

Remembering Karl Beyersdorfer

(Sermon Notes)

By Warren Zehrung

6/4/2016

Obit: Joplin, MO: Karl Lewis Eugene Beyersdorfer, 73, a minister, passed away Friday, May 27, 2016.

I received the sad news in an email from my friend David on Memorial Day telling me of Karl's death.

David added, "Karl was a **real support** and **positive example** for me during some pretty confusing times, as I know he was for many others."

Brethren, that is so typical, Karl was an encouragement and positive example to so very many through the years.

Karl lived a **full life**, and by full, I mean that Karl always had a lot of things going on – he had a lot of irons in the fire.

In today's sermon I'd like to share the Karl Beyersdorfer I knew as, "**A legacy to Karl Beyersdorfer.**"

Karl was a **servant** of Jesus Christ. "Servant" – that is the correct meaning of the word – "minister," has taken on an entirely incorrect connotation these days.

When God remembers Karl – what does He remember?

Karl had a zest for life and living it.

He had an openness that other ministers lacked.

Karl was a man among men.

I was never closer to any man than I was to Karl.

I am a much richer man for having had Karl as a part of my life. If there were a book on my life – Karl Beyersdorfer would be the longest chapter.

At 73 year of age, Karl is gone too soon.

I received this email from Becky. "A lot of people are wondering about Karl – one man we know of – he's 91 and news of Karl B. kept him awake during the night. A lot of us are looking for closure. Karl's passing has shaken many of God's people."

Brethren, I'll try to lay out some answers in today's sermon.

I often thought that Karl and I need a day to sit down and compare the things we learned in life – I was looking forward to that closure.

It is not going to happen – but perhaps this review of the man, Karl Beyersdorfer, will have to suffice.

Back home, we have a saying about some of the ministers, "He was one of the "good ones." Well, **Karl was one of the "good ones."**

Karl was indeed a fun loving and very funny guy back in that day. He was well known and liked a lot.

Karl attended the University of Chicago for one year after high school. – Then he went on to Ambassador College in 1962.

Gaylon was a little ahead of Karl, having arrived at Ambassador College in 1959.

Karl graduated from Ambassador College in June of 1966 – got married to Gaylon Smith (Texas) two days later on June 5th, and then they moved to Minnesota to assist Sherwin McMichael in the work of the church there.

How sad it is, that Karl died a week before his fiftieth wedding anniversary – that's tomorrow 6/5/2016.

In fact, Karl was planning an anniversary trip with his wife and friends to Arizona and New Mexico to see the Decalogue Stone and other artifacts that bear ancient Israelitish inscriptions carved into rock.

Karl died before he could make that exciting trip.

Up in Minnesota, a congregation was started in Mpls/ St. Paul by Sherwin McMichael, he was joined by Karl and Gaylon in 1966.

Karl and Gaylon lived in Duluth (**largest inland** sea port in the world on western tip of Lake Superior.

Karl often mentioned how cold it was in Duluth.

It is just a coincidence that later Karl and Gaylon moved to the port of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the **farthest inland deep**-water port on the Mississippi River.

Karl also Pastored other cities in Minnesota, as well as Waterloo Iowa.

Karl returned to Pasadena for a Sabbatical.

Karl Beyersdorfer was a controversial pastor. I say that with all due respect.

From Baton Rouge/Lafayette, Karl moved to Cincinnati, OH and then on to Joplin, Missouri and Pastored there for about three decades.

In the early 80's at the Feast of UB in Cincinnati, Karl invited me up for the closing prayer before over 2000 brethren – it was quite a demonstration of his confidence in me.

Karl and I are the same age – born within two weeks of each other. We are both German ancestry. One thing that I liked about Karl was, he did not go by the book.

Karl refused to be locked down by silly regulations and rote order – he believed in spicing up life.

Events of 1976: It was exactly 40 years ago this month:

One night Sharon and I attended an awards gathering at our kid's local school.

Our son was called up to the stage for the "Citizenship Award."

He was called up for the "Student Service Award."

He was called up "Scholastic Achievement."

He was called up for the "Sportsmanship Award."

It was almost embarrassing...

Walking home, I told Sharon, "We've been greatly blessed."

We had stopped being Catholics 10 years before, and after listening to Herbert W Armstrong for a dozen years – I realized that it was time to get serious about my Faith.

When I got home I called 1-800-423-4444, most of you probably know that number by heart as well. So, I call Pasadena, and it is late at night and asked for a visit.

The nice young lady gave me the name of the new Pastor who is just arriving in Baton Rouge. "Karl Beyersdorfer."

And she says to me, don't call him tonight – it's too late.

I thought to myself, "Where is the rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents."

I told her that I'd call tomorrow morning – and she was happy with that. When I called the number she had given me – it was a local motel – not far from me house.

Now, you can chalk it up to coincidence if you like – but I don't. What are the odds that I'd contact the World Church of God on the day that Karl Beyersdorfer got to Baton Rouge, Louisiana? To this day, I do not believe it was a coincidence at all.

I've met too many ministers who were off-putting – and there would have been no way that I would have ever respected their judgment about anything.

If it had been any other minister that was my first contact with the Worldwide Church of God – I doubt that I would have made it. And yet, I was a little apprehensive to meet with Karl – I'd noticed some very strange things about this church – though they were all backed up Scripture as I checked them out.

Karl was happy to meet me – and overjoyed that I had a wife and four kids. I thought to myself, "Isn't the church made up of families?"

And Gaylon was sitting there holding Craig in diapers, while Kurt, Christi and Chuck were playing in the motel pool.

After vetting me – Karl invited me to Sabbath services. I didn't find out until much later that lots of people did not get invited to services right away.

When I got home, I told Sharon, "I think that they are OK – Gaylon had toenail polish on."

Karl knew so much about God's way that I wanted desperately to learn.

I asked him about the Trinity and the explanation of Matthew 28:19 ...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:

Karl went into depth and explained how God the Father and Jesus Christ shared **one** spiritual life together – and how, as the Children of God we were destined to share that one spiritual life together with them.

Neither Karl nor I had to revisit the issue of the Trinity when United was forming. In May of 1995, at the organizational conference of the, "United Church of God, an International Association," Victor Kubik asked me the whereabouts of Karl Beyersdorfer who was not in attendance at that formational conference.

Karl had spoken directly with the new head man of United – who confirmed to Karl his belief in a three-ness when it came to the nature of God.

I told Victor, "If you expect all those men to be on-board, the first thing that you will have to do is to repudiate the false Trinity doctrine." Victor responded to me, "We are not going to repudiate anything – we are going forward from here." And with that, Victor Kubik literally swept me and my wife aside and walked off.

Karl was there for me when I got fired and disfellowshipped from the Worldwide Church of God for standing up for our traditional doctrinal understandings.

I asked Karl other things about the Bible that I had heard growing up as a Catholic. On one question, he answered me, "That's not in the Bible!" I thought to myself, "That's incredible – he's read the whole Bible!"

It wasn't too long before Sharon and I were baptized by Karl. We were baptized by Karl Beyersdorfer in the West Hog Branch Creek - a stream located just 4.3 miles from Livingston, in Livingston Parish, in the state of Louisiana, near Magnolia, LA.

I remember the day Sharon and I were baptized by Karl. Karl was in his garden – preparing it for early planting when we arrived. Karl went to the house and changed into cleaner clothes.

We had had a number of freezing nights. The creek that we were to be baptized in was covered with ice.

As we walked down to the creek, Karl mentioned that this was "God's true Church," which is the exact same phrase I had heard in the Catholic Church all my life. I thought to myself, I suppose most serious people think that theirs is the true church.

And then Karl mentioned that there was “authority” in the church. I thought to myself, “That makes sense.” Little did either of us realize what a difficult battle lay ahead with regard to “authority” in the church.

Karl asked Sharon if she had repented of her sins and accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior. He asked her to cross her arms and hold her nose as he tilted her backward.

Sharon went under and came up with a “yelp” as the ice water hit her back and stunned her. Karl looked at her with a look that said – don’t you realize the solemnity of the baptismal ceremony?

I’m twice the size of Sharon with a fair amount of internal insulation to shield me from the cold. I’m also half again as big as Karl. As he labored to plunge me under the water – the water topped his waders and he too experienced the cold. His waders had filled up to the top and he was unable to walk up the steep bottom to get out of the creek. I had to pull him out of the creek.

Now, Karl and Sharon were both shivering and freezing. Karl looked at me and said, “We’ll do the **Laying on of hands** in the house after we’ve changed. Karl now has his third change of clothes for that morning.

It was a **most** beautiful ceremony – I tried desperately to remember every word Karl prayed.

I had tried to warn Karl about that section of Livingston Parish being a KKK stronghold.

One night someone put a dead snake in the car of one of the folks attending a Bible Study.

It wasn’t a big deal to us who knew the mindset of the locals – but Head Quarters became unglued – fearing the worse.

Those were fantastic days in the church – incredible choir and musicians – excited people – friends with a common faith.

Karl took me visiting with him on many trips. I always had a thousand questions for him.

I loved the long deep spiritual, philosophical and astronomical conversations we had... Karl was a really deep thinker – much more so than any other man I know of in God’s Church.

One day I asked Karl a question – and he turned and looked at me and asked, “Warren have you ever tried figuring out the answer to some of these questions for yourself?” And I asked back, “Are we allowed to do that?”

I loved the Bible – and Karl was there to lead and guide me in my spiritually formative years. Karl was a brilliant man. There was a time when Karl would have had the answer to depression and despondency. This is not a sermon on depression - I have a few of those online (2004) - this is about what happened to Karl.

It seems that Karl hardly ever gave a sermon without mentioning a “Thick Steak” hanging over the side of the plate.

Karl loved his steak and his wild life. He prided himself in putting “meat on the table.” He was an avid hunter.

When I learned of Karl’s death, I called a mutual friend, Clifford, down on the Gulf Coast to inform him.

The very first thing Clifford said was, “Karl was a life-saver to me in Spokesman’s Club – he encouraged me to get me up there to speak – I didn’t think I could do it. My favorite speech was the “Get the Facts” speech.”

“You know, Karl spoke to me without talking down to me. He knocked down the façade – there was no pretense like other ministers – no “holier than thou” with Karl – that is what I respected about him.”

Clifford continued, “Karl was a **people person** – No one had a more positive affect than Karl – He’d get out there after a storm or hurricane – and Karl wasn’t bashful, to help clean up.”

I feel the same way about Spokesman's Club. One of my fondest memories of those early days was Spokesman's Club. We all learned so much – especially in the after-club discussions. When I got home after club, I could not sleep – I was too wired.

Karl gave me the topic, "What I learned from my dad," for my "Impromptu Speech."

What I remember is how encouraging Karl could be. He evaluated my speech and said, "Warren I thought you would say something like, "My dad taught me how to swing a hammer," but you came out with the meaning of F-A-M-I-L-Y, Father and Mother I Love You. "That was really good, Karl said."

You see brethren; Karl did not have a dad like that. Karl did not learn love and affection from his dad. When a child grows up in a pessimistic environment, in which discouragement is common and encouragement is rare, that child will develop a vulnerability to depression.

Karl told me that when he learned of his dad's death – it made him no difference at all, He said, I could "spit on sidewalk" and keep right on going.

As a young man, Karl wanted to be a forest ranger – out on a lonely fire tower – where he did not have to interact with people. God had other plans, and He used Karl in some very significant ways.

But let me get back to Spokesman's Club. Karl told me that I'd never be a speaker. At least not good enough to pass the "Attack Speech." I tried three times to pass the "Attack Speech." Karl would tell me, "Warren, I know you can get angrier than that.

Karl told me that "I was to barely maintain control" – that's how angry he wanted to see me be in the Attack Speech. You don't tell a Louisiana boy who breaks chairs over pianos and knocks down doors to "barely maintain control."

On my next attempt to pass that speech I enlisted the help of Landis and RayJ. Karl did not know what was coming. It was all a set-up, but Landis introduced RayJ for an Attack Speech.

So as soon as RayJ launched into attacking...I jumped up from the audience and interrupted saying, "I've had it up to here with these Attack Speeches." Karl sat there speechless!

I said, "You don't tell your daughter to go out on a date and "barely maintain control, do you?" I argued, "That's not a right principle." And I proceeded to attack the "Attack Speech."

I'd get so worked up over those speeches that my stomach hurt. At the end, RayJ asked Karl – "Did I pass my speech?" We had Karl so puzzled he was confused. He did have the presence of mind to say, "Warren you need to do that speech over!"

I relate this story to you to show how Karl was not a stickler for spit-and-polish details – but gave us all a lot of room to grow, develop and learn.

Karl was a naturally motivational person. He inspired people to do their best – to take on bigger and bigger challenges.

Karl was intrigued by the differences in people. To Karl, we were not all yellow pencils – I say this because so much of the ministry in God's church are emotionally remote from the brethren - and everyone is treated the same.

Karl was free to think outside the box – and he always did. To Karl we were all real and interesting and he reveled at knowing us all.

Karl once told me about a man he knew in the church in the Mpls/ St. Paul, Minnesota area. His name was Igor Kubik and he had miraculously escaped from the horrors of WWII.

Karl told me how when he got to America, Igor Kubik built a beautiful and intricate sound system. Karl was really impressed with this man putting his skills to work.

That story about Igor inspired me to use my skills to build a world class fireplace insert with my fabrication and machining skills. I built a huge fireplace insert out of stainless steel, brass with floor level blowers.

Much later I would meet Igor's kids, Eugene, Oley and Vic Kubik. Igor, died suddenly at age 42 when Vic was a freshman at Ambassador College.

Karl spoke often on prophecy. As a result, I constructed a precise chart of historical church events, years of release, sabbatical years, Daniel's time line, etc. Here is an example:

Jesus has just begun His public ministry in the year 27 AD.

Luke 4:16 And [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

Now, we know that this "Sabbath day" is not a weekly Sabbath day but actually the Greek shows this Day to be "The Day of the weeks," or Pentecost. This Sabbath is an annual Sabbath, a yearly Feast day.

We know the year, the day of the week, Sunday, etc – that can be plotted on a chart.

Luke 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Luke 4:19 To preach **the acceptable year** of the Lord.

Pick up on that time line - the acceptable year.

Luke 4:20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

Luke 4:21 And he began to say unto them, **This day** is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Jesus said, This day, is that day. So I plotted things pointing to the return of Jesus Christ. The 1335 the 1290, the 1260 days...

On my chart I had, "The organized persecution of the Church, January 2, 1979." Next was, "The man of sin being revealed..." They were all right there on my chart.

I came home from work – there was a deacon and deaconess at my home that day and we had the TV on because Stanly Radar was supposed to be on the evening news. The first thing out of Stanly Radar's mouth was "We are being persecuted."

On January 2, 1979, the Attorney General of the State of California, had filed an action in state court, seeking that the Church be placed in receivership.

January 2, 1979 – there it was – right there on my chart. So I talked Karl and RayJ to fly out to Pasadena to see the "man of sin" revealed – which was the next item on my chart. It all made perfect sense at the time.

It was my first time to Pasadena. I awoke early the next morning and went exploring around the campus – so beautiful – so pristine. The campus had won world acclaim as the most beautiful campus on earth.

Ambassador College was like the Garden of Eden. I thought that soon everyone would believe the Gospel.

The only thing that happened was that I passed a kidney stone out there. I was standing on my head in a corner – thinking my bowels were blocked.

Karl asked me, "Do you want me to anoint you." I said, "No thank you – I think that I'm going to live." I thought at the time that anointing was only for terminal cases!

Dr. Hoeh commented on my paper saying, you live in a fool's paradise if you think this is the Tribulation.

Karl was truly a servant of Jesus Christ.

I cannot relay to you brethren, how many times I found Karl putting a roof on someone's home...

Or tilling up the garden of an old-timer...

Or installing an air conditioner for some widow lady...

Or going hours out in the country to anoint a dying person.

Always serving...

Late one Sabbath, Karl said, "Warren, come go with me." That's the way he would work - he wouldn't tell you where you were going or what you would do when you got there. It was a typical way of teaching authority from the top down in those days.

We were going out in the country to anoint a dying man – Nathan's dad. Typically, Karl forgot his anointing oil.

I cannot tell you how many times Karl left his glasses, his wallet, his anointing oil, or his sermon notes behind. He relied and depended on Gaylon to remember details like that.

I don't remember what he ended up using to anoint the old fellow, butter or salad oil I believe.

Few realized how much Karl worked behind the scenes.

I remember remarking to myself, "Karl is the most Godly man I have ever met."

I thank God for the example that Karl brought to my life. Karl was generous with his time and his thoughts.

He was not guarded or afraid to tell you what he was thinking.

Let me tell you about a trip to Mexico – because Karl played hard too.

After His resurrection:

John 21:4 ... **Jesus stood on the shore:** but the disciples were 100 yards off shore.

John 21:5 Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any food? They answered him, No.

John 21:6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

John 21:7 [John recognized Jesus and said] unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (**for he was naked,**) and did cast himself into the sea.

John 21:9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Peter fishing nude! There is a good possibility that Peter had been fishing, as the French would say, "au naturel." Karl, spear fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, wanted to reenact that Bible scene. Deep in Mexican waters with only two Spanish speaking fishermen - - Karl did the same.

Feast in Jerusalem in 1983. Karl and I walked where David killed Goliath, where Abraham buried Sarah, and where Jesus walked and died, but Karl got so sick with "travelers illness," that I had to bring him to the Hospital for shots.

I remember too, driving all night on frozen roads with Karl on a hunting trip in Texas – the flying geese were so thick in the pitch dark I thought we were going to get clobbered.

In Pasadena, Karl would go on early morning hunts with his Benjamin pump BB gun for doves – and bring a good mess back home for Gaylon to cook up.

When Sharon and I were transferred by the Worldwide Church of God – after some terrible persecution – Karl gave us to beautiful Canadian stuffed geese taxidermies for our home.

I've known Karl to open the hunting season early at City Park – to thin out the overcrowding of geese there.

And back to the serious times:

We were with Karl when he performed a marriage inside of the maximum security Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola. I was the best man and Sharon was the Matron of honor for Jeannette Coulter when she and Aaron Anderson were married. Aaron spent most of his time in solitary confinement for refusing to work on the Sabbath.

The prison guards will remember in the resurrection (Luke 11:31-32).

Karl was always **teaching** life's lessons.

Karl said, "When you need some help with a project, ask the people with lots of kids who are as **busy** as they can be. They will help you. If you ask those with nothing to do – they'll tell you they are too busy at the moment to help."

One thing that Karl liked to do – was to shock people out of their complacency. The more unorthodox something was – the better Karl liked it.

You can tell a lot about yourself by looking at your friends – I suppose that Karl was about the best friend I ever had.

We went through crises – trials in the church and with our kids. Karl was there for us.

When Joette was 15 she almost died. Her entire system was backed up. Healing and doctors??? It was still a big dilemma in the church. After 8 days, Joette was in a coma and about to draw her last breath.

Karl finally said to me, "Aspirin or brain surgery, it's all **physical** – but we appeal to God in the Spirit – **the spiritual plane.**"

There were times that Pasadena was so controlling in the church that you weren't supposed to throw a rope to a drowning man without Head Quarter's permission and go ahead.

One man became jealous – he said my fabrication shop was opened one Sabbath. Karl asked me about it. I told Karl about the arrangement that I had with my business partner.

When I was baptized, I told my partner that I had joined a new church. I told my partner that if any work came up on a Sunday, Christmas, Easter, etc., I would take care of it and he could have the time off. I told him that he could take his vacation in the summer when his kids were out of school – and I would take my vacation after school started in the fall. My partner loved the deal.

That wasn't good enough for the jealous man – he said, "But you are making a profit on the Sabbath." Karl suggested that I sell my partner 1% of my stock so that he would have control and responsibility for the shop. I would be in the clear before God. I told Karl that I did not think for one minute that God worked that way or that He wanted me to find a legal loophole like that that would somehow exempt me. I said, "God does not think like that." **Karl backed me up.**

"Are people who own stock in big corporations like IBM or Exxon somehow in jeopardy for the profits they make, because those corporations do not shut down for the Sabbath?" We pay for our electricity produced on the Sabbath. Karl had some rental property. Karl was not required by God to allow tenants to go rent free every Sabbath. **Karl agreed with me.**

One day Karl called me and asked if I could meet him with my equipment trailer. I said, "sure," and met him early the next morning. We drove about 20 miles and picked up a man that I didn't know. Then we drove about that far again and picked up a tractor with a bush-hog attached.

And then we drove a good way and came to an old house with a big field in the back. After unloading the tractor, the man jumped on and began to bush hog the field. It only took an hour or two, and then he began to reverse the order of things.

By the time we got back to where I met Karl it was almost 4:00 o'clock. I told Karl, "Next time that old widow lady's field needs cutting – just give me a call – and I can run over there with my tractor and be back home before lunch! We don't have to use up the whole day cutting grass!"

Karl looked at me real funny – he paused – and then he said, "We weren't cutting grass." I asked, "If we weren't cutting grass, what were we doing?" Karl simply responded, "We were teaching that other fellow **to serve.**"

I wanted to share that story with you – because that was a typical day in the life of Karl Beyersdorfer. Karl was always **teaching**. He loved the principles of God and he lived by them. I learned to **serve** from Karl.

Karl lived his entire life believing that God's way works.

Karl Beyersdorfer was more instrumental than any other minister in my going to Ambassador College. I had already worked a career in the construction field.

In fact, Karl was instrumental in sending lots of people to Ambassador College – more than any other minister I know of. Karl believed in his Ambassador College training.

While a student and Ambassador College – Big Sandy, Karl played a prank by putting a dead skunk in one of the trash cans. That was an act for which Les McCullough has not yet forgiven Karl.

There was always a part of Karl that resisted institutional stuffiness and pretense.

Karl became somewhat **disillusioned** about a lot of things as we tried to get a solid footing after the breakup and destruction of the Worldwide Church of God.

I heard **depression** in Karl's voice for the first time:

On a trip to visit Karl in Joplin, Missouri, I first noticed this disillusionment in Karl. It took me by surprise. Even with raising his kids, Karl told me, "It is all a "crap shoot," a game of chance. Your kids may come into the church – they may not." But God's word says:

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

For Karl – **despair, depression, or hopeless despondency** were uncustomary.

Depression is not uncommon. Brethren, I want you to know that depression hit me too:

When the Worldwide Church of God was really coming apart, I was in Chicago. The Worldwide Church of God had not become what I thought it would become. When I thought the church would get better - things become even worse.

In the final days of the Worldwide Church of God, things did not just get **dark** for me – they became impossible and unbearable for me.

Physically, I was down – I had just gone through my bout with cancer – Sharon was fighting with the onset of Type 1 Diabetes... and there was an evil, Godless man within the church – not only destroying the brethren – but trying to destroy us both.

I drove to Pasadena twice for help for our congregation, but my pleas for help only fell on deaf ears - and it got worse and worse.

Not only could I not get help from anyone in the ministry – they piled on – accusing me, blaming me – while they too supported the Joe Tkach administration, systematically devastating the **faithful** brethren.

The Worldwide Church of God was not there to help, and it was becoming clearer and clearer that the Worldwide Church of God would never become what I thought it should become.

In my darkest hour – I got down on my knees and asked God to **take my life** – **take** even my salvation – I could not stand it anymore.

I prayed, “Let me die the second death” – and it would be like I had never lived or existed at all. It seemed to be a reasonable request. That was my prayer to God...

And the sun came up the next morning – because God is faithful.

A Quarter century has have gone by now, and for Karl – the church was not progressing to where it ought to be. If fact, for Karl, things seemed to be floundering.

My friend, Karl Beyersdorfer, went deeper into darkness than I ever had.

God remembers who Karl really is – God will not quit on Karl either.

Depression is our mind’s way of acknowledging the existence of hardship.

I’ve seen it in the church: When Mary Grice died, her husband went into a deep depression. Willis found him – he couldn’t shave himself or boil water.

Willis took him to the doctor who put him on the antidepressant Sinequan or Lithium – and he was back singing in the choir the next Sabbath! He just need a little help. Depression was easily treated in that case.

But, we must be **extremely** cautious – because the use of certain antidepressants can greatly exacerbate the problem – even cause death.

When there is a **spiritual** factor involved – depression is quite complicated. That is the way it was with Karl. Here’s another example of depression:

In the church break-up and reforming, there was an evangelist who was compromised beyond his core principles and he went into a deep depression for a good while – **until** he put God first and chucked **everything** else aside.

Another long time Pastor yielded to his fears of no income, and no security at the time of the church break-up and reforming – he became so depressed that he could not speak or function properly.

It should not be wrong to seek help – but the subject of depression is taboo in the church. Too many of us are going around putting a happy face on when deep down, we’re hurting.

After the death of Herbert W Armstrong at Pasadena we had four well trained presenters doing the World Tomorrow broadcast – and yet, our call-ins dipped precipitously.

In Chicago – in the Worldwide Church of God – after the death of Herbert W Armstrong – we had greatly publicized Public Bible Study series Campaigns - and **no one** at all came!

That open door was no longer open as it had been in earlier times.

About two years ago, Karl had just completed one of these Public Lecture series at Mt. Home, Arkansas, Karl took the project most seriously. With his usual zeal and determination – he even visited everyone of the respondents – only to have a “Zero” return for all his hard work and expectations. That would certainly be enough to make any of us depressed – especially when it seems like bad things keep happening no matter how hard we try.

Karl was conflicted because his lifetime’s expectations were not coming into sync with what was taking place within the church. Karl was hard on himself.

Karl desperately wanted to grow the church like in the early days when we came in – new members came weekly and monthly.

I remembered a time in Baton Rouge when we had not had a new person come to services in more than a month. I suggested to Karl that we pray and fast as a congregation – so Karl called a church-wide fast for the congregation for the next Sabbath. God answered our prayers and on that next Sabbath – while we were fasting – Terry and Cheryl showed up for services for the first time.

Sometimes it seems that being in a large corporate church organization is an **end in itself**.

I believe that Karl was disillusioned when the church did not continue to grow.

Karl believed that we should all live by every word of God (Luke 4:4).

Karl believed that we should all live by every principle of God. Why were so few living their faith? Why were so few responding to the Gospel on TV?

Maybe, even, why is God not blessing our work?

Maybe even God is not pleased with our work!

As early as 1998, when we were all in Global, Raymond McNair announced at the Feast in Branson that with all our efforts after five years that only 55 new people had been baptized all together – around the world.

Karl needed to see growth in the church and in the people – and he just wasn't seeing it. Karl was not blind to how many of the ministers treated the brethren with disdain. Many brethren knew that they were not being cared for with Godly love.

The same overall picture for Karl was also the concern of many of the brethren: Their concern for the future of the church led them to speculate that the group may be facing hard times in the immediate future, and that the church may be on the verge of major change.

Karl, back in his prime, was full of life and hope. He had heart – he had feelings – I think that Karl was dying on the vine from a lack of empathy, tenderness, feeling, zeal, spirit, sympathy, genuine concern and heart in his immediate environment: even his death notice is as dry as dust:

The death notice letter from Head Quarters blames Karl's **physical** ailments: Quote:

“Mr. Beyersdorfer had had quite a number of serious **physical** ailments—leading to deep depression at times—and finally, about two years ago, completely of his own volition, asked to be removed as the Pastor. He asked that Mr. Gene Hilgenberg carry on and he would just “assist” him as best he could. He was under a great deal of stress and was sometimes not “himself” according to his wife and many others. He was under medical treatment ...”

Where is the deference to God in all of this?

The death notice letter from Head Quarters even denies Karl the **better resurrection** saying, Quote: “...we feel that Mr. Beyersdorfer will **eventually** be resurrected...”

That is so sanctimonious and so judgmental! And it is totally unscriptural.

I do not buy that. I believe Karl's dilemma went deeper than that. I believe it was disillusionment in the path he found himself on.

Karl realized that his life-long expectations for God's people were not being met. God's way of life was not in practice. The future prospects for the church were not going to be realized. Even after all these years – the church was not rising to its potential, and Karl was devastated by it all.

Yes, **depression** is physically devastating – it can even bring on heart attacks, but:

Increasingly over time, Karl could not see any hope for the future. Did he think that God was displeased with him - had forgotten him - or that he had somehow been working against God? Karl had hundreds of friends - there were 220 at his funeral - he had one of the largest congregations in Living - and he owns his own church building. But, clinical depression is able to consume every area of your thoughts and life - you see life with a darker lens.

After fifty years, what led to the abrupt end of a life spent in service to God's people?

Karl had a zest for life and living it that few men possess. Somehow toward the end of Karl's life he became disillusioned with where the church was, and where it was headed. All of his life was spent in building the church, loving the members, adding to the numbers, and raising up new congregations.

In the end, it seemed to Karl that his best efforts were producing little or no growth. Karl came to the point where he felt that he had become ineffective as a minister. He could not see God's hand in the work he was trying to do. And he was too old; and with the depression too tired, and too invested where he was, to begin again.

Real, undeniable, clinical depression was taking hold of Karl.

Karl began to question his past decisions – wondering if somehow God had become displeased with him – even thinking that perhaps he had committed the unpardonable sin. Not only was professional help needed for Karl – but professionals with the **Spirit of God** to direct their efforts. Psychiatrist and neurosurgeons know only the physical aspects of depression, and are therefore totally unable to be of help **spiritually** in time of need.

Because, WHO WE ARE AS CHRISTIANS has to do with the human spirit coupled with God's Spirit - modern medicine will never deliver a pharmacological cure for depression for us.

*“What man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man [Psychiatrist and neurosurgeons] which is in him? Even so no one understands the things of God, but by the **Spirit of God.**”* (1Corinthians 2:11)

Sadly, in the end, there was no one there for Karl in his darkest hour. Even though Karl came to the point of questioning his own efficacy and usefulness, I question the decision to overtly replace him as Pastor.

I question the judgment of making another man Pastor of the congregation Karl served for years [even if Karl did request it] – because that move JUST ADDED – to Karl's fears of inadequacy and failure.

It would not have hurt a thing to insist that Karl remain the **figure head Pastor** – while giving him an assistant to do the other tasks. He needed someone spiritually motivated near him – to **encourage him** as he had encouraged thousands of others.

After 30 years of loyalty on Karl's part – it would not have been asking too much for a little loyalty on the administration's part.

Karl loved the brethren and the church – he personally touched more lives than any man I know of.

I am **only** one of the thousands of lives that Karl touched in profound ways.

Karl was trying to stand for what's right at a difficult time in his life. Karl could see that things in the church were not all that they should be. Karl understood God's love for **ALL** the scattered and forgotten brethren [not only those in Living] and down deep he knew that something was not right.

Deep in Karl's heart and mind Karl recognized a spiritual dichotomy – a division between what should be, and what was taking place all about him. Those two things were entirely different. He may have reasoned, “It's too late to change the system – or to go somewhere else and start over.

Yes, he had one of the larger congregations, and yes, he was still able to preach, and baptize, and counsel, and visit those in prison – but there was something eating at Karl.

A number of faithful ministers have wished that they could have been there for Karl in his most difficult hour. There were ample signs and cries for help.

I'm sure that those who were closest to Karl did all that they could do. They simplistically think that they are safe with lots of people and friends. Their form of Christianity consists of, “You live – you die – and you wake up in the Kingdom of God.” Their philosophy is that it's easy when you are following the right man in the right church group.

Brethren, we cannot forget that we must continuously be defenders of the Faith – not defenders of Head Quarters. We cannot forget that we must continuously be protectors of the faithful brethren – and not loyal to the whims of a man.

We must always consider ourselves to be an **army of one** where it comes to these responsibilities. Karl was an army of one – until physically he was unable to pull the load.

The Church of Jesus Christ will not be killed off – there are always a few true adherents who are willingly living the True Faith. Make no mistake about it – our true faith is under assault – we are under attack. We are not to lose faith – ever remembering the rewards that will accompany a right Faith.

Karl gave and gave of himself - but his spiritual and emotional tank was not being refilled.

God remembers who we are.

God knows Karl at his finest hour.

I wanted to share with you today how Karl touched my life – but Karl touched **a thousand lives** - just like that.

One of the first questions I ever asked Karl Beyersdorfer was, “What happens when someone converted gets old and senile.”

Back in Louisiana, I thought that just about everyone got senile when they got old.

Within a heart-beat Karl answered, “God knows when to **fix His Spirit** in a person.”

Looking back today, how profound Karl’s answer was!

My Catholic philosophy was different – life is like links in chain black and white. White, white, white, white, white, white, white, white, black – and you go to hell for eternity.

God knows WHO we are – and we are all like a mosaic. What picture did Karl’s life paint?

When I think back on the life of Karl Beyersdorfer it is overwhelming positive.

Add to that, the fact that God **forgives and forgets**.

Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and **will not remember** thy sins.

It says the same thing in:

Hebrews 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities **will I remember no more**.

When I look back at the Karl Beyersdorfer I knew and loved, I remember the good things.

God knows Karl – his heart, his mind and his soul – the wonderful man Karl was. The amazing thing is that Karl’s offences have been totally erased and forgotten by God.

God remembers Karl – the **servant of Jesus Christ**.

End: Remembering Karl Beyersdorfer