



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dundee, Ohio

Dear Fellow-laborers,

Gloria and I are traveling in the U.S. We will spend Thanksgiving with my sisters and their families here in Ohio and then head for Texas to see our son and his family. In God's service in Asia, one of the sacrifices we have to make is not being able to see family as much as we would like. But God's will takes precedent.

We are also on a speaking tour and have been invited to speak in several places in Ohio and Texas. Invitations come from various fellowships of the Church of God. We have no formal relationship with any particular fellowship, but enjoy brotherly friendship with many.

Since Legacy Institute was founded in 1999, we have come to know and respect many small Church of God fellowships or ministries the world over who may have little or no connection with one another and are called by various and sundry descriptive names attached to "*Church of God*".

Some are large and some are small. Some have a more centralized form of government, while others are run by a committee style governing body.

Some concentrate their efforts in one geographic area or even on one particular tribal group. Some COG's have very large budgets, while others are poor!

Some have the potential for an impact on many people's lives, while others have only a limited and very specific impact.

What BINDS US? What makes us BROTHERS?

It is the Holy Spirit of God! It is the Holy Spirit that *binds* us. We may speak different languages, have different customs, and even have a different style of Sabbath worship services; but we all share the same *Spirit* that UNIFIES us!

Paul tells us in **1 Cor. 12:4 -7** that:

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:" NKJV

I wish more of us in America would truly come to recognize this important point of our faith. I learned a very big lesson when I first visited Lazum Brang in Kachinland in January of 1999. That visit opened to me a vast, new door of understanding about how God works.

Lazum Brang was a Church of God evangelist in Kachinland [far northern Myanmar (Burma)]. He had attended a Seventh Day Adventist seminary and was baptized by a Church of God 7th Day elder in India. His contact with the former American COG fellowship I had belonged to was limited to a few letters and a magazine. He had been evangelizing for 7 years with very little funds. He and his family lived in poverty.

The Church of God congregation he pastored numbered about 30 persons. Their doctrines were almost the same as I believed (*at that time they were not yet observing the annual Holy Days*), and their Sabbath services were structured different than what I was used to.

What struck me was the unity of Spirit I felt when I was with them! It was the same feeling I would get when I was with COG brethren back in America! I was accepted warmly as a brother and I felt the same way toward them.

We were different in race, nationality, language, customs, traditions and a host of other differences. BUT – WE WERE UNITED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD! We shared a common purpose and destiny; and we shared a common LORD!

They ALL belonged to God as I belonged to God. They were JUST AS MUCH members of the Body of Christ as I was. As far as God is concerned – **THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE!**

My eyes were opened to the truth!

Eph. 1:22-23

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” NKJV

Rom. 10:12-13

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.” NKJV

Over the past 7 years I have had the privilege of working closely with Lazum Brang. The one thing that I admire most about him is this:

Lazum Brang is CONSUMED with the GREAT COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL NATIONS!

It is his life and his breath! There is nothing more important to him! He is constantly visiting remote areas in Kachinland, Burma and the borderlands of China – preaching and teaching. Many of the places he visits are not reachable by motor vehicle. If not, he rides a bicycle or walks. Legacy Institute has regularly helped support his evangelistic efforts since that fateful meeting in 1999. Small churches have been raised up in Kachinland, central Burma, Shan States and the China border regions. God has abundantly blessed his ministry.

Does he still conduct Sabbath services different from what we are used to in America? Yes!

Does the Church of God in Kachinland and Burma continue to have different customs and traditions? Yes!

Does Lazum Brang have certain beliefs and practices that are different than mine? Yes! But they are not the trunk of the doctrinal tree!!

Does Lazum Brang do things the same way I do? NO!

Is he God's TRUE and FAITHFUL servant? Yes!!

Is he my BROTHER in Jesus Christ? YES!!

The point I am making should be GLARINGLY CLEAR! God doesn't have to follow our petty rules and conventions! Some of us would like the Church of God around the whole world to become a "cookie cutter" replication of the way we do things in America or they are not acceptable!

Where in the Bible can one find this? Who made up this rule?

It certainly wasn't God! And it wasn't Our Lord!

PREACHING THE GOSPEL INTO ALL THE WORLD

Perhaps the BIGGEST difference between a Lazum Brang and others like him and some of us Americans is this:

He is ON FIRE for the Work of God! He is zealous beyond measure to accomplish the GREAT COMMISSION!

He makes me ASHAMED of my own lethargy and apathy!

My fellow American brothers and sisters: are we ON FIRE? Do we have a ZEAL for taking the Gospel to this dying world that CONSUMES and BLOTS OUT anything and everything else? Are we willing to do everything it takes to get the WORK of GOD completed!?

Sometimes I think we are all asleep like the foolish virgins of Matthew 25.

Matt. 25:1-13

*"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were **wise**, and five were **foolish**. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they **all** slumbered and slept.*

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for

yourselves. 'And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you. "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." NKJV

This parable is used by Jesus to tell us to be ALWAYS ready for His return. Because Jesus did not come back in 1972 or 1975 or 1995 or 2000, does NOT mean He has delayed His coming! It does not mean we should relax and engage in self-gratification and materialistic pursuits because we now have a lot of time. Our focus should be riveted to the Work that must be done BEFORE Jesus' return!

Matt. 24:45-51

*"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them **food in due season**? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." NKJV*

Some of us have been seduced into what I call the “*Lord delays His Coming*” syndrome. Where is our passion?! Where is our zeal?

We also have been drawn into a situation I call “Church Wars”. We actually have people in different fellowships of the Church of God living in the same town that WON'T EVEN TALK TO ONE ANOTHER!! We still have bitterness and strife and offenses that remain UNFORGIVEN!

Where this attitude exists, we play right into Satan's hands!

Remember Matthew 24? The temptations mentioned are twofold: “*that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards...*”

The warning Jesus gives us is about **HOW** we treat our fellow servants and **WHETHER** or not we are concentrating our energies on the pursuit of self-gratification.

If we are spending a lot of time chaffing over some real or perceived offense committed against us – or if we are consumed by the pursuit of riches or worldly success – then we should carefully RE-STUDY the above scripture and examine ourselves in the light of Jesus the Messiah's Words.

Mark 13:36-39

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,

until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” NKJV

Notice that the 2nd Coming will be like the Days of Noah. Everyone will be going about their business and not heeding the warnings God gives them.

Do we want to be included in this category? Do we want to be asleep when He comes?

God does not leave us without warning and without knowledge of what is to come:

1 Thess. 5:1-3

“But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.” NKJV

We must do the WORKS of God every day – spreading the Gospel Message -- AS IF JESUS IS COMING TOMORROW!

Now for some of you, I may be preaching to the choir. Others are going to get mad at me because they are very, very comfortable in their slumber! It really doesn't matter to me one way or the other. God commands me to convict, convince, exhort and even rebuke – using the Word of God.

2 Tim. 4:2-3

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” NKJV

In my personal experience, I look back and I see many events that have taken place since the split of the large and powerful COG organization I belonged to into many small fellowships – fragmented for many different reasons.

Maybe the day will come when we can truly embrace one another again in full Christian fellowship. But that is going to take a lot of humbling and a serious change of focus.

The events surrounding the second coming will happen quickly. There will be NO TIME to prepare or time for sudden “death-bed” repentance when that last TRUMPET blasts from Heaven!

The warning that Jesus gives us is this:

ALL – including and especially the ministry – must be actively carrying on with the WORK of God – CARRYING THE GOSPEL TO THE FAR CORNERS OF THE EARTH – as faithful servants – right up until the VERY DAY that Jesus returns!

We have no time to slumber. We have no time to sleep. We have no time to waste fighting among ourselves or selfishly enjoying the pleasures of this world, NEGLECTING the job Jesus gave us.

We must be spreading the Gospel Message -- AS IF JESUS IS COMING TOMORROW!

Luke 12:35-40

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." NKJV

Speaking to "OLD TIMERS" – (like me!!) – do you feel the same sense of urgency you once did back in the 70's and 80's?? Do you get as excited as you once did about Preaching the Gospel in foreign lands and the baptism of new people?!

Do you still willingly get into your pocketbook and sacrifice to help get the GOSPEL through NEW doors that have opened in Africa, South America or Asia?

When is the last time you gave-up a meal in a nice restaurant and maybe sold something you held dear in order to support one of these opportunities?

Now I am sure that there are those of you reading this letter who DO maintain a sense of urgency and have not become complacent. Then maybe this message is NOT for you! I hope that is the case.

But, as my Dad always said: "If the shoe fits – wear it!"

We need to seriously examine ourselves. Are we wise virgins or foolish ones!?

Rev. 3:1-6

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."'" NKJV

Now some may read this section of scripture and exclaim, "Well, I'm not Sardis – I am Philadelphia!"

Fine, believe what you want to believe; Sardis – Philadelphia – Laodicea; I doubt any of us REALLY know which Church of Revelation 2-3 we belong to. But it doesn't really matter because the messages *are for us ALL!*

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

This is PLURAL – the message is for all the people of God – no matter which “era” we think we or somebody else belongs to.

The point I am making is that not one of us can afford complacency about Jesus return. Nor can we afford complacency about the WORK He gave us to do.

That WORK is supposed to continue – done by you and me – right up until His return or until persecution stops us.

We cannot afford to say: *"Well, that job belongs to someone else"* – or – *"Well, it is the job of the 2 Witnesses"*. Nor does the Bible support the idea that: *"The Gospel has already been preached and now we are to prepare the bride"*...

NO, Jesus gave the job to us – AND **IT IS NOT FINISHED!!!**

We must have the same attitude Jesus had:

John 9:4

"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." NKJV

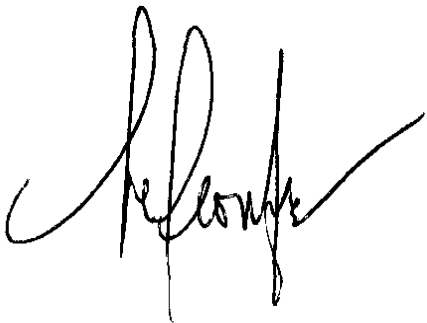
There is much work to be done. The fields are RIPE for the harvest. I have seen it with my own eyes and experienced the thrill of the newly converted, called and chosen from the various tribes of this earth.

Sleep is not an option.

Let's all pray that God gives us a renewed FIRE and ZEAL for His Work!!

Until next time,

Your fellow-laborer with Our Lord Jesus,



T. Leon Sexton

WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?

LEGACY INSTITUTE is a private, non-profit, charitable foundation and is not affiliated with any human church organization. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. Your donations to Legacy Institute are tax deductible in the USA.