

First Century Church of God

NEWSLETTER

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Greetings brothers and sisters,

As we look ahead to Pentecost 2025, let us remember that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost came only when the brethren were in one accord. Unity was not optional—it was essential. God does not dwell in division or confusion, but in peace and harmony (1 Cor. 14:33).

Acts 2 reminds us that the early disciples were of one heart, one mind, and one purpose, focused wholly on God. There were no lukewarm souls, no isolated spirits—everyone was earnest in prayer, love, and expectation.

As we prepare, let us strive to speak the same truth, walk in humility, be patient with one another, and put others before ourselves (Phil. 2:3–4; Eph. 4:1–3). True unity flows from love, gentleness, long-suffering, and a shared commitment to the gospel.

Pentecost is not merely a date on the calendar—it is a divine appointment. Let us ready ourselves in heart and in fellowship, praying that the Holy Spirit will move powerfully among us once again.

In Christ's service,
Pastor George Ramocan

FEAST OF WEEKS 2025





Gen Z and Alpha Believers:

By Job Dunwell

Rely on the Holy Spirit and Evangelize as Pentecost Approaches

As Pentecost approaches, I urge my fellow young believers from the Gen Z and Gen Alpha generations to take hold of their God-given role in the mission of the Church. The world is yearning for truth—and we are called to be bearers of the one true Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Jesus commissioned His followers, saying: *“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation”* (Mark 16:15). This command is not reserved for the ordained or the elderly. It is for every believer. Scripture tells us: *“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12). The same Holy Spirit who emboldened the apostles now lives in us.

However, evangelism without the Spirit’s love becomes empty noise. As 1 Corinthians 13:1 reminds us, *“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”* In a world filled with distraction, fear, and conflict, we must depend on the fruit of the Spirit to bear lasting witness: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* (Galatians 5:22–23).

Have you considered how each fruit functions as a gateway for effective outreach? The Bible declares: *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses”* (Acts 1:8). That power is not limited to miracles—it empowers us to live, speak, and love with grace and truth. Joel prophesied, *“I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy”* (Joel 2:28). This means our witness must be led by the Spirit.

The upcoming Feast of Pentecost should be more than a date on the calendar. In the coming weeks, be encouraged to bear the fruit of the Spirit, rely on God’s strength, and share the Gospel intentionally—with friends, classmates, and communities.



Exodus 34:22:

"You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end."

Using WhatsApp for Personal Evangelism as We Count to Pentecost



By Bonita Ramocan

Dear Brethren,

As we journey toward Pentecost, a season marked by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it's a meaningful time to reflect on the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These qualities not only shape our inner lives but also guide how we reach others with the message of Christ. WhatsApp, a platform most of us use daily, can be a simple yet impactful tool for personal evangelism, especially with close friends and family.

Start by using the Status feature to share scripture, brief devotionals, or testimonies that highlight one fruit of the Spirit each day or week as we approach Pentecost. This not only offers spiritual encouragement but subtly invites others into your faith journey.

Leverage broadcast lists to send uplifting messages, prayers, or short Bible reflections directly to people's inboxes—making it feel personal without being overwhelming. As you do this, let the fruit of gentleness and kindness guide your tone.

Voice notes or video calls can add warmth and authenticity, especially when praying for someone or sharing a personal testimony. These Spirit-led interactions often make a lasting impact, showing love and patience in action.

Above all, rely on God's strength. Join in our weekly congregational fast which draws us closer to relying on him, even in our motivation when tailoring messages sent via WhatsApp. Evangelism is not about persuasion, but our participation with God to transform someone's heart! After all, it is possible that your message can change the lives of your family and friends! By using WhatsApp with intentionality and spiritual fruit, you can plant seeds of faith that may blossom long after Pentecost into lives transformed by Christ. May you have a fulfilling and joyful experience in your evangelism efforts, over the coming 7 weeks as we count to the Feast of Pentecost!



Creating Worship Music

By Elder Mark Rusinko

Worshipping our creator through music is one of the greatest pleasures one can have in this life. The scriptures reveal the desire of God for his people to create "Songs of worship".

The Bible verse that calls for singing a new song to the Lord is Psalm 96:1. It says, "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth". Psalm 98:1 also uses the same phrase, "Sing to the Lord a new song," emphasizing the idea of fresh praise and new expressions of worship. Psalm 149:1 further reinforces this call, encouraging praise and new songs in the assembly of the godly.

The primary Bible verse referencing a "sacrifice of praise" is Hebrews 13:15, which states, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that confess His name.". This verse emphasizes that Christians should offer praise and gratitude to God as their spiritual sacrifice, through the means of Jesus Christ.

Christ himself will be singing to the congregation of the brethren when we come together at the resurrection.

Hebrews 2:12

New International Version 12 He says,

"I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."

With this background in mind, I would like to discuss the process of writing worship songs. I have been privileged to be inspired and given the gift of composing worship Music. I have a musical background and training in a number of instruments including the guitar but was never able to write songs about the scriptures. I did pray for the ability to write songs for a number of years. But, then one day at the feast of tabernacles in the early morning hours I heard in my mind a whole orchestral movement, and it was beautiful, and then I heard a melody for a song. I got the impression from that experience that maybe a door was opening up for me to write worship songs. [An anointing in a sense]. It wasn't too long after that experience that I began to hear melodies and lyrics in the early morning hours of the day. I would have my tape recorder nearby and play and sing the melody into it so I would not forget the tune. After some time, I would even have two or three melodies come to me at the same time. I was very thankful to the Father and the Son for granting me the ability to use these melodies from them.

I would also have dreams where the song was already composed and all I had to do was copy it when I woke up. This happened with the song, the Pilgrim. In my dream I entered an English pub and a girl was singing the song. I woke up immediately and wrote the song down verbatim.

In composing a song, I want to write songs that talk about different subjects in the scriptures. I choose a subject then compose a few verses then I choose which "mood" the music should be in whether it is slow, fast, or intermediate speed.

After the melody is chosen, I begin to compose the lyrics that follow the melody line.

Concerning the lyrics, I pray for inspiration and try to tell a story that it grounded in the scriptures. All of these things become second nature as one composing these songs.

Many modern worship songs lack a full set of lyrics to address a subject. A few verses are repeated over and over again. I try to take the lead from the psalms where a line is developed by David and a moral teaching is found in the story line. This approach causes the listener to meditate on the lyrics that are grounded in scripture and find inspiration on the moral teaching in the song.

So, in essence, the worship song becomes a vehicle to preach the gospel to a wide range of people. And God can use it to inspire the spiritual mind for his glory.



By Tom Bettinger

Welcome brethren to the first of a series of articles I hope to present to you over the next year or so concerning biblical analysis from the perspective of the ancient source texts themselves. I have been doing research in this area for several years now after careful examination of the biblical source texts. I've used this research to compare several English language Bible translations that are readily available to most people. These include the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), along with more recently created English translations.

With all those English translations of the Bible available, have you ever wondered why the wording that is used by each is just a little bit different from one another? They all seem to express more or less the same ideas, but in a slightly different methodology. Why is this?

And from what source(s) are they formulating their translation? And if you look closely, and compare what each translation uses in certain areas, then compare the source text, whether biblical Hebrew, Koine Greek, or the Aramaic of the time, you may find that each translation may incorporate errors (the same errors) into their translation that should have been identified by successive translation efforts.

My goal in this first of what I hope to be many articles of the series is to introduce to you the idea of research and understanding of what those original source texts (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) we're actually saying, at the time that they were written down, in context to the understanding of the writers who created them. These textual sources were written down over a period of more than 1,500 years. Those languages, like languages today, evolve to a certain extent, just as our modern English has evolved to a certain extent over the existence of our country, The United States of America. This includes changes in dialects, in pronunciation of words, the deprecation of certain words, the meaning of certain words, and the usage of those words. Think of how the word "gay" has changed accepted meaning, since the 1960s, from its original meaning from decades earlier.

Additionally, the basic characteristics of those three languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, specifically the Hebrew and Greek) are not the same as their modern equivalents today. For example, biblical Hebrew is not the same as Modern Hebrew, in many ways. Modern Greek is not biblical (Koine) Greek. The same could be considered for biblical Aramaic (although today few people speak even the modern equivalent).

Modern Hebrew did not even come into existence until late in the 19th century, developed by the efforts of an individual named Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who researched the ancient language, then began the process of developing the modern equivalent over many years. What many might have thought was Hebrew up to that time was actually a combination of several languages: a mishmash of Yiddish, Russian, and other local dialects. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda was so devout and determined to reintroduce the Hebrew language that he taught his young son this language, and only this language was to be spoken by his son. Over time, a few others also learned the language and it began to spread. However, it was not universally incorporated into the lives of the Jewish population. As a matter of fact, after World War 2, and the declaration of the new Jewish state of Israel in 1948, many, if not most, of the initial leadership in the nation of Israel did not even have much of a working vocabulary in the modern Hebrew language. And there was some debate among many in that leadership as to what should be the official language of this newly formed nation. Eventually, a great effort was pushed forward to educate the people and to make modern Hebrew the official language of the nation of Israel.

But getting back to the purpose of this article, some other considerations should be addressed. Sentence structures are usually different. For example, we are used to the subject-verb-object method (“Tom sat in the chair”), whereas biblical Hebrew uses object-verb-subject method (“in the chair sat Tom”). Not only that, there are no punctuation marks in any of those 3 languages; how do you really know when a sentence starts and ends?

And how does one really know what the meaning of a word is within those ancient languages? As a matter of fact, due to a smaller lexicon (number of words in the language), the same word in, for example, biblical Hebrew, may be translated into dozens of English words (which can be very specific in their meaning).

I hope this overview will be useful and not too confusing at this point. I will elaborate further in future articles. May Yehovah bless you and keep you safe.

Until next time!





Biblical Eldership

An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership

A two part article By Elder Michael Reis, CGI Gaithersburg, Maryland

Welcome brethren. I am sharing with you a book report I did on “Biblical Eldership” by Author, Alexander Strauch. I begin this book review with this statement of fact, I would have never walked into a Barnes and Noble, or any Christian Book Store, or for that matter, any online Christian bookstore and purchase this book. If not for the fact that it is a recommended study for Church of God International, Ministerial Apprentice Program. I would have deprived myself of an absolute phenomenal book written on selecting, training, and strengthening church Elders.

After reading Strauch’s book, I realize I knew extraordinarily little about shepherding God’s flock and the importance of sound doctrine for God’s people. Most importantly, my eyes and ears were opened to show me how truly little knowledge I had concerning how critical it is for church leaders to protect the congregation from false teachings. The more I read Strauch’s teachings on this subject, the more I became aware of the burden-ship of eldership in shepherding God’s flock.

Alexander Strauch’s provides sound rationale for why this book is so necessary; Strauch explains that this book: is a book about those who keep watch over the souls of the Lord’s people; those who Peter and Paul commanded to pastor the flock of God (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2), and it is about the church leaders (p. 9). Also, and I quote “...is aimed primarily at churches that practice eldership but misunderstand its true biblical character and mandate.” Its purpose is to define, as accurately as possible from Scripture, what is biblical eldership (p. 10).

Following some acknowledgements, abbreviations, and a section on why this book should be included in church leader’s library. What comes after is a four-part guide that lays out the structure for the different parts of instructions for the underlining essence of the book, “An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership” (pp. 7-14). Part one and two address biblical eldership and the defense of biblical eldership, (pp. 15-120). Part three speaks about the exposition of scripture as it relates to elders (pp. 121-276). And, Part four addresses: Notes, a scripture index, an author index, and a general index (pp. 277-337).

The author explains he has a twofold burden that God has placed on his heart; “first, to help clarify the biblical doctrine of eldership and second, to help church elderships function effectively” (p. 11). He later admits that the book is intended to fulfill the first purpose (p. 11). But he also states that he has developed additional written and audio materials to fulfill the second purpose (p. 11). Strauch details his first purpose “to help clarify the biblical doctrine of eldership,” which is primarily doctrinal and exegetical in nature, and points out it is not enough merely to have eldership; but the eldership must be actively functioning, competent, and spiritually alive (p. 11).

Strauch states that: “The purpose for which the Holy Spirit placed the elders in the flock as overseers was “to shepherd the church of God.”” He mentions the complete “shepherding task of leading, folding, feeding, and guarding the sheep. It is an image of shepherding that perfectly fits the Holy Spirit’s purpose for the elders.” I see this as the foundation work of church leadership.

The shepherd must always be with the sheep. It demands knowledge of the sheep, good management skills, and courage in the face of danger, yet the elder must show love for the sheep and provide protection from all dangers that threaten the church. (p. 149). He reminds the readers that it is God’s congregation of people with unspeakable worth that the elders’ pastor; that it belongs to God, not the elders or pastors. He is astute to remind us that it is an immense honor to shepherd the church of God! Yet through leaders’ inattentiveness to the needs of the church of God, it continues to be a worldwide problem even today. (p. 150).

The book is replete with Scripture usage. Strauch uses bible passages to support every single point he makes about biblical eldership. In reading through the chapters of this book, one cannot help but reference the Scriptures used. I say repeat without hesitation that this book is a must-have resource in every church leader's library.

The reader is forced to reference the Bible to verify how the author relates the Scripture to the teachings, and is it accurately used. This is one of many reasons why I believe that Strauch's book is a treasure-trove of sound doctrine and an absolute necessity for every Deacon, Minister, and Elder in God's church today. On the back cover of this book, one of several comments made was by John MacArthur, Jr. Pastor-Teacher: Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA. *"Mr. Strauch has made a fine contribution to the subject of eldership. I am confident that it will be helpful to many."*

Chapter One: Opening Scripture – *"Therefore, I exhort the elders among you...shepherd (Pastor) the flock of God" 1 Peter 5:1-2*. Strauch explains why "biblical elders must be flock-protectors, why they must be courageous, spiritually alert, good managers, spiritual and physical diligent workers, flock-leaders, and flock-feeders" (pp. 17-29). He refutes the business-like language that describes those in the seeker-driven movement:

"Thus when Paul and Peter directly exhorted the elders to do their duty, they both employed shepherding imagery. It should be observed that these two giant apostles assign the task of shepherding the local church to no other group or single person but the elders. Paul reminds the Asian elders that God the Holy Spirit placed them in the flock as overseers for the purpose of shepherding the church of God (Acts 20:28). Peter exhorts the elders to be all that shepherds should be to the flock (1 Peter 5:2). We, then, must also view apostolic, Christianized elders to be primarily pastors of a flock, not corporate executives, CEOs, or advisers to the pastor. If we want to understand Christian elders and their work, we must understand the biblical imagery of shepherding. As keepers of sheep, New Testament elders are to protect, feed, lead, and care for the flock's many practical needs" (pp. 16-17).

Another thing emphasized in chapter one is the difference between a "board elder" and a "shepherd elder" (pp. 15-16, 31-32). In Management Skills, Strauch states that "The same leading and managing principles involve shepherding sheep, also apply to shepherding the local church and a congregation needs leadership, management, governance, guidance, and vision" (pp. 26). Strauch contends true biblical eldership is not a business committee, but rather, it is a "biblically qualified council of men that jointly pastors the local church" (p. 31). Elders "lead the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine, visit the sick and pray, and judge doctrinal issues" (p. 16).

Strauch ends the first chapter reminding his readers that ... "The New Testament apostles, led by the Holy Spirit, were extremely careful in choosing the vocabulary they used to describe the person and work of Jesus Christ, His "new creation" the church (Galatians 6:15), and those who provide leadership for the people of God." He used the term *episkopos* (overseer), for example, developed a meaning that was quite different from the New Testament usage; it became one of the most significant ecclesiastical titles of the hierarchical church" (pp. 32).

Chapter Two: Shared Leadership. Opening Scripture – “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (I Timothy 5:17). Strauch explores the concept of “shared leadership” (pp. 35-50). He starts by writing “Jesus Christ gave the Church plurality of Leadership.” Indicating that the twelve apostles comprised the first leadership council of the church and, in the most exemplary way, jointly led and taught the first Christian community, and provided a marvelous example of unity, humble brotherly love, and shared leadership structure.”

Strauch define this as eldership patterned on the New Testament model which requires qualified elders who must meet specific moral and spiritual qualifications before they serve (I Timothy 3:1-7). He added that they must be motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work (pp. 38-39). Strauch does not hesitate in any way to use the term the Holy Spirit repeatedly as a form of presenting his case for the work of being an elder, must and should be led by the Holy Spirit. They must be acknowledged, loved, and honored by everyone in the congregation. This, in my opinion, will present the biggest challenges for modern churches seeking to establish and maintain leaders who rule well.

People don’t always agree on the same things; we are a more diverse, outspoken, and opinionated church today. One of the points Strauch makes is that many churches (and Christian homes) have no vision for serious teaching or training in Scripture and doctrine, and others simply do not have the means to professionally train their leaders; they are struggling to survive as a church body. And that is why Bible schools and seminaries will always be needed (pp 81-82).

He talks about a council of equals and the benefits of being a council of equals. Strauch calls the elder structure of government, “a collective form of leadership in which each elder shares equally the position, authority, and responsibility of the office.” It is described as a collective, corporate, or collegiate leadership. He points out that the opposite of collective leadership is unitary leadership, monarchical rule, or one-man leadership. (pp. 39).

Alexander Strauch reminds the readers that it was never the Lord’s will for the local church to be controlled by one individual, and shared leadership provides close accountability, genuine partnership, and peer relationships (pp. 43-44). All elders must be able to teach the Word. He uses a lot of Scriptures to support his explanations: (Acts; I Peter; Paul; Titus; Matthew, Galatians) all relative to how he connects concept and Scripture. He closes the second chapter stating that “Elders need to be in the business of building up one another’s lives; older, more experienced elders needs to mentor younger elders. Elders need to share the responsibility of shepherding God’s flock. Once again, this block of learning was a light bulb turning on in my head. I was impressed by Strauch’s extensive reach into the Scriptures to justify the benefits of the principle of “First Among Equals” (pp. 45-49).

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Stay tuned for chapters 3-5 in the next newsletter.