



The Key to Answered Prayer

How righteous do we have to be for God to listen to and answer our prayers? What do we have to be like to get his attention? We can learn many things from Manasseh who was the most evil king Judah ever had.

Manasseh's father was Hezekiah, one of Judah's most righteous kings. Manasseh undoubtedly knew of his father's trust in God and how God had delivered him from the king of Assyria and saved Jerusalem. Yet Manasseh was exactly the opposite. Does that surprise us? If so, look around and what do you see? Do you see children automatically living by their parents' values, or does each generation have to stand on its own?

Note how Manasseh is described:

Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. He built altars in the temple of the LORD,

of which the LORD had said, 'In Jerusalem I will put my Name.' In both courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced sorcery and divination, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, provoking him to anger. He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which the LORD had said to David and to his son Solomon, 'In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander from the land I gave their forefathers, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them.' But the people did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites. ... Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end--besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the LORD. (2 Kings 21:1-9, 16)



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Not only did Manasseh lead Judah into idolatry, but the last verse quoted above says he shed innocent blood. The Jewish historian Josephus says Manasseh killed some of God's prophets every day. What a difference between him and his father Hezekiah!

So why worry about evil king Manasseh? Is there anything about him that can help us? There certainly is. Note what becomes of that king:

The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. So the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon. In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God. (2 Chronicles 33:10-13)

I think none of us can claim to be as evil as Manasseh. Yet when he became deeply humble inside, God heard him and didn't hold what he had been against him! It is not personal righteousness that gets to God. It is being humble. It seems God responds just as we do to attitudes. We like humble people and are repulsed by anyone who is arrogant. And don't all of us really know that we aren't really what we seem to be to others? Don't all of us know that we are shameful, sinful, and sometimes really dumb people? God also knows what we are, so we ought to be open with him.

It is not our righteousness that makes us of any worth, for we aren't really righteous, are we? We all ought to know that. It is the righteousness of Christ that matters. There are many statements Jesus made in the gospel of John where he said "I am ..."

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35); "I am the light of the world" (John 8:58); "I am the gate for the sheep" (John 10:7); "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25); "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:5); and "I am the true vine" (John 15:1).

Since Jesus is all these things, and we are not, does it not make sense that we ought to be humble? The apostle Paul knew that real righteousness comes only from Christ (Phil. 3:9). A humble heart opens the windows of heaven and moves God to respond. He forgives us no matter what we've been, as Manasseh learned. And Manasseh didn't die in captivity. God rescued even him!

We may at times feel that we aren't humble. There is just a sense there that something is wrong. In spite of that, we are afraid to ask God to help us become of a humble heart for fear that he will bring a trauma upon us. Why not tell our heavenly Father that we want to be humble, and we want to be different, but are afraid of what he might do? He is a good Father and is willing to accommodate us if there is any way possible. I have personally experienced such responses from God many times. God is our best friend!

This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." (Isa 66:2) **FN**

Faith Networks is a voluntary effort by a group of individuals interested in promoting cooperation among the Churches of God and encouraging healthy relationships both within congregations and between them. Resources have been made available for the initial stages of Faith Networks by members of the Church of God Cincinnati.

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Book Review:
More Than a Carpenter
By Josh and Sean McDowell



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The McDowells, father, Josh, and son, Sean, have updated the original 1977 version of Josh McDowell's *More Than a Carpenter*. Their intent is that, "...this book will have a transformational impact on a new generation of people on a quest for spiritual clarity."

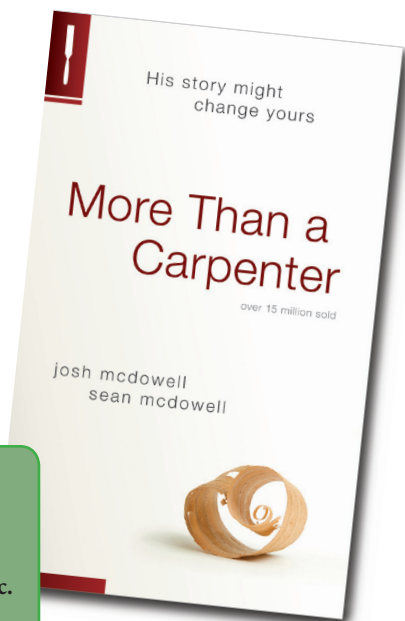
Josh gives the account of his search for meaning in life in Chapter 1, "My Story." He relates how he tried religion, but it didn't work. Then he tried education. He noticed a group of people on the campus of the university he was attending had a different attitude than the rest. When he asked for the reason, a young woman replied: "Jesus Christ." He replied, "Oh, for God's sake, don't give me that kind of garbage. I'm fed up with religion. I'm fed up with the church. I'm fed up with the Bible. Immediately she shot back, "I didn't say religion, I said Jesus Christ!"

Challenged to make an intellectual examination of the claims of Christ, he was eventually led to believe in and accept Jesus as his God and Savior. In the remaining chapters Josh and Sean relate the results of examining the legal-historical proof regarding Jesus utilizing both the Biblical record and secular sources.

The last chapter, "He Changed My Life," reveals how Josh McDowell's life was changed through his relationship with the resurrected, living Christ. In his conclusion he states,

“But in spite of the firmness of the facts and the authenticity of the experience, Christianity is not something you can shove down anyone’s throat... what you do is up to you.”

More Than a Carpenter is only about 179 pages long and takes very little time to read. If you are a Christian who never really investigated the solid facts about Jesus, and your doubts are hindering your spiritual growth, this book may help strengthen your faith. The book will also make a great gift to someone who is searching and asking questions. **FN**



More Than a Carpenter
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Patch It or Replace It?

Did you ever hang on to an article of clothing way past its best days? I had a long, beige wool coat I really liked. It was warm on the coldest of winter days. As the years wore on, it lost buttons, and the lining would tear at the least stress. I would stitch it up and it would go one more winter. The fabric lost its luster and was looking shabby. I began to realize that the fabric would not hold the new stitches any longer than it took to put the coat on and off. It was time to replace it.

Jesus made a comparison to a garment needing a patch:

No one sews a patch of un-shrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved (Matthew 9:16-17).



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The religious leaders of his day had a habit of asking Jesus some picky questions, trying to trap him or embarrass him. This time they wanted to know why his disciples didn't fast according to their customs. Jesus did not engage them in a long argument about fasting. He got down to the heart of the matter. His teachings could not be bound in their rigid traditions of men. He did not come to patch their old way of life; he came to replace it.

Jesus did not come to patch our old ways of living; he came to make us into new creations living new lives. The old self must be destroyed so the new self can take its place.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The rest of this chapter, and in fact the entire letter to the Ephesians, describes the old shabby life and what the replacement life should look like. The old self relied on lies; the new self speaks the truth. The old self gave in to anger and rages in response to aggravating people and circumstances; the new self doesn't allow those feelings to linger and fester. The old self stole or took advantage of other people; the new self generously works to help those who have need. The old self used language for its own gain; the new self uses language to encourage and benefit others. Instead of quarreling and fighting, we are admonished to be kind and compassionate to others remembering to forgive as Christ forgives.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:1-2).

The letter goes on to describe what love is and what love is not in our relationships with other people.

Jesus replaced the old with the new as foretold by Jeremiah (31:31-34): "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20)."

God is making everything new through Christ beginning with those who believe in his Son now, but he does not do everything for us. Eternal life is his gift. When we accept it, we agree to live a new life; replacing the old life we had been living with a life lived for God, lived his way. Don't settle for a patch; replace that old garment with his righteousness (Revelation 19:6-8; 21:5). [FN](#)



The Orbit of God

Are you sitting still as you read this? Standing still? Lying down still? You are probably doing one of those, since reading is easier when we are still. Where I live I have seen one gentleman who reads as he walks, but I think that is a little risky because one may step someplace where one would rather not step. So I don't read and walk at the same time. I also don't read if I am in an automobile or other ground transportation where there's a lot of movement. I develop motion sickness real fast if I do that. Airplanes seem to be okay, so long as the ride is smooth and there is no turbulence. And if there is turbulence I'm not reading anyway. I am clutching the seat with white knuckles hoping I can make the plane stay in the air. So far, thankfully, that has worked in every case. Like you, I prefer to be still when I read, especially in airplanes.

There is, however, one little problem with our perception of being still: it is a total illusion. It is a necessary illusion for this physical life, but an illusion nevertheless. From the day you are born you are moving in ways that you cannot fully comprehend.

There are approximately seven octillion atoms in the average human body. Of course, some of us are carrying around more atoms than we should, but even the average of seven octillion is a lot of atoms: 7 followed by 27 zeros. Atoms are what you are made of at the most basic level, and they are never still. They are constantly vibrating. Besides the vibration, the electrons in each atom revolve around the nucleus of the atom at incredible speeds. At the most basic level, you are always moving. You are a vibrating mass of billions and billions of

atoms, each with its revolving electrons.

A more familiar example of constant motion is the rotation of the earth. The earth rotates at a speed of 1,070 miles per hour, and we call one rotation a day. You and everything else on earth are being carried along at this breakneck speed as the earth rotates. Gravity is the only thing that keeps us from spinning off into space.


In addition to rotating on its axis, the earth revolves around the sun at a speed of 67,000 miles per hour, carrying with it the moon, which is revolving around the earth. We call one revolution of the earth a year, so your age at each birthday tells you how many times you have been around the sun.

The sun also revolves. It is moving around our galaxy, which we call the Milky Way, taking along the earth and all the other planets as it moves at a speed of 600,000 miles per hour. At that speed it takes 200,000,000 years for the sun to go around the galaxy. And the galaxy itself is moving through space at 1.3 million miles per hour, taking with it the sun and billions of other stars. Scientists are not really sure why the galaxy is moving or where it is going. For all we know it may also be going around something on a scale too vast for us to comprehend.

Have you ever felt like you are going around in circles? You are! Just thinking about it may make you a little dizzy, but



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at least the next time someone tells you that you have just been sitting around all day you can tell them that you have actually been quite active.


The interesting thing about all this is the common theme we see in the universe of everything rotating or revolving around something else. It is almost as if the Creator of all that movement is trying to tell us something. Maybe He is. Spiritually speaking, our lives should revolve around God and His way of life. In other words, we should be in God's orbit. There will be bumps in the road, but things will turn out okay if we are in God's orbit.

There are many examples of this in the Bible. One of my favorites is the Old Testament story of Joseph, the son of Jacob. Joseph was in the orbit of God, but that doesn't mean that everything always went smoothly for him, far from it. When he was 17 years old he was sold into slavery by his own brothers. He was taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard. Joseph must surely have missed his home and family, but under the circumstances things worked out well for him in Egypt because Potiphar was impressed by him and he was appointed superintendent of Potiphar's household. But then Potiphar's wife brought some false allegations against Joseph and he was thrown into prison. That must have been very discouraging. Just when things seem to be getting better for Joseph, he ended up in prison.

But Joseph was still in the orbit of God. After a time he interpreted the dream of Pharaoh's chief cup bearer, who was imprisoned after apparently doing

something to offend his royal employer. Joseph told him he would be reinstated as cup bearer, and he requested that when the reinstatement occurred that the cup bearer would mention him to Pharaoh. But when the cup bearer went back to his old position he forgot about Joseph. That must have been very discouraging. Just when there seemed to be a glimmer of hope, things did not work out and Joseph spent another two long years in prison.

But Joseph was still in the orbit of God. Eventually Pharaoh had a dream and he wanted to know what it meant. At that point the cupbearer remembered Joseph and Joseph was brought before Pharaoh to interpret the dream. He told Pharaoh that there would be seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine and that grain should be saved during the good years to get Egypt through the bad years. Pharaoh was so impressed that he appointed Joseph to a high position of leadership position in Egypt so the country could prepare for the coming lean years. At that point Joseph was not yet 30 years old, and as far as we know things went well for him after that. Eventually even his family came seeking assistance during the famine. Things had come full circle for Joseph because he was in the orbit of God.

The overriding theme in Joseph's story is faithfulness. God always rewards faithfulness. If we continue to obey and trust Him through the good times and the bad then He will ultimately work things out in a positive way according to His purpose. That is what He did in the case of Joseph, and that is the message as we ponder the incredible ways in which we are constantly moving even when we think we are still. Let us always stay in the orbit of God. 

Withdrawing Protection

Does God actually punish people? What was once a basic religious concept has become a problem for Christians to explain and a subject of skepticism for non-believers.

Christians don't have a problem with the idea that a human father will chastise his children out of love. In fact, it's his responsibility. So the idea that our Father in Heaven will punish from time to time is consistent with loving discipline. He is real and our relationship with him incorporates both blessings and punishment. When Job was undergoing trials his wife became bitter and urged him to curse God and thus die. Job responded, "Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?" (Job 2:10 NRSV) Job's outstanding trait was his confidence in the goodness of God during the trials. Unlike so many people, the trouble he endured never caused him to question the existence of God.

But an even bigger problem seems to lie in the arena of national sin—and national punishment. Does God punish a community, or a nation? If so, what does He use? Is war punishment for the sins of a nation? What about natural

disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis or even disease epidemics? Well,

we could say man is the cause of war but not a tsunami. Is it punishment from God? If so

we must deal with another problem. What about the innocent people who lie in the path of such destruction?

A minister being interviewed by a national news reporter was asked this question after a major natural catastrophe. The minister posited that devastation such as a tsunami that had just occurred was the result of sin. The news man responded with undisguised anger, "You mean that God killed innocent children to punish mankind? A 7-year-old girl was killed! What sin did the 7-year-old girl commit for which God would kill her?" The minister stumbled his way along for a few embarrassing seconds and the show went to a commercial.

The major assumption in this scenario is that God *caused* the tsunami. There is no doubt that God could have *prevented* the disaster, but that is far different from saying He caused it.

To unravel this mystery it helps to go to the story of Job where we get a rare glimpse into how the spirit realm operates. Job was a wealthy man blessed by God. One day Satan appears before God. That in itself is hard for man to comprehend. Maybe the closest comparison is when leaders of the free nations sit down around a conference table with leaders of communistic countries.

When God points out the righteousness of Job, Satan cynically responds, "Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? (Job 1:10) This peek into the world unseen



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by human eyes is revealing. God is defending His servants! Satan is seeking opportunities to destroy. Peter describes Satan as “a roaring lion...looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8) That’s a frightening scenario.

Why, then, do men assume that God created hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and volcanoes when there is plenty of evidence to the contrary? When creation was finished “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31) That’s not a description of a planet in chaos. The good earth is evidence of the righteousness of God. The world He created was orderly and harmonious, but we see an adversarial force at work early in Genesis whose sole purpose is to corrupt the purity of creation.

The rational mind has a hard time understanding the destructive mind. Why does a vandal, for example, destroy another’s property when he has nothing to gain? So the idea that a destructive being with great power can exist at the spirit level runs contrary to the way we think. How can the Spirit of harmony and the spirit of destruction both exist at that level?

Any thinking person can see that complexity is the result of design. Take a cell phone which most of us use regularly. The phone connects to a cell tower, which communicates with a satellite orbiting the earth, which then converses with another cell phone tower, which reaches the person with whom we wish to speak. How does the phone connect with the tower? How does the tower communicate with the satellite? How does the tower find the correct phone to receive the signal?

No sane person would say that the satellite attained its orbit by accident, or that

the towers that communicate with one another or even the cell phone itself came about accidentally. So rational people would conclude that the universe, which is far more complex, came into being through design rather than through an accident of chaotic chance.

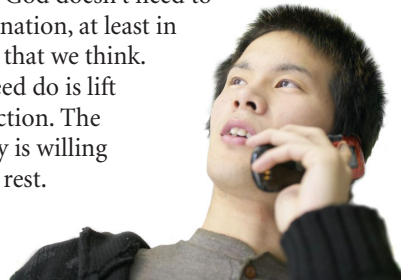
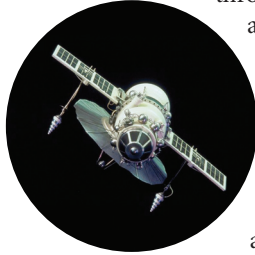
How many systems work together in cooperation so communication can occur via telephone? How many things can go wrong within those systems to corrupt the process and prevent the system from working?

Customers hold the phone company responsible to maintain the systems that cause the phones to operate properly. In return, customers owe something to the phone company. The company provides a service, so it deserves a reward. If a customer doesn’t compensate the company, can he expect to continue receiving service?

In the same way mankind owes something to God who maintains life. Humans can’t have it both ways. If we owe something to our Creator for the services He provides, He also has a right to withdraw them.

Just as the federal government has as its primary job the protection of citizens from foreign or domestic enemies, one of the most important services God provides His people is protection from our enemy, Satan.

Maybe God doesn’t need to punish a nation, at least in the sense that we think. All He need do is lift his protection. The Adversary is willing to do the rest.



time researching the incredible claims in that book. It was terribly difficult to learn that at the roots of almost all accepted Christian dogma lie pagan religions. I was even more alarmed at how much of those practices were in the church we now attended! I challenged the pastor on why he tolerated those practices in his congregation if he knew they were wrong. As his answer was not sufficient, we had to move on, but to where? I had no clue there were any other Sabbath-observing groups in existence at this point.

My studies of *The Two Babylons*, if anything, made me want to know more. While researching the Sabbath on the internet, I found this website <http://biblicalcenter.org> and became pen pals with the owner of the site, Wayne Schatzle. He recommended a number of other books for me to read, which I consumed voraciously, and we communicated back and forth for quite a while. I was struggling with my church and was looking for a new one when Wayne met Rick and Paula Frazee at a Feast of Tabernacles gathering in Florida. Wayne then referred me to Rick, who lived in the Kansas City area. So, I found the Church of God, Kansas City by talking to a guy in Ohio over email who then met the Frazees, founding members of COGKC, in Florida. Yep, that's a miracle.

It took me quite a while to get the courage up to visit COGKC, and I was skeptical for quite a while. It took many long phone calls with Rick, who very patiently answered all of my questions. Interestingly enough, Rick and I still have a lot of long phone conversations and have grown to be close friends. When I started attending, I noticed that there was no script. Bible studies were done straight

out of the Bible. Ramon Coleman was going through the book of Isaiah at the time, and he was just going line-by-line, seeing what there was to see. This was really refreshing and the opposite of the church I had been attending. Sermons and studies were being given then by quite a few different people and nobody seemed to be "in charge." There was never any mention of money or passing of a plate. It was "church" but it did not seem to be like any church I had attended or even heard about. All the jobs were done by volunteers.

When I heard about a business meeting, I attended because I was really curious to see how a church that never talked about money and appeared to have no leadership actually functioned. It turns out that without a paid ministry and by renting a building, there isn't much overhead. The congregation was collecting far more money than it needed through a small box on a table in the back and was using the surplus for good works. Committees operated with complete independence and managed their own budgets for things like evangelism, music service, flowers and cards. The church also puts on a huge annual event where youth from around the country come to visit us.

At this meeting, I asked why the church did not advertise. It took an actual miracle for me to find the congregation and I had the idea that we might be able to make it a little easier for the next family to find us. After I asked the question, George Curry, the President of the church at the time, walked over to me with a piece of paper and had me put my name under Arlo Gieselman's on the "Evangelism Committee." I walked out of the meeting with a significant budget and a mission to use it however I saw fit to advertise our church. I had only

been attending COGKC for about nine months at the time.

Time went by and my first endeavor into advertising was a pretty expensive mistake. But I did not get into trouble, and my second foray was advertising our website through Google Adwords. That turned out to be a huge success. We have had numerous visitors because of our increased web presence and have gained three or four more families as members who found us through the internet. We have had to make a concerted effort to teach the basics and shepherd new folks along. Growth is a nice problem to have!


I have grown a lot along the way as well. I remember at one point wondering to myself, "Why did God give me this knowledge?" Perhaps that sounds a bit pompous, but it was in the vein of "why me?" For some reason, God plucked me out of the world, gave me a wonderful and Godly wife, a significant amount of scriptural and theological knowledge, and placed me in a congregation where I can use the talents he loaned me.

There simply had to be a reason for it. So, I took a page from Wayne Schatzle's playbook and created my own website. It is an attempt to let others who question established doctrines find out that they are not alone. My website is www.firstcenturychristianity.net and it is the number one hit on Google for the words "first century Christianity" without one penny of advertising effort. This is yet another miracle. The most incredible statistic, to me at least, is its international reach. It has been visited by people from 72 countries! I have friends now, brothers and sisters in Christ, in such far off places as Canada and Hungary because of that website. Praise be to God!

I have been on the speaking and Bible study schedules for quite a while now. I don't actually remember how

long, but probably three years or so.

This is another feather in the cap for the COGKC because my first few sermons were horrible. But everyone kept encouraging me. Ramon Coleman and Lenny Cacchio sent me numerous articles on how to preach/speak in public, and now I can contribute that way as well. I did one sermon so badly that I thought I should just find another way to contribute, but Lenny encouraged me to stick with it and suggested I do one on the subject of the Sabbath, a topic that we all know well. He recognized that I was trying to shoot basketball's three-pointers when all I really needed was a lay-up. I took his advice and really turned a corner. This saga really illustrates the analogy of the congregation to being "the Body of Christ" They sure did patiently let me limp along for quite a while!

My wife and I serve the congregation in other ways, as well, but so does almost everyone in the group. It is not uncommon for Ramon to give a Bible study and then turn around and play the piano for services; or for Joe Bollig to open and close the hall, as well as lead songs. The wives and young adults do an enormous amount of work and almost always miss Bible study in the main hall because they are teaching the youth or preparing for a group meal. Ed Andreas, who has served the Church of God for decades, came early and stayed late every week for nearly ten years in order to take care of our church's audio system. We have managed to get him some help in that department these days, though. This is how our congregation, the Church of God, Kansas City works. We all serve gladly and willingly. It is our calling and also our mission statement: Preaching the gospel, feeding the flock, caring for our neighbors. 

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The Not-a-Church Church

Editor's Note: Chris DeWeese is a member of the Church of God Kansas City. His story of how he got there and what it has been like is recounted in this article.



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The story on how I came to be in the Church of God, Kansas City is nothing short of miraculous.

My wife, Diana, is a third generation Sabbath keeper from a different denomination (Seventh Day Adventist church). Neither of us was interested in religion at all when we were dating, but in the early months of our marriage, I got the inkling to start attending Sunday services at the denomination of my youth. Diana challenged me to find proof for Sunday in the Bible and, well, I couldn't. I had never read the Bible before, so to prove my point about Sunday, I read it cover-to-cover. It was the first of many times I had to utter the words, "You're right, honey." So, we attended services at her church for quite a while, and I was baptized in 2004.

In the meanwhile, my study of the scriptures could not be quenched. The pastor of the church we attended gave me a book called *The Two Babylons* to read. I spent quite a long

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