



"We need God's help to guide our nation through stormy seas. But we can't expect Him to protect America in a crisis if we just leave Him over on the shelf in our day-to-day living."  
—Ronald Reagan

**29-Dec-06**

## **Surviving the Next Hit**

Dwight David Eisenhower once observed, "In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." In a similar vein, heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson is quoted as saying, "Every man has a plan—until he gets hit." These very different men reached a similar conclusion: When events are beyond our control, we cannot tell what is coming next. However, the preparations we make before that point comes will determine how—or whether—we will survive the next hit.

A recent survey of students who were present at Ambassador University in 1994 (when the doctrinal changes of the [Worldwide Church of God](#) kicked into high gear) proves the necessity of such preparations. The study is entitled *A Journey from Radicalism to Mainstream Evangelicalism: An investigation into the effects of doctrinal upheaval on members of an American sect, The Worldwide Church of God*. It was conducted by researchers Tricia Jenkins and Gina Thomas, and according to its introduction, it "will be used as the basis for a presentation at the North

American Conference on Radicalism at Michigan State University . . . , as well as being used to write an article for submission to academic journals in relevant fields."

The study consisted of 91 surveys collected between August and October 2006, and the majority of this sample group would fit the description, "second-generation Christian": Eighty-five percent of those surveyed began attending the church between 0-5 years old, and 95 percent had parents who also attended the WCG. Seventy-one percent of respondents had been baptized, and nine out of ten respondents heard the sermon given by Joseph Tkach, Sr., in December 1994 that marked a major shift in church doctrine. Ultimately, *84 percent of respondents adopted the doctrinal changes*. Once hit with doctrinal confusion, they crumpled to the mat.

How could there be such a high attrition rate among the younger generation? How could 84 percent so quickly and easily give up the doctrines that they ostensibly believed and practiced for most of their life?

Perhaps that is the key—the doctrines were only *practiced* and not truly *believed*. That is, there may have been compliance with the [Sabbath](#) and [holy days](#), and eschewing [Christmas](#), [Easter](#), and [Halloween](#), but these practices were not *real* to the respondents—they were just something they did. Without deep roots and solid grounding, even the mightiest oak will topple when hit with a major gust. This survey exposes the younger generation as not truly rooted or grounded in *the faith* that separates the holy and the profane.

Ironically, the church youth of the '70s, '80s, and '90s received a great deal of "attention." There were the Y.O.U. and Y.E.S. programs and summer camps at various locations around the globe. There were sports weekends, dances, and teen Bible Studies, all presumably for the sake of rooting the next generation in the truth. Yet, for most, the truth never took root.

What this reveals is that far more is required than just church social programs or even church Bible programs for the younger set. God's Word clearly places the responsibility for instructing children in His way on the shoulders of the *parents*—not the church (see [Proverbs 22:6](#); [Deuteronomy 4:9-10](#); [6:7](#); [11:19](#); [Ephesians 6:4](#)). If the survey's respondents are indicative of

the whole, the vast majority of parents were not diligently teaching their children through all the activities of life (see [Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19](#)). We can perhaps conclude that the truth was not real to the children because it was not real to the parents! God's way of life was not lived and taught continuously enough—either by formal instruction or, better yet, by example—for the children to consider it to be anything more than just going through the motions. When adversity hit, they had nothing upon which to stand. [God](#) and His truths were not real enough for them to keep their footing.

By all accounting, the church of God continues to be hit. We may not know where the next blow will come from, where it will land, or what force it will have, but the planning and preparation we carry out now will decide whether we will have a solid-enough foundation to survive the onslaught and continue on. This is not about contingency plans should leader X die, group Y begins to experience persecution, or the doctrine of Z is changed. Those future details cannot be accurately forecast. No, the planning and preparation that matters is not specific but general. We are prepared and empowered to survive what comes our way through our *daily* walk with God—through God and His truth being real to us now, through knowing the Father and the Son by experiencing life with them *before* the next crisis comes.

[Daniel 11:32](#) warns us that, at the time of the end, those who transgress the covenant of God will be corrupted, "but the people who *know their God* shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." This ongoing training—through knowing God—will not ensure that we are never hit again, but it will ensure that we will have the footing to remain standing and continue to advance toward the [Kingdom of God](#).

- David C. Grabbe

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Hebrews 12 and 13: Advice for the End Time](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The practical advice in Hebrews 12-13 fits our current condition like a glove.

Like the recipients of this epistle, the greater church of God, having drifted away and given in to sin, must also lay aside every weight which encumbers, accept God's chastening, receive encouragement from those who have already succeeded (Hebrews 12:1), and energetically get back into the spiritual race. We should allow nothing to deter us from the goal, remembering the consequences if we fail. All of our behaviors — including demonstrating brotherly love and hospitality, exercising empathy, strengthening our marriages, being content with God's blessings, submitting to leadership, avoiding strange doctrines, coming out of this world, praying without ceasing, and being charitable — must be done out of a pure heart.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Power Belongs to God \(Part One\)](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

As the return of Jesus Christ marches ever nearer, Christians need to be sure of one critical matter: Where does real power reside? John Ritenbaugh shows that all power has its source in God—and not just the kind of power we typically think of.

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