiritual law was in motion at creation and has continued ever since. Its basic expression is found in the Ten Commandments.

Human beings were made in the image of God. One godlike quality that flows from that basic blessing is the power of choice. Adam had the capacity to make a choice in the Garden of Eden. Yet he knowingly chose disobedience to God and suffered the consequences.

Later the patriarch Abraham exercised his power of choice in the right direction. Overall he lived a life of faithful obedience to God's commandments (see Genesis 26:5). Hebrews 11 records the faithful lives of other obedient men and women of God who lived in Old Testament times. For instance, Moses chose a life of service to God's people over a life of pleasure in Egypt (verse 24).

Of course, none of these heroes of the Old Testament was completely perfect. Nor are we today. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,' wrote the apostle Paul (Romans 3:23) The sinless Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross, wiping out our past sins and reconciling us to God. That sacrifice is all-inclusive throughout the ages to truly repentant people.

God made known His way of life to

peoples of ancient Israel and He gave them a choice. Notice another passage in the book of Deuteronomy. 'For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say: "Who will ascend into heaven and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?" . . . But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, *that you may do it*' (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). But the choice was still there.

God also makes known His way of life to those He chooses to call to be Christians today. The Bible says, 'As many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts 2:39; compare John 6:44, 65). God's overall plan makes provision for calling everyone during Christ's coming millennial reign and the great resurrection to follow when the whole House of Israel will have an opportunity for salvation (Romans 11:26; Ezekiel 37).

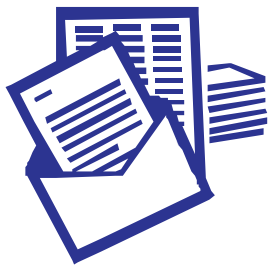
(To understand further, please request our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.)

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Everyone gets an opportunity for salvation, but each in his own time. Yet each individual has to personally choose whether or not he or she wants eternal life. God will not force anyone into His Kingdom. To understand all the details, you need that booklet about *God's Holy Day Plan*.

The annual festival of Pentecost has been highlighted in this issue of the Supplement. One of its basic lessons is that God is calling His firstfruits to salvation during this age of man's rejection of God's way.

How our literature is funded

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Letters From Our Readers

The Good News

I enjoy reading your *Good News* articles and always look forward to reading the biblical take on the issues of the day. I especially enjoy your [news] analysis which I feel is sorely lacking in my day-to-day church and religious life. I think it is high time that our teachers (religion and history classes) in school start discussing the implications of [the effects of Islam. We should consider] the gospel when speaking to the faithful to highlight the perils we face and emphasising the need to empower our elected leaders to deal with them.

H N, Sydney, Australia

I enjoy reading all the articles you write, but most of all I look forward to reading material about events in the Middle East and long for the day when Jesus Christ comes back to this earth and stops all the madness, wars, genocide and everything that goes with them.

Mrs J H, Lancashire

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the publications that were sent to me: *America and Britain in Bible Prophecy, The Book of Revelation Unveiled, The Gospel of the Kingdom, The Good News* magazine and accompanying letter. I find your exposition of the book of Daniel the most enlightening I have ever read so far. God bless for you for this good work.

E A, Essex

- *Readers may be interested to know that our free booklet The Middle East in Bible Prophecy covers that area of the globe and has a fine exposition of parts of the book of Daniel as well.*

Your explanations of prophecy really make a great deal of sense and give hope to those that read them.

A H, Slough

I absolutely love your magazines. They are packed with so much information and teaching. They are well detailed in explaining biblical truths.

A S, Northolt

The Good News and the booklets are important to people who want to live moral and decent lives in today's immoral world.

D S, Blackburn

Help with marriage problems

I am so grateful to read your lesson about marriage. That subject touched me as I am having some problems in my marriage.

Reader from Aldershot

- *Further information about this subject may be obtained by requesting our free booklet Marriage and Family: the Missing Dimension.*

Studying God's Word more

Reading your magazine this month has confirmed what I believe that God's Holy Spirit is saying to me and the rest of the Church today. We have to study God's Word more. Please find a donation towards your great work. You can claim the tax back if you want.

Mrs S H, Cwmbarn, Wales

- *Readers who contribute regularly may wish to join the Gift Aid programme. Then the British government will add to each donation that is made.*

Bible Study Course

I thank God who has quickened my understanding and the illumination of

my heart in completing my 12 Bible study lessons through the United Church of God. I thank all of those who have been instrumental in providing these very unique lessons. My understanding of the Bible has been enlightened and I am now closer to the Lord than ever before. I pray that the Lord will give me the grace to surrender my all. Finally, I will appreciate if the promised certificate could be sent to me.

A S, Kent

- *It's on its way.*

I express my appreciation and thanks for the certificate you sent to me after I completed the *Bible Study Course*.

K J, France

Readers grateful to learn about Jesus Christ

Thanks for bringing me out of darkness to the light through Jesus Christ.

H A, Manchester

God bless you so much for informing people how good our Jesus is. One thing people should know is that He loves those who love Him. The more you draw closer to Him, the better life is.

F S, London

- *Readers may want to request our free booklet Jesus Christ: The Real Story. We shouldn't neglect our gratefulness toward and our worship of God the Father either. Jesus came to reveal the Father. He also addressed God the Father as 'Lord of heaven and earth' (Matthew 11:39) and Christ encouraged us to direct our prayers to this great Personage. Also ask for another free booklet, Who Is God?*