THE Olive Branch





May – June 2023



In this issue

A Special Gift BY Fran Barbano

Teapot Lid Battle By Joyce Griffin

Prepare for Battle, continued By Brad Gonzales

Session 4 Calendars By Harold Worthen

Look for the next edition of the Olive Branch in the beginning of July 2023

Living the D.R.EA.M. with Christ

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the

Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you,

plans to give you hope and future.” Jeremiah 29:11

**D** – Develop = People, ministers, and facilities to serve the needs of the community.

**R** – Reach = World Missions, US Missions, and Community Outreach. Reach the People where they are with the love of Christ.

**E** – Equip = Believers with the knowledge of God to establish them in a relationship with Christ.

**A** – Anoint = Holy Spirit lead spontaneous worship that glorifies God and draws people to Him.

**M** – Mobilize = The Church to exercise their gifts in ministry outreach and missions.

=======================================The Olive Branch

A person with a beard

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“*I will bless the Lord at all times;*

*His praise shall continually be in my mouth*.” *Psalm 34:1*

**A Special Gift**

by Fran Barbano

As we celebrate Mother’s Day, there is joy in my heart for gifts received because I’m a mother. We watch our children grow from birth to adulthood as they learn about life and the world around them. We rejoice in their first words, first steps, and first moves of independence. We fear for them while they’re growing up, realizing that life is seldom easy and the world’s not always kind.

They don’t realize that they face danger as they pursue enjoyment with reckless abandon. They teeter on the edge; we hold our breath. They laugh at our fear; we pray for their safety. We nurture, love, accept, discipline and, sometimes, do battle with our offspring. We rejoice at their victories and anguish but encourage them during times when they’re not victorious.

When they grow up and have children of their own the meaning of ‘mother’ becomes apparent. They’ll wonder how they took us for granted. As they are entrusted with a new life to shape and mold for tomorrow’s destiny, I’ve seen fear and awe in their eyes. Once you are entrusted with the life of a child, you have been presented with a special gift and a tremendous responsibility. Your life will never be the same.

Sometimes, in this gift of life, God sends us an extra special child, one with whom we will share an experience so unique and so life-changing that we will be forever changed. This child will have us on our knees more than on our feet as we pray for direction and answers. It was that way for me and Lisa. When I became pregnant, I ‘knew’ something was wrong. Expressing that to my doctor he looked at me sympathetically, assuring me everything was fine. In my heart, I knew better.

Perhaps when I say ‘heart,’ I really mean ‘soul,’ but it is a ‘knowing of the unknown’ that carries with it a certainty that what you sense is true and unalterable. I prayed for strength to face the inevitable. Nothing could have prepared me more than prayer, yet I was not ready for reality when this child was born. Lisa had congenital, multiple birth defects; a condition called Klebatt-Schadel syndrome, so rare that at the time of her birth my odds of having a child like Lisa were 500 million to one. Only six other cases have been reported, worldwide.

Lisa, in critical condition, was rushed to a children’s hospital in a larger city. Hospital staff secluded me. No one came near, not even the nurses. God had been preparing me for this day for months, but here’s where God’s intervention became vividly apparent. Five weeks before delivery, I met a woman in the doctor’s office whose due date was two weeks after mine. We became friends and spoke often on the phone. When her husband called to say she was in the hospital awaiting the birth of their third child, I knew I would be joining her that day. The next day, she looked for me. Nurses refused to provide information. This Christian sister searched until she found me.

If it were not for God’s hand in bringing us together, I don’t know what I’d have done. We cried and prayed together. Whenever possible, she’d be in my room consoling and comforting me. My heart was broken. Her prayers and presence gave me strength, courage, and hope. We, as mothers, faced the unthinkable together. I cannot think of my daughter without thinking of Myrna, a Christian sister sent at a specific time for a specific purpose. To this day, the way God works always puts me in awe of His wisdom, guidance and power. There is no such thing as coincidence. God’s intervention can be seen throughout our lives if we’ll only look.

My life was enriched beyond measure because of my Lisa. I believe God sent her to teach me how to live, how to love, and how to accept things that happen beyond our control and to love no matter what. To realize that in the midst of it all, Christ was going through everything with me, was undeniable. When I would fall into a sobbing heap on the floor, He was there. His love was all encompassing, but never smothering. His presence was profound. I felt His heartache at my heartache. I could feel His emotions in addition to my own. Certainly, my life was changed not only by this child, but because Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, became real to me. At that moment, I realized beyond the shadow of a doubt, that God loves us so much that He comes to us in our deepest sorrow and grief. He rejoices in our joys; He grieves in our pain, and He never ever leaves nor forsakes us. †

A cartoon of a person holding a piece of paper

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Teapot Lid

A true story by Joyce Griffin

A teapot with flowers and butterflies painted on it

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Moving is never fun, and I was glad to be unpacking the last of the boxes labeled “Kitchen.”

I smiled as I unwrapped my favorite teapot – the one that held as many good memories as a canister full of tea leaves. But, oddly, I couldn’t find its lid. *Strange that they aren’t together,* I thought, as I rummaged through the pile of crumbled newspapers and bubble wrap that had been in the box. I still didn’t find it.

That particular teapot was one of the prettiest I’d ever seen. But it was even more special because it symbolized God’s enormous blessing in arranging circumstances so that I could get my first really good job a number of years ago. Thanks to that job, I finally had a little extra money in my pocket after paying my tither and bills and saving a bit too.

I was wandering through a nearby store on my lunch hour the day I found the teapot. Though I had a perfectly serviceable old brown one, I couldn't resist this English china beauty, with its intricate floral design and gold trim.

The sign said it was on sale, but I still gasped when I saw its price tag. I mentally hemmed and hawed about it for a while, but I couldn’t resist. I exited the store with a huge grin on my face and the teapot in hand. When I used it, I often thought about God’s special blessing that allowed me to own it.

Now, with the last of the kitchen boxes completely unpacked, it seemed unlikely that the lid would show up. And what good was a teapot without a lid? I was heartbroken.

After nursing my sorrow for a few minutes, I did what I should have done at the beginning. I prayed. Now it might seem strange to pray about something as seemingly insignificant as a teapot lid. And even more unlikely that the God of the whole universe would find it for me. But I asked anyway. I’m not sure I asked anyway. I’m not sure I asked with any great amount of faith, but I prayed with all I could muster up at the time.

The next morning, I began unpacking boxes for another room. The first one I opened was labeled “small toys.” No, I don’t play with toys anymore. But my late husband loved miniature cars and other small sized collectibles. A few were fairly expensive. Many were not, but each had a special meaning to him.

As I removed the outer layers of bubble wrap from the top package, I didn’t feel any little wheels or moving parts. That told me it wasn’t a car, and I wondered which of his other tiny treasures I would find inside. The rest of the wrapping came loose with one last tug, and I shouted out loud. It wasn’t a collectible. It was the missing lid to my precious teapot!

I have no idea how that lid got into a box of miniature toys instead of one marked for the kitchen. It didn’t matter. The important thing was my beautiful teapot had a lid again!

And then I realized that God had both heard and answered my prayer even though my faith had been weak.

First Peter 5:7 came to mind: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” I had done the casting. He had done the caring.

I’m so thankful that God lovingly cares about the things that are important to us, whether we’re dealing with a huge life-changing problem or something really small. Whether the answer is immediate, as it was in this case, or whether we need to wait a while for His answer, we can be assured that God always cares about all our needs. And I’ve got a teapot lid to prove it!

Wrong does not cease to be wrong because the majority share in it. \_Leo Tolstoy

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*Shared by Kathleen Chappell Psalms 103:8-12*

*“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Prepare for Battle - Continued

All around us every day, an unseen combat rages. It is invisible, yet we feel it in every aspect of our lives. **It is a spiritual war. It is a battle for our souls and a desperate struggle for the survival of everything we love, from our children to our nation to our very civilization.**

**You cannot avoid this battle. You are in this spiritual combat whether or not you want it, because the enemy will most definitely come for you and yours. There is no escaping this enemy. There is only victory or death. Salvation or damnation.**

**Our enemy is evil. Indeed, our enemy is the very definition of the foulest conceivable evil, and this demonic foe never stops hurting, fighting, deceiving, cheating, and killing in an endless effort to destroy all that is dear to us.**

But keep reading,

if you are prepared and put your trust in the Lord Jesus, He has already won.

In order to stop sin in its tracks, we must identify our enemy, our adversary and the sin he wants to trap us. The U.S. government has attacked our belief system. First, they removed prayer from the schools, then legalized abortion. Removed the Ten Commandments and if you dare read scripture in the classroom most often a pink slip would be waiting for you. The results were, “Make love not war”., a sexual revolution. Drugs are rampant in spite of a “war on drugs”, hundreds die daily. And 60+ million murders of the unborn have happened.

People no longer believe in sin. Decades ago, C.S. Lewis wrote about his frustration of this when speaking to his audiences. Today we live in a society that has redefined sin. Adultery has become, having an affair. What was once a procedure, action or an occasion, e.g., a party. Now if you search the internet for the definition, “it is having a romantic relationship with someone who is not your spouse” and some would defensively tell you my affairs are none of your business. Stealing is fraud or embezzlement. Hate is now seen as intolerance; often it is intolerance of sin. Being pro-life and pro-marriage is intolerant in the liberal mind. More can be said but you get the picture.

*“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter” Isaiah 5:20*

Yes, we have gotten to the point that calling sin good and good evil.

Satan comes to Jesus in his physically weakened state, having fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. Satan entices Jesus “You must be so hungry, having not eaten in so long, just turn these stones into bread after all you are the Son of God. [My paraphrase] Jesus answered quoting the word of God in Deut. 8:3. Using the word of God, the sword of the Spirit. Then Satan said you could throw yourself off the cliff, misusing scripture. Ps. 91:11-12 Jesus again corrected him “Don’t you dare test the Lord your God.” [Paraphrased in The Message] Deut. 6:16. “Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.” [appealing to the desire of power and wealth, books and movies use this theme, just sell your soul to me, the devil, and you can have the desires of your heart, he lies.] Verse 10 “Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord you God, and serve him only” Deut. 6:13

Satan and the world do not want us to believe he exists. Jesus knew him and the devil knew who Jesus is, the Son of God. We too must recognize the enemy in order to combat him.

One of my favorite expressions is Actions speak louder than words. The actions of our politicians are what I pay attention to, not so much their words. How do their policies affect the nation and the well being of “We the People”? Some of their words are “rough around the edges” but the *outcome of their actions* are good for the people.

The actions of our enemy are **Deception**: *making lies sound appealing*. I hear or read from time to time the statement “The important thing is that you are happy” On the surface it sounds reasonable even admirable. But in context it is usually spoken condoning the “lifestyle” someone has chosen. Also not wanting to appear to be ‘intolerant.’ Another redefined sin is homosexuality as a lifestyle choice. God loves all sinners, but until you ask for forgiveness and turn from your wicked ways (2 Chronicles 7:14) without repentance you will perish, Luke 13:3

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***I want to yell at the TV, the important thing***

***is your eternal life and where you will spend it!***

**Jesus speaking to the pharisees in John 8:43 – 44, would he say the same to our society today? I think so. (43) Why can’t you understand what I am saying? It’s because you can’t hear me! (43) For you are children of your father the devil, and you love to do evil things he does. He was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.**

The next action of the enemy are **distractions**. Mark 4:19 In the amplified says: “Then the cares and anxieties of the world and distractions of the age, and the pleasure and delight and false glamour and deceitfulness of riches, and the craving and passionate desire for other things creep in and choke and suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless.” Distractions: most of us use the internet. There is a plethora of information on the internet. It is easy to go down a rabbit hole, get off track, even for the most disciplined. Another is the number one searched category by volume “Adult Content”. ***Set your safe search to strict.*** It is a problem even among women not just men and it is a problem within the church. God can take this desire from you, it may take prayer and fasting, it will take diligence and surrender. It is not hopeless. It is no wonder that so much is said in the Bible about the lust of the flesh.

This brings to mind the story of the hunter that came across a cute, adorable leopard cub whose mother had been killed. The hunter knew that the cub relies on its mother for two years and had no chance for survival. So, he takes it home as a pet for his children, after all it was a soft little kitten. They fed and cared for it and as time passed, it grew into a full-grown Leopard. One day the leopard turns on the hunter and kills him.

Do you think David thought just admiring the neighbor bathing would lead to conspiracy to commit murder? No, he probably would say he was just admiring the beauty of one of God’s creations. We do have a way of downplaying our sinful actions, if it had ended at just a glance and respecting her privacy and that she was another’s wife, we would not have known the story.

It is not a sin to be tempted, we all have temptations of one kind or another. It is how we react to temptation that determines the outcome. And keep in mind sin starts small, seemingly innocent but it grows and grows. Recognize it when it is small and easier to nip it in the bud.

Watch therefore and pray lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 26:41

When I started this series, it was an article on the Armor of God and getting a better understanding of it. While researching I have found it is a much larger and frequent topic and one that I think is most important during these last days. We must **stand firm** and not be deceived by false teachings and watered-down definitions of sin.

Our adversary has been doing his worst, deception, death, delay, distraction, disappointment, discouragement, depression, and debt for thousands of years. He comes to steal and destroy, we need to be stronger, not in our on strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

To win the battle we must surrender. What? That sounds counter intuitive.

Do not surrender to the enemy or his works but **surrender all** to the one who gave His life and blood to save our souls and cleanse us from all unrighteousness, adopting us into the family of God. So, look for the next segment of this series.

Until then; stand firm in the love and grace of our Lord Jesus. Brad

*“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” Philippians 4:4 NKJV*

Calling a sin, a sin

Isn’t judging. Its

Like calling a car a

car. It is what it is.

JEWISH HISTORY 101 SESSION 4

![A close-up of a person

Description automatically generated with medium confidence]()

By Harold Worthen 05/04/2023

Welcome to session 4 of Jewish History, today we will be looking at the calendar God gave the Jew’s and why they changed it. Before starting, we need to lay some groundwork for this session.

A stone sundial with a stick in it

Description automatically generated with low confidenceThere are three calendars I will be using today and all three use the seven- day week cycle, God’s Solar calendar.

A picture containing text, circle, graphics, logo

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the Jewish Lunar calendar,

and Gregorian calendar we use today, even though there are many more calendars that have been used throughout history. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us that God created the Heavens and Earth in six days, and He rested on the seventh day. He specifically chose a pattern of 6+1 days, 6 is the number of man and 7 is the number of completions. This seven-day week has persisted throughout human history and was set up by God as a template for the Sabbath cycle. Other ways God revealed His pattern was through grouping of sevens are the Shittah cycle, the Jubilee cycle, and the Thousand -as-a-day prophecy in the book Hosea which we will look at in a later study, for now on to the calendar stuff.

Let’s start with the question, what is God’ calendar, also known as the Zadokite calendar, and why does it matter?

His calendar tracks time beginning with the week of Creation. Since God created the Sun, Moon, and Stars on the 4th day of creation, He started the Solar calendar on the 4th day of the week (Wednesday) after the spring equinox. The first two months of each season are 30 days and the third month 31 days giving the calendar 364 days.

With a 364 day calendar every year starts on the same day of the week, Wednesday. Every holy day is on the same day of the week in the same month. Passover is always Tuesday, Nisan 14. This results in fixed dates for all seven of the major Jewish festivals every year. God instructed Moses in Exodus 12:2 “From now on, this month (Nisan) will be the first month for you”.

What does God’s calendar tell us about Noah and the flood? Glad you ask, evidence of God’s Solar Calendar and what His word says about it. Genesis 7:24 tells us the flood lasted 150 days, ok the Lunar calendar has months with 29 and 30 days in them. Do the math that does not add up.

The rain started on the 17th day of the 2nd month, (Genesis 7:11). It rained for 150 days. (Genesis 7:24),

After 150 days the waters receded on the 17th day of the 7th month (Genesis 8:3-4). His words have spoken, His Solar Calendar was being used at that time.

God’s calendar was changed from a solar to a lunar (pagan) calendar in 167 B.C. by the Greek ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This calendar remains in that basic form to this day.

Our Gregorian calendar is a Solar calendar and starts the year in the winter season and was designed in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar and was updated in 1582 A.D. by Pope Gregory.

It takes 365.25 days for earth to complete one year around the sun, it is not possible to have a quarter day, so all calendars have some type of leap year. I’m not going into the leap year stuff for now, maybe later.

Next time I will continue with this study covering the timeline of God’s plan using the Solar Calendar.

Till then, God’s blessing on y’all.

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Looking Ahead:

**Mother’s Day May 14th**

**Pentecost Sunday May 28th**

**Memorial Day May 29th**

**Men! June 3rd  will be the first Men’s weekly meeting – See the bulletin for time and more info!**

**Young at Heart Luncheon 1PM, June 3rd at Serrano’s Mexican food in Mesa**

**June 18th is Father’s Day**