

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 4 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be July 1995

Follow Me!???

Follow a man as he follows Christ?

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1Cor 11:1, KJV).

How many times have we heard that? After all, Paul wrote that, didn't he? Preachers often emphasize the need to follow Christ and to follow the "minister" only as he follows Christ. Then, in the same message, they say

something that completely destroys their message and, in some cases, exposes their true motive. Leaders who are seeking a following will tend to give a strong sermon about following Christ and then provide a false test for the listeners to apply to the leader as proof that he is God's servant to be followed.

An Open Letter to All the Churches of God

To the *Ekklesia* ["assembly" or "church"]:
Greetings,

I was baptized into the body of Christ (the *Ekklesia*) in 1983. As a member of the Worldwide Church of God, I learned about the eternal truths and the 18 truths restored.

I sincerely believed I was a member of God's True and only Church. The many booklets and literature of the WCG made us feel unique and special. We felt we knew the truth and our understanding of future events was right.

We had booklets titled: *Mystery of the Ages, What Do You Mean the Kingdom of God?, Which Day is the Christian Sabbath?, Pagan Holidays of God's Holy Days?, The Plain Truth about Healing, Is All Animal Flesh Good for Food?, The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy, The Book of Revelation Unveiled At Last, What is Real Christianity?, All About Water Baptism, What do you Mean Born Again?, What is the True Gospel?, What is the Holy Spirit?, Where is God's True Church?*, etc. These made us think that we knew God's truth and that He was working only through us.

We financed a worldwide work with Plain Truth, Good News, Youth 95, Worldwide News, correspondence course, a radio broadcast, a television

At a recent Feast of Tabernacles, a Church of God leader was giving that exact message. After lightly bantering one of his preachers by saying that he was going to send him to Nome, Alaska, he said, "I'm just kidding brethren. We don't operate that way. If we did, God would remove me. I sincerely believe that, brethren, God would remove me." *So, the test we should employ to see if we should follow this leader or not, is whether God has removed him or not!* And since he is still where he is, then, obviously, we should follow him! In light of past and recent history, when has God removed a leader who was not following Christ?

A tragic example happened back in the '70's. Jim Jones used these same tactics before he took all his followers to Guyana which ultimately ended in a mass suicide. Jones literally stood on the Bible and challenged God to strike him down if he were not God's chosen servant. Since God did not strike down Jim Jones, the people followed him to their useless and tragic deaths by drinking poison at Jim Jones' request.

Another modern Church of God leader says this about following. "...Be followers of God along with men who are themselves also following Christ." "...We cannot be true Christians without following a man." And "...men will be somewhere between God and us as long as we are human..." So, what is it that we are really supposed to do regarding this topic of "following"? After all, didn't Paul say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"?

There is a human tendency in the

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WE CAN DO A BETTER JOB

We received the following fax shortly after we mailed the June Servants' News:
July 4, 1995

Greetings:

I am faxing you this message because in reading Servants' News I have become a little upset at what I see as a double standard. You wrote an article titled "Your Paper Said it, But Is It True?"

In the article you are complaining about false things being written about you—all which is fine, I have no problem with that.

But on the other hand in the section "News from Local Congregations" you are making allegations about the United Church of God which I find distasteful. You even admit that some of it is hearsay, you state that "we have even heard several stories of men contacting multiple 'Church of God' organizations." Hearsay to me is nothing more than gossip, and if you want to print negative information than I suggest you better take a look at your own house. There seems to be a bit of hypocrisy evident in this last edition you have published.

I hope you are converted enough to apologize and print it. Up till now I have felt you were doing a good job, printing unbiased articles, but now I am not so sure. Hope you will make the necessary corrections and get on with doing a good work.

I have enjoyed reading your News up until this time. I look forward to reading it in the future, but with a more positive approach to what is printed.

—G.H., New Mexico

Thank you very much for the correction. Upon rereading our United Church of God article (page 5), we see that it seems to be condemning some in United. **That was not our intent, but that is what it says. We apologize for our mistake.** We should have discussed the problem in a separate section and not mentioned any organization names. Indeed, some of the problems we had in mind were with other organizations.

Although we characterized these things as "stories," we do have either first hand knowledge (a "minister" told us he was primarily looking for a job), or information that was heard by many people (a "minister" attended and promoted one organization for two weeks then suddenly was hired by another organization). This is a great contrast to the article in the other paper about "Friends of the Brethren" which contained statements directly opposite of the observable facts.

We did not name these people because we hope that they will repent, change, and become good servants. While the Scriptures do identify a few people as evil (Acts 8:23,

1Tim 1:20, 2Tim 4:14), the Bible authors most often just identify the nature of a sin and let others determine who is doing it and how to avoid them (2Pet 2, Rev 2 and 3, 2Thes 3:6, 1Tim 6:3-5, etc.) We do not believe it is our task to judge.

Please notice that we did use nearly two whole columns to discuss the good things about United and to give the locations of their services. I have personally attended United congregations and was pleased with much of what I heard and saw.

In the future, we can do a better job of discussing difficulties in the congregations without giving names of individuals and organizations.

—Norman S. Edwards

At least two people did not have as much difficulty with the June issue:

July 9, 1995

I have received my first [June] Servants' News and am very pleased with it.

I am attending the Ft. Worth **United Church of God** services and a great cloud of relief has been lifted since I've left the Worldwide Church of God.

—R. T. C., Ft. Worth, TX

July 6, 1995

Dear Sir,

[I] am finding your publication Servants' News most helpful in sorting thru the confusion as a former WCG member. My focus of study now is centered on the type of government that God's church should have. With respect to that subject, please send your article titled "How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans." [other literature requests not printed].

That may very well be the problem. I had pretty much just accepted whatever came out of Headquarters as the "Gospel" with no particular incentive to prove it. With the massive doctrinal changes, however, it's back to basics for me and an intense distrust of any human government—church or otherwise.

Please accept the enclosed contribution to help defray your expense.

Sincerely,

—E. D., Texas

The scriptures indicate corruption in both religious and secular governments in the end. (Ezk 34:, Hos 7, Rev 17-18, and many others). "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8). Don't give up!

—Norman S. Edwards

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 1, No. 4 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be **July 1995**

Servants News is published monthly by *Friends of the Brethren*. Subscriptions are free to individuals interested in obeying their Creator as described in His Word. We believe His law is the basis for living a life that is pleasing to Him in harmony with our neighbors. We believe the holy spirit gives us the power to live such a life as long as we continually repent of our sins and accept the salvation provided through our Messiah and Savior. We believe in living "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deut 8:3).

We believe the gospel should be given freely: you may copy any or all of this publication and give it to others. Friends of the Brethren is financed by donations and has no ties with any of the other organizations listed in this publication.

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Contributors: (many) "Thanks" to everyone involved.

Servants' News accepts articles for publication. Include a self-address stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We do not publish materials that attack individuals or organizations, nor do we publish materials that claim there is only one human organization through which the Eternal works. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles and letters to:

Friends of the Brethren

PO Box 6516

Springdale, AR 72766-6516

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“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always”—Matt 28:19-20

“But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of man comes.” —Matt 10:23



Many organizations that call themselves “Christian” spend very little time teaching the actual words of the Bible. Hence, we should not be amazed when the organization which Herbert W. Armstrong founded no longer distributes or his writings.

While Herbert Armstrong never claimed that his writings were perfect or equal in authority to the scriptures, they have certainly influenced many thousands of people to reject false ideas taught in the name of Christianity and to understand much of the truth of the Bible.

While some people have understood a great amount of Truth by reading the Bible and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it seems that most learn it with the help of a teacher. It is a great aid to read the writings of a man that strove to learn and teach the Bible for over 50 years!

While some of his works (e.g. 1975 in Prophecy) are primarily of historical value, Mr. Armstrong's writings are an invaluable tool in teaching the truth to people that have never had a chance to hear or see him. They touch nearly every area of Bible, religious, social, and ethical questions that people ask today. Few men have ever or will ever write so much in one lifetime.

While many “long-time church members” have shelves and boxes full of these old articles and booklets, there are many others that have no access to them at all. We must remember that Herbert Armstrong has been gone for nearly ten years. There are many capable, converted men and women today that were children or teens when he passed away.

One such man is David Day. In order to serve the Eternal's people, he has taken it upon himself to make copies of the text of the writings of Herbert Armstrong available to those that would like to read them. He already has nearly 100 books, booklets, and articles in a ready-to-reproduce format, and he is working on others. Mr. Day's list contains some titles written by close associates of

Herbert Armstrong, since these works are largely another author's understanding of Mr. Armstrong's teaching on a particular subject.

You can obtain copies of these writings by requesting them from:

David Day
548 Havasu
Tooele, UT 84074
Telephone: 801-833-0622

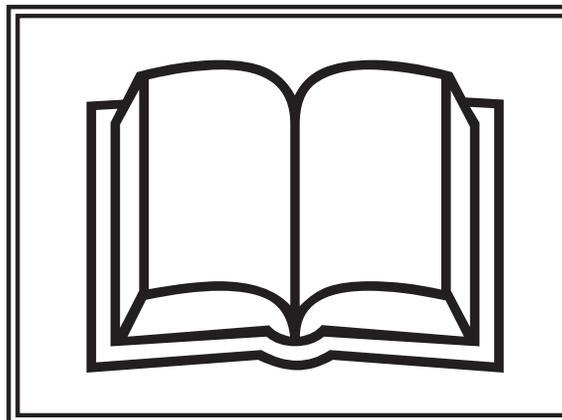
David would like to make these copies available in the same way Herbert W. Armstrong did: free of charge. However, we at Servants' News would like to take it upon ourselves to encourage you to help David in a few simple ways:

1) Do not ask for everything you need to fill out your collection or for everything that you might want to read someday. This can require a lot of time and effort and result in little benefit. Ask for those items that you intend to read or give to others in the near future.

2) If you can, send something to help defray the cost of reproduction. Pages can easily cost five cents each to copy and about five cents more to mail first class. Fourth class mail is only one to two cents per page, but it does arrive more slowly.

3) Let Mr. Day know about any important booklets or

Learning From the Writings of Herbert W. Armstrong



articles that you might loan him that are not on his list. Also, he is thinking about making Mr. Armstrong's audio and video tapes available in the future.

The following page contains a list of the works available from Mr. Day.

Those with two asterisks after the title (“**”) have not yet been prepared for reproduction. Please do not expect quick service on these items. This list is sorted in alphabetical order, with the words “a”, “an”, and “the” removed from the front and placed in parenthesis at the end of the title. Some of the titles, are booklets, some are articles, and some had been published as both..

We hope this literature can be a help to you and many others.

1975 In Prophecy **	Just What Do You Mean... Conversion?	The Six Great Doctrines of Hebrews 6
After Death—Then What?	Just What Do You Mean... Kingdom of God?	This is Ambassador College **
All About Water Baptism	Just What Do You Mean... Salvation?	This is the Life! Real Abundant Living
Am I In It for the Money? [PT article August 1980]	Key to the Book of Revelation (The)	This is the Worldwide Church of God **
Ambassador College College Correspondence Course [56 Lessons, 1-40 available]	Man Who Couldn't Afford to Tithe (The)	Tithing
Are We In the Last Days?	Managing your Personal Finances **	To Hell and Back
Are We Living in the Last Days?	Mark of the Beast (The)	“Tongues” Question (The)
Are You Being Called by God?	Middle East in Prophecy (The)	True History of the True Church (A)
Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong Vol 1 & 2 **	Military Service and War	True Womanhood
Awesome Power of Prayer (The)	Missing Dimension in Sex (The) **	Truth about Earthquakes **
Be a Positive Christian	Modern Dating **	United States and Britain in Prophecy (The) **
Bible Story Vol. IV (The) **	Mystery of the Ages **	Whale of a Tale (A) **
Bible—Superstition or Authority? (The)	Never Before Understood	What Do You Mean the Unpardonable Sin?
Black Horse—Famine (The) **	New Covenant—Does it Abolish God's Law? (The)	What is a real Christian
Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last (The)	New Facts About Marijuana **	What is Christ's Gospel? [from 1976 GN]
Building a Happy Family	New Feminism... Have Women Ever Really Had Their Rights? (The) **	What is Faith?
Crime Can be Stopped **	New Morality (The) **	What is Man?
Crucifixion Was Not on Friday (The)	Our Polluted Planet **	What is the Reward of the Saved?
Do We Have the Complete Bible?	Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days?	What is the True Gospel?
Does God Heal Today?	Pale Horse—Disease Epidemics (The) **	What is Worldliness?
Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (The)	Plain Truth About Easter (The)	What Science Can't Discover About the Human Mind
Germany in Prophecy **	Plain Truth About Healing (The)	What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?
God Restored These 18 Truths (WN Aug 25, 1986)	Predestination—Does the Bible Teach It?	Where are Enoch and Elijah
God's Sacred Calender	Principles of Healthful Living **	White Horse—False Religion (The) **
Gospel Pollution **	Proclaiming the Gospel by Your Last Will and Testament **	Who is the Beast?
Has Time Been Lost?	Read the Book	Who Will Rule Space?
How and Why We Know We Have the Truth	Real Jesus (The)	Why Marriage?
How Long Were the “Days” of Creation?	Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God (WN June 24, 1985)	Why Must Men Suffer?
How Often Should We Partake of the LORD's Supper?	Red Horse—War (The) **	Why the Strange Custom of Halloween?
How to Observe God's Festivals	Resurrection was not on Sunday (The)	Why We Need God's Holy Spirit
How to Study the Bible	Secret Rapture—Fact or Fiction? (The)	Why Were You Born?
How to Understand Prophecy	Seven Keys to Understanding the Bible	Wonderful World Tomorrow (The) [Booklet]
How You Can Be Imbued With the Power of God!	Seven Laws of Success (The)	Wonderful World Tomorrow (The) [Book] **
Human Nature—Did God Create It?	Some Fishy Stories... About an Unproved Theory **	World Crisis in Agriculture **
Incredible Human Potential (The) **	Ten Commandments (The)	World Held Captive (A)
Is all Animal Flesh Good Food?	The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong [booklet version]	World Peace—How Will It Come?
Is Jesus God?		Worldwide News, February 10, 1986 [About HWA's death]
Is Sex Sin **		You Can Defeat Discouragement!
Just What Do You Mean... A Cult?		Your Awesome Future 
Just What Do You Mean... Born Again?		

Local Congregations



This section is for short articles about formation or activities of local congregations. Groups listed in this section may have some doctrines or policies which we cannot justify from the scriptures, but we believe most of them are a reasonable place for fellowship with the brethren. We believe the holy spirit will guide you in your fellowship decisions if you will study and ask.

We would appreciate any brief stories sent to Servants' News, PO Box 6516, Springdale, AR 72766.

East Texas Church of God, 7th Day

PO Box 174, Pollok, TX 75969
Phone: 409-853-3206

We are a small group of about 13 in and around the small towns of Lufkin and Nacogdoches, Texas. We are former members of the WCG. Although we are a remnant of a scattered few, we hold to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

We would be interested in knowing if there are small groups, or individuals in the areas of Houston, Beaumont, Tyler, or Shreveport. If there are, we would love to welcome them to meet with us, even if it is just once in a while. Please contact Leo Holley at the above address or phone.

Unity Christian Fellowship

PO Box 370, Watertown, CT 06795.
Telephone: 203-274-1896.

Unity Christian Fellowship is a ministry to the glory of Jesus Christ, a ministry to the sheep of our Savior, and a "harvest" ministry. We accept and believe the scripture which teaches that all members of the Body of Christ are spiritually united in Him. Therefore, we welcome with open arms into fellowship all those who are seeking the testimony of Christ, and to new and better understanding of God's Word. But all doctrine must agree with the

plain Word of God. UCF accepts on face value 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." America is not without hope.

The Leadership of the UCF is Congregational style, according to the first-century apostolic model, **not** hierarchical or authoritarian. The local work is autonomous and independent. The ministry is not, nor does it stand in place of, the government of God; rather, the government of God exists only between God and the individual believer. We find no authority in scripture for the establishment of councils of ministers or ministerial hierarchies to rule over local congregations.

The UCF observes the Seventh-day Sabbath and Biblical Holy Days. A free quarterly letter, *The Fellowship Commentator* is produced along with other literature. A television program, *A Table in the Wilderness* is also produced and aired on a local cable TV station.

Church Counsel

PO Box 1, Little Chute, WI 54140
Phone: 414-733-5271 or 788-2939

We provide counseling services at all levels of Church life. Special attention is given to those who are interested in starting a new congregation. We provide Bible information as to how to achieve stability in a congregation and how to expose pastoral abuse.

Church Counsel offers annual seminars and two quarterly publications: *Original Languaged Text Studies* and *A Living Relationship*. Inquiries are encouraged.

Church Counsel was started by God's Church in the Appleton-Green Bay Area (Wisconsin), a congregation seeking to live in obedience to God's

laws and principles. We teach the same things that Yeshua (Jesus) taught as recorded in the original language inspired texts. He set us an example in the first century by sending out two-man teams. Sabbath meetings are in obedience with his commands (1Cor 14:26-40). Holydays are kept in accordance with the calendar published by Herb Solinsky. We publish "The Living Relationship."

Big Changes in Big Sandy

Big Sandy has always been a unique area in the United States. While most Sabbath-keepers must drive miles to visit the nearest people from their congregation, in Big Sandy, there are probably several that live on your block! The festival site, inexpensive housing, Ambassador University, employment in church-member owned businesses, and a friendly environment all helped to attract people to this area.

This is not to say that the area was without its problems. There has always been a certain polarization between the Sabbath-keeping and non-Sabbath-keeping people. Schools that scheduled events on Sabbaths or Holy days would find them poorly attended. Employers always seemed to be short-handed. Since Ambassador is one of the largest employers in the area, the local economy has gone up and down with each closing and opening of the college, and people's hearts have gone up and down with the far more frequent rumors of closings and openings.

The Worldwide Church of God has been the largest organization of Sabbath-keepers in the area, but there have always been many other groups. The Church of God International has been headquartered in nearby Tyler since 1978, the Global Church of God has a growing congregation, the United Church of God

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page now has nearly 500 attendees, and there are numerous smaller groups. Since the Worldwide Church of God began firing all employees that attend a service of another Sabbath-keeping group, it appears that several hundred people are simply staying home for the Sabbath. If present trends continue for a few more months, the Worldwide Church of God will no longer contain the majority of Sabbath-keepers.

Speculation that the college may be closed again has a sound basis in fact: Over 20% of Ambassador University employees have been terminated or resigned in 1995. The subsidy sent from the Worldwide Church of God has been decreased by about 25% and is now set according to the WCG income (if the WCG income falls by 10%, the subsidy sent to AU will be decreased by 10%). Five people of the eight-member AU board have left over doctrinal issues this year.

Dr. Donald Ward, formerly the college president was replaced June 16th. He is now attending the United Church of God—giving a sermon in the local congregation on July 22nd. We, at *Friends of the Brethren*, would like to commend Dr. Ward for standing for the truth in spite of **twice** being thwarted in his efforts to help build a college for Sabbath-keeping young people. Dr. Ward was appointed President of Ambassador College in 1978, shortly before it was cancelled by circumstances beyond his control. He was again appointed president of Ambassador University and saw it through the difficult accreditation process. He attempted to hold AU to sound doctrine, even though it eventually cost his job.

Several *In Transition* writers live in the Big Sandy area. For more information about Big Sandy and other "church of God" events send \$10 for 6 issues to *In Transition*, PO Box 450, Monroe, IN 46772.

Feast of Tabernacles

A number of organizations are planning festival sites that will accept people without regard to their corporate affiliation. The festival dates are October 9-16

unless listed otherwise. (Some organizations calculate the calendar from their own understanding of the Scriptures rather than using the traditional Hebrew calendar which uses a set of rules not derived directly from the Bible.)

Only the initials of the organization are specified for sites run by organizations listed at right.

Feast Sites in Order by State:

Australia, Qld., Noosa. UCG.
Australia, Wollongong. GCG
Belgium, Hengelhof. GCG
Canada, B.C., Whistler (90 minutes from Vancouver). CGI.
Canada, B.C., Whistler. UCG.
Canada, Ontario, Collingwood. CGI.
Canada, Ontario, Hull. UCG
Canada, Ontario, Niagra Falls. GCG.
England, Berwick-on-Tweed. UCG.
Guyana, Georgetown. GCG
Malaysia. GCG.
Philippines. GCG.
South Africa. GCG.

Arizona, Tucson. UCG.
California, Kings Beach (near Lake Tahoe). CGI.
California, Del Mar (San Diego). GCG.
California, Morro Bay. Talents Ministries. 707-864-2250.
California, Redding. UCG.
Colorado, Colorado Springs. Oct 11-18. Church-Light Publications, 719-637-1140.
Colorado, Colorado Springs. GCG.
Colorado, Glenwood Springs (90 miles East of Grand Junction). CBCG.
Colorado, Keystone. UCG.
Florida, Destin (East of Pensacola). **Computer conference is at this site!** See June issue, page 4. CP.
Florida, Orlando. GCG.
Florida, Orlando. UCG.
Florida, Panama City Beach. CGI.
Florida, Pensacola. CBCG
Florida, St. Petersburg. Ministries of Yahweh. 705-696-3111.
Georgia, Jekyll Island. UCG
Kentucky, Lexington. UCG
Kentucky, Land-Between-the-Lakes. (near Paducah) CGI.
Massachusetts, Lowell. UCG.
Minnesota, Minneapolis. UCG.
Missouri, Lake of the Ozarks. GCG.

Missouri, Schell City (SE of Kansas City) Oct 8-15. Church of Israel, 417-432-3119.

Oklahoma, Wagoner. (near Muskogee) CGI.

South Carolina, Myrtle Beach. CGSD.

Texas, Corpus Christi. UCG.

Texas, Tyler. CGI.

Virginia, Virginia Beach. GCG.

Washington, Spokane. GCG

Places to Fellowship

This list contains a number of organizations with many Sabbath-keeping congregations and/or regular sermon-tape mailings. There is a diversity of doctrinal teachings so we encourage everyone to study the scriptures and prove doctrines for themselves. Most of these organizations welcome visitors, though individual congregations greatly vary. We encourage the people of the Eternal to fellowship and serve each Sabbath if practical.

Christian Biblical Church of God (CBCG). PO Box 1442, Hollister, CA 95024. 408-637-1875.

Church of God, 7th Day [Salem WV]. PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426. 304-782-1411.

Church of God, International (CGI). P.O. Box 2530, Tyler TX 75710. 903-825-2525

Church of the Great God (CGG). PO Box 471846. Charlotte, NC 28247. 800-878-8220 or 704-544-2100

Congregation of God Seventh Day (CGSD). PO Box 2345, Kennesaw, GA 30144.

Cornerstone Publications (CP). 3802 Olive Street, Texarkana, TX 75503. 903-792-1352

General Conference of the Church of God 7th Day. PO Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. 303-452-7973.

General Council of the Church of God (7th day). 1827 W. 3rd St. Meredian, ID 83642. 208-888-3380.

Global Church of God (GCG). PO Box 501111, San Diego CA 92150. 619-675-2222.

United Church of God (UCG). PO Box 661780, Arcadia CA 91066-1780. 818-294-0800. 

Oh, How I Love Your Law!

Part Two

“...You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 22:38). While covenants may pass away, the laws regarding how to love our neighbor remain.

Part One of this article covered the the different types of laws:

(1) **Principles governing how we should love the Eternal and our neighbor**—as binding upon us now as when they were given.

(2) **National laws and punishments for disobedience**—many can be used in our congregations and families, will be used on a national basis in the millennium.

(3) **Ceremonial laws**—most without a direct application today, but symbolically instructional.

Part One also covered the five principles of good law found throughout the scriptures: 1) Punishments must be stiff enough that offenders do not repeat the crime, yet not so harsh that they destroy them as useful citizens. 2) Persons offended must receive a just restitution. 3) Laws must make it difficult to obtain restitution falsely. 4) Laws must be designed to greatly reduce the chance of wrongful punishment—especially the death penalty. 5) Laws must not produce a harmful or negative effect on society.

We covered the laws found in Exodus 21. We will continue our study with Exodus 22.

Stopping the Business of Stealing

"If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.... If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey

or sheep, he shall restore double (Ex 22:1,4).

While this scripture is about animals, it certainly applies to all types of property. There are two obvious lessons here that we must not overlook: 1) Property is privately owned; animals and things are assumed to have owners. 2) The penalty for theft of property is not a jail sentence or a fine paid to the state, but restitution to the owner.

Why the different amounts of restoration: 5, 4 or 2 times the value? There is a very good reason! If the thief is selling what he steals, he is making theft a business—he is getting rid of the evidence in order not to be caught. He did not take an ox or a plow or an ax because he needed one, he took it because he wanted to get money. There is a fivefold restoration for stealing the animals or tools that a person needs to do his regular work. An ox was a trained animal that was used for pulling wagons, plowing, etc. A sheep did not do daily work, but was used for wool once a year, or eaten (once in its lifetime).

If the person steals something and keeps it, it is not usually done out of lust, weakness or maybe even by mistake. (A person that has stolen dozens of things and kept them all would eventually be identified by one of the rightful owners.) If a person needs an ax and steals one from his neighbor's shed because the neighbor has four axes and might not miss one, he

should still restore double, but not four or five times.

Also, a person may sometimes make an honest mistake and take his neighbors animals or tools thinking they are his own. If the offended person recognizes the mistake, he may decline the need for double restitution. On the other hand, if a theft victim cannot understand why his neighbor has kept four of his sheep with his brand in his pasture for three weeks without noticing it, then he is entitled to double restitution. The person with the extra sheep should be more “diligent to know the state of your flocks” (Prov 27:23).

Nevertheless, the penalty for someone that “accidentally” acquires another's property or “borrows it without asking” is only a two-fold restoration, not four or five.

One other scripture that applies to this subject: “People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house” (Prov 6:30-31). Why this highest of all restorations for a crime that men do not despise? Because he could have had food without committing the crime: “If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly

lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs" (Deut 15:7-8). A man should not steal what he is allowed to ask for.

People Safe in Their Own Home

If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed... (Ex 22:2-3).

There have been numerous cases where thieves have broken into houses and were injured or killed by the owners. Months of trials and thousands of pages of testimony have been generated as a result. Some thieves have collected big awards because of injuries they received. Did the thief threaten the owner? Did the owner have sufficient cause to believe his life was in danger? Could the owner have fled? Did the owner use more force than necessary?

The Bible makes the issue very simple. As a person who decides to fight an angry bull takes the risk of being killed, so does a person who breaks into a house. A person at home does not need to be a law professor to know what to do when someone breaks in. He may defend himself by any available means. Accidental deaths are extremely rare when everyone knows this simple law. Just as children (and adults) must learn not to play at the edge of cliffs or at the feet of large animals, so must they learn not to enter another's house uninvited and unannounced.

Big Thieves Become Servants

...He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft (Ex 22:3).

This law would revolutionize our criminal justice system. Today, many thefts are committed by minors—they are rarely required to make restitution and are usually put back on the street in a few weeks. White collar criminals often hide their booty in trusts or secret accounts—they rarely make restitution and serve short sentences. If either of these two groups knew that they would have to work hard for

six years (no plea bargaining or reduced sentences) if they could not make a four-fold restitution, they would think again before stealing. In Part One, we explained how it is better for people to remain in society and become servants for a maximum of six years than it is for them to go to a prison and learn to be an expert criminal.

Responsibility for Property

If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution (Ex 22:5-6).

People are responsible for the damage they cause as well as the damage caused by their animals or other property. A person who improperly parks his car or docks his boat is responsible if it strays into another's property and damages it. In these damage cases (not thefts), the victim is compensated equally or better, but certainly not double. Why? The person responsible for the trouble is punished enough: they must make restitution and receive nothing in return. On the other hand, if a person received double when the neighbor's cow ate his crops, he might be tempted to secretly leave gates open and encourage the neighbor's cow to eat his crops!

If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor's goods. For any kind of trespass, whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his

neighbor (Ex 22:7-9).

There are always situations like this one: Tom agrees to let Mike borrow his chain saw and Mike lets Tom borrow his portable TV. The engine on the chain saw blows out in a few days and Tom tells Mike "not to worry about it"—he knew it was worn out. A few months later, Mike sells the blade of the chain-saw to a friend and throws the rest away. Six months go by and Mike asks for his portable TV back. Tom says he left it on the back porch so Mike could pick it up a couple of months ago, but cannot remember exactly when it disappeared. Mike remembers no such arrangement. But Tom wants his chain saw back, or at least some kind of compensation for it—he told Mike, "don't worry about it," but he did not give it to him.

This is a case where judges are necessary: people cannot agree on the facts and/or the meaning of the facts. The judges will ask questions. They may talk to witnesses. They will attempt to determine if someone is lying—if his or her story does not fit all of the known facts. Why the double restoration? To encourage people to be truthful in their dealings with their neighbors and avoid the judges if possible. For example, supposing Tom had accidentally left the TV at a beach party and never gave it back to Mike. If he is honest and confesses to him, then he owes him one TV. But if he lies or conveniently forgets what really happened and goes to the judges and tries to get out of payment, then, if found out, he will have to restore two TVs.

If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven away, no one seeing it, then an oath of the LORD shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept that, and he shall not make it good. But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it. If it is torn to pieces by a beast, then he shall bring it as evidence, and he shall not make good

what was torn (Ex 22:10-13).

These verses cover situations where the judges cannot determine exactly what happened. It is important to note that this situation regards articles that a man gives to his neighbor to keep, not that his neighbor asks to borrow from him (those situations are covered in the next section).

If there is determination of fault, the owner of the lost goods must accept the oath of the other. If it can be proven that the missing goods were stolen, but the thief is not caught, the man who kept them must make restitution, though not double. Why? Someone must bear the loss, and it makes the most sense to assign it to the person most capable of preventing the theft.

Also, this law nearly eliminates “inside-job” thefts. If the person keeping the goods is responsible for making restitution for anything stolen, he has no motivation to steal them himself or let a friend steal them: If he is **not** caught: he must restore them, if he is caught, he must restore at least double. Would the owner then be tempted to steal his own goods from his neighbor’s house in order to both keep them and have a like restitution? If he is **not** caught, he will double the value of his goods. If he is caught, he will have to restore at least four-fold, and he might be killed during the break-in.

It Was Borrowed and Then Broken, Who Fixes It?

And if a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not being with it, he shall surely make it good. If its owner was with it, he shall not make it good; if it was hired, it came for its hire (Ex 22:14-15).

If everyone knew and practiced this principle, it would save thousands of fights and court cases every day. We may derive the following principles:

- 1) If you borrow something, you must be prepared to fix or replace it if it breaks.
- 2) Do not borrow something that you do not know how to use and

might break.

3) Do not borrow something that is in poor repair and likely to have a major breakdown.

4) If you desperately need to borrow something (such as a car or truck in our day), but one or more of the above three rules are telling you not to do it, ask the owner to come with you to help you use it.

5) If you are lending something, make sure the borrower understands the possible costs of repairing or replacing the item.

6) If the owner stays with the borrower to use the item, the owner must keep a careful watch and make sure it is used correctly.

7) If you rent things out for a price, your customers are not automatically responsible to fix whatever goes wrong. Either be prepared to take responsibility for all problems, or write out each party’s responsibilities before the transaction takes place.

The Eternal does command us to lend to our brothers and help them when they need it. It is always good to discuss and remind our brother of these righteous principles before we lend to them.

Sex Before Marriage

If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins (Ex 22:16-17).

Deuteronomy 22:29 adds: “he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.” Many people in Western societies would find this completely unacceptable: Just because a couple gets excited and has a sexual experience, should they be required to stay married for the rest of their life? Would not that be a disaster for parents as well as any children? Why should the man pay money? Why should the woman’s father be allowed to decide whether the marriage takes place?

Before we answer these questions, we must look at how poorly the methods of our Western societies are working. While birth-control methods

abound, the tens of millions of unplanned conceptions attest to the fact that they are not always used or effective. Millions of these children are killed before birth. Millions more are raised by only one parent. Far too many are raised by people that are neither financially or emotionally ready to take care of them.

Our societies make little effort to teach people that they are responsible for their sexual behavior and the little lives that they might create. Billions of dollars are spent trying to reduce the effects of this irresponsible behavior. The standard government solution to the problem is spending billions more on similar programs: sex education, welfare and day-care for single mothers, institutions for unwanted children, venereal disease research, free medical care, and other programs that encourage more sex, irresponsibility and unwanted babies. Even if these programs miraculously became 90% effective, would it be acceptable to still have hundreds of thousands of aborted and unwanted children each year?

Let us compare the Eternal’s system with the present-day approach.

Today, sex among unmarried people is socially acceptable. In the heat of passion, babies, diseases and birth control are too often forgotten—until one of the “lovers” finds themselves with a baby or a disease—or both. **The Eternal wants happiness for the parents and the children to be born.** He commanded us to marry before we do anything that might bring a child into the world. If an unplanned child is conceived within a marriage, it may be a financial hardship for the family, but at least the child will have a caring father and mother—an irreplaceable blessing.

The “bride price” mentioned here assured that the groom was capable of earning money before he married, and it compensated the parents of a daughter—a son would inherit their land and take care of them when they are older, but a daughter would live on her husband’s land and would not be responsible for helping her aged parents.

Now look at the Eternal’s law from the perspective of a man thinking

about enticing a woman. If he just wants a good time now, the woman could tell her father about him later and he could be stuck with her for the rest of his life—a fearful thought. On the other hand, if he thinks he does love her and wants to marry her, the woman's father could always say no. He would still have to pay the bride-price, he would have a bad name, and he would not have a wife. If he does not have the bride-price, he could become a servant. It would seem much better to wait and to ask to marry the woman, rather than entice her.

The situation is equally bad from the woman's perspective. If she just wants a fun time now, her father may demand that she settle down and marry the man. Yet if she is trying to "catch" the husband of her dreams, he could be denied to her. In any case, if she loses her virginity, she has greatly decreased the chances of her marrying at all. The problem will stay with her whether anyone finds out about the affair or not.

If the Eternal's law were practiced, sex outside of marriage would be **understood to be** the disastrous practice that it really is.

Various Capital Offenses

You shall not permit a sorceress to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. He who sacrifices to any god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed (Ex 22:18-20).

Most of these laws are self-explanatory. All of them deal with people that are perverted and practicing things harmful to others around them. Several kings of Israel led their people into destruction because they listened to sorceresses or others influenced by demons. Modern research has shown that AIDS and other diseases are a direct result of bestiality.

It is important to realize that the death penalty was only carried out at the testimony of two or three witnesses that had seen the crime (Deut 17:6).

Fair Treatment for the Disadvantaged

You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you

were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless (Ex 22:22-24).

The society described in the Bible is certainly one based on families with their own home and land and a father leading the way. These verses are a warning to those that would take advantage of people that are less fortunate. Also, it is a promise to hear the oppressed if "they cry **at all** to Me" The Eternal does not require righteousness, obedience, or any other specific conditions; the afflicted person need only cry to Him for deliverance. People that are afflicted should take the Eternal at His word on this.

If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest (Ex 22:25).

Interest should never be charged to someone that borrows money because he is poor or in need. However, a person that has money to invest, can certainly lend it at interest to someone that will use it. (Matt 25:27). This principle is greatly violated in our society in that banks, credit card companies, and other lenders often try to induce poor and less-educated people to buy more than they can afford on credit, and then they charge them very high interest rates for years to come.

If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I am gracious (Ex 22:26-27).

Another caution to those that would oppress others, and a promise to those that are oppressed.

Remember These Things That Are Easy to Forget

You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people (Ex 22:28).

It is easy to forget and vainly use the Eternal's name. Also, even though the Eternal never designated a person as coming between a man and his God, He does expect us to speak truthfully, and if possible, positively about our leaders.

You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. (Ex 22:29).

Again, these are things that are easy to forget. The beginning of Deuteronomy 26 contains instructions for offering the firstfruits. The latter part of this verse has nothing to do with sacrificing humans, but refers to the instructions in Exodus 13:2,11-13. The human firstborn were never sacrificed, but were redeemed.

Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me (Ex 22:30).

These same instructions for allowing animals to be with their mothers for their first seven days are repeated in Lev 22:27. While no direct explanation is given for this action in the scriptures, it is probably similar to the circumcising of new-born male humans on the eighth day: it provides both a physical health benefit and teaches a spiritual lesson. What do the seven days represent? Probably the Eternal's "seven thousand year plan." Just as a new-born cannot be accepted by God until after the seventh day, so we cannot really be with God in the New Heavens and the New Earth until the first seven thousand years are up.

And you shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs (Ex 22:31).

Like the previous verse, a physical principle of avoiding meat that is likely to be spoiled or carrying disease, and a spiritual principle of staying away from that which is unclean.

To Be Continued...

These first two parts have covered Exodus 21 and 22. Many more interesting chapters of practical, divinely-inspired law remain.

—Norman S. Edwards

Acceptance Without *Compromise*

Many Christians, and many Sabbath-keepers in particular, are very zealous for truth and for obedience to God. Commendable attitudes indeed. But we are often shackled by our own zeal. We become so concerned with doctrinal correctness that we neglect to love! Please don't misunderstand, I am all for truth and for proper doctrines. But we can become so preoccupied with these that we neglect even greater truths—love for brethren, unity of spirit, oneness in Christ.

Diversity Among Christians

At the heart of our problem is the fact that there are so many different points of view and practices among those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul experienced a very similar situation. In practically every city there were new Christians who had come from different backgrounds. Some were Jews who continued to be very zealous for the law of Moses (Acts 21:20). Other Jews were more moderate. Then there were Gentiles who had previously been adherents to the Jewish religion. And there were Gentiles who came out of paganism. Quite a hodgepodge!

The New Testament reveals differences and conflicts in the churches at Colosse, in Galatia, Corinth, and Rome. How Paul dealt with these situations can be very instructive to us today.

The Message of Romans 14

From what we learn in Romans 14, there were differences of practice among the Romans relative to avoiding meat (perhaps because of concern that it had been sacrificed to an idol), and observance of certain days (perhaps special feast or fast days, or perhaps the calculation of timing those days). Though we don't know too many of the details, we do know that Paul so easily could have straightened things out. He could simply have given them a formula for each problem. But he didn't. Because there was an even more important truth involved: don't judge your brother!

Accept him whose faith is weak,

without passing judgement on disputable matters.... Who are thou to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand....

You then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat....

Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another (Rom 14:1,4,10,13).

Dealing with Modern Differences

Among Christians today the situation is very similar to that at Rome. We have those who abstain, those who eat meat, those who drink wine and those who abstain, those who wear make-up and jewelry and those who don't, those who observe annual feasts and those who don't, those who observe non-Biblical holidays and those who don't. We have people that say God, Jesus and Christ; others that use Yahweh, Yahshua, and Messiah, still others that use Yehova, Y'shua and Moshiach, and some that believe we should not pronounce the Eternal's name at all. We have some that use the Hebrew calendar, some that use other calendars, some that look for dark moons, crescent moons, or full-moons. On and on we could go!

Yet in the face of all the differences of practice and doctrinal belief among Christians, we are exhorted by Scripture to have unity of spirit:

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit... (Eph 4:3).

But how can we find unity when there are so many divisions and differences? How can we minister effectively to the world and to one another if we are so divided and can't even agree among ourselves? How can we hope to some day be presented as one bride to Jesus Christ if we are hostile and judgmental and condemning of one another?

People answer these important questions several ways. Some look at all the conflict among Christians, throw up their

hands and leave religion altogether! They become atheists, agnostics, or merely believe in a God, but nothing more.

Others deal with the lack of unity by drawing a box around themselves and their particular set of beliefs. They insist that they only have the truth, that they don't interpret the Bible like other people, they just "believe what it says." They believe they alone are the true church, that they alone are unified in spirit. Of course they must close their eyes to so much of the working of God that is going on outside their organization and keep their heads buried in the sand. And they can't ask too many questions or think too much or they're likely to learn something new—and discover that they are wrong about something.

But there is another way for Christians to have unity even in spite of all their differences—and that is the answer found in Romans 14: accept your brother for whom Christ died! We can be one in spirit, in faith, in hope, even though we have differences in practice, belief, and organization—if we learn and practice the truth about acceptance and love—if we recognize that God is running the show, that He is in control of His Church, that He is leading each of us step by step, and that all of us see through a glass darkly—probably to a greater degree than we would care to know!

Why we Judge Others

There are a number of reasons that we tend to condemn those who don't believe exactly as we do:

1. We place a very high value on truth and on obedience.

To be sure, these are admirable traits and worth pursuing; but we can become so preoccupied with the quest for one point of truth that we neglect an even greater truth. For example, we can become so concerned about the Sabbath truth that we neglect another truth: "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God, does not have life" (1Jn 5:12). We can be like the Pharisees who were so concerned about the truth of tithing garden herbs that they neglected the truth of justice, mercy, and

faithfulness (Matt 23:23).

Is it such a shame to say, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" or "I don't have an opinion on that issue?" Is it such a shame to admit that we are still growing and learning and to accept as brothers and sisters other Christians who are also growing and learning? We must learn to say, "This is how I see it and how I will live, but I will love and accept and give my life for my brother who honestly sees it differently."

2. Two value thinking: if I'm right on this question, then everyone else is wrong. If it's right for me, it's right for everyone.

To be sure, there are absolutes and Christians must not compromise with those absolutes. But is it possible that what you see as absolute, another sincere, truth-seeking, Bible studying, God-fearing Christian may not see as absolute? Is it possible God is leading your brother down a somewhat different path for purposes and reasons far beyond your knowledge? Is it possible God is leading both of you to an even greater depth of understanding than what either of you see now? Is it possible that each of you has different lessons to learn so you both can come into the fullness of Jesus Christ—in God's due time? Can we allow that God is the Master and we are merely servants? Or must we arbitrarily superimpose the things God has shown us on everyone else? Must it be done now?

There are many Bible examples of diversity: Daniel served God in the Babylonian palace while Ezekiel was a captive. John the Baptist socialized little where Jesus did a lot (Matt 11:18-19). Timothy was circumcised by Paul, but Titus was not (Acts 16:1-3, Gal 2:3). Peter had to be killed for the Gospel, but John was allowed to live to old age (John 21:18-22, Rev 1:9).

3. We view God in terms of rules, not in terms of a relationship.

Unfortunately too much of our spiritual security rests not in an intimate personal relationship with God, but on adherence to rules and regulations. Hence, if we are to judge ourselves accepted by God—based on the rules we keep—we must judge others, who don't keep exactly the same set of rules, as rejected.

Our quest for truth is commendable;

but we are shackled by our own zeal. We are so intent on certain points of truth that we neglect more important points—like love and acceptance and humility.

One Body—Many Members

The book of 1 Corinthians teaches a powerful lesson in regard to the body of Christ, the church. It is not a picture of a monogeneous mass—but of a varied body, with each member functioning effectively, doing what other members cannot do. Just like the human body has eyes for seeing, feet for walking, fingers for grasping, so the spiritual body has many different parts—parts that function for different purposes and with different methods to serve one God.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.... The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable (1Cor 12:4-6, 12-13, 21-22).

We can be so quick to consider ourselves as stronger, or having more truth, or being more open-minded than other Christians. But before we get too satisfied in our self-righteousness, we'd better remember what Paul wrote: "...those parts of the body that *seem* to be weaker are indispensable."

God is the One—He is the only One—who sees the whole body. We see only a portion of it, and we must be very careful how we pass judgment. For however stringent we are in judging others, God will be just as stringent in judging us (Matt 7:1-5). If we must err, let it be on the side of being too accepting of others, not on the side of being too judgmental and critical.

Acceptance Doesn't Mean Compromise!

Just because you are willing to

accept someone who has different beliefs, you are not compromising your own convictions. You can continue to strongly believe in, teach, and share your own understanding of God's Word while you have fellowship, love and respect for others who have a different understanding of some points.

The apostle Paul set a terrific example for us. He was willing to be all things to all men, unconverted men. He was willing to accept them where they were in order to win some to Christ. How much more should we be willing to accept those who are already won to Christ?

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak, I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some (1Cor 9:19-22).

Paul certainly didn't compromise with truth; but, he was willing to accept people where they were. We should do the same. Sure we might have a doctrinal truth which another person doesn't; but, can we respect and understand his views before we try to share ours? Can we realize that there are many things more important than most of the doctrinal issues Christians argue about? Can we recognize that maybe, just maybe, since we see through a glass darkly, we could learn some truth from other Christians, even those we might consider as having less truth than ourselves? Can we let God be their Master and Teacher? Can we see ourselves as fellow servants?

To love someone means to really understand them and the circumstances that have brought them to where they are, to respect them as children of God, as potential kings and priests, to accept and love them even at their worst.

We have so much to offer to the world and to one another as fellow Christians. To be able to effectively share what we have we must learn to accept everyone where he is. Then, even though we have differences, we can grow together, we can have unity of spirit, and we will be able to effectively share with a world in great need.

—Richard A. Wiedenheft

Letters & Responses

We print a representative sampling of our mail—both positive and negative. We do not include names unless we are fairly sure that the writer would not object. We include our response to each letter in this type-style. We have selected a title for each letter for easy reference. If writers supply their own title, we will be happy to use it.

10 Commandments not Old Covenant

LETTER: July 1, 1995
Dear Friends of the Brethren,

In my further studies of what is being taught by the Worldwide Church of God, I still can't go along with how the Ten Commandments are being treated.

There is at least four questions that I see nobody is answering about the Ten Commandments being the Old Covenant:

1) Where is there any example of some of the Church working during the Sabbath time (sunset Friday to sunset Saturday), while others of the Church went to Sabbath Services?

2) If the Ten Commandments are the Old Covenant, then why do I need to follow any of them?

3) What scriptures in the New Testament show that the words "THE LAW" plainly means the Ten Commandments, which includes the Sabbath?

4) What scriptural examples clearly tell what the Old Covenant **was** and what the New Covenant **is**?

I am not going to follow what is being taught because the answers to those questions prove the Ten Commandments are not the Old covenant. Part of the answer is plain common sense.

Herbert Armstrong used to say: "Don't believe me. Look in your own Bibles." His words are just as relevant today as they were then. The Holy Bible calls them the Ten Commandments, not, as Ted Kopell said they were not, "ten suggestions." If they were suggestions, Christians would have a choice to keep them or not. But the fact is we don't have a choice because they are COMMANDMENTS.

Sincerely,

—Matt Gee, Wisconsin

RESPONSE: You have asked four good questions and provided some good

answers. The Law of the Eternal is not the same as the Old Covenant. Abraham kept His Law (Hebrew *torah*) over 400 years before Moses (Gen 26:5, Ex 12:40). Some will say that the Old Covenant is Exodus

chapters 20-23, with the ratification in Exodus 24:1-8. A covenant always defines responsibilities and benefits to both parties. Exodus 24:1-8 contains no benefits to Israel, only an affirmation of obedience.

The Old Covenant is found in Exodus 19:5-6: "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'" Israel was to obey the Eternal's voice—all that he said (Deut 8:3), and they were to be a special **nation** to Him. In Exodus 24 we find that the words the Eternal spoke were written down and became a part of the covenant—because the covenant included obey everything that God said.

The New Covenant includes forgiveness of sin, but the same laws being written in our minds and hearts rather than on stone (Heb 8:10-12, Heb 11:16-17). There was no fault in the law, the fault was in the people (Heb 8:8).

In answer to your four questions:

1) We never see believers working on the Sabbath in the Bible.

2) The Ten Commandments (or "Ten Sayings"—literal Hebrew translation) are not the old Covenant and are part of His Eternal law as we have shown.

3) In Matthew 19:17-19, our Messiah told a man that if he wanted to enter into life, he should keep the commandments. Then he proceeded to name some of them: he mentioned five of the ten, and quoted from Leviticus 19:18, a commandment that summarizes the whole law (Matt 22:36-40). See our article, *Oh How I Love Your Law*, in the June issue for more information on which laws have been ended.

4) We have already cited the scriptures defining the Old and New Covenants.

We absolutely agree with your approach of looking into the Bible for yourself. Sometimes we even need to look back to the original language because translators wrote what they wanted the scripture to mean. Even if the term "ten commandments" never appears in a Hebrew or Greek Bible, these ten sayings certainly are spoken by the mouth of the Eternal and confirmed by the Messiah as commands to be obeyed. Let us obey them!

—Norman S. Edwards

Bountiful Encouragement

LETTER:

July 5, 1995

Dear Friends,

Thank You! I do greatly appreciate what you are doing. Your efforts have helped me very much! Your "STATEMENT OF PURPOSE" is wonderful. I'm sure our Father is pleased with your efforts to help in so many ways. I'm now attending the UCG Akron, Ohio. I would very much like to remain on your list to receive "Servants' News." Please accept what I can give to help your good works.

When it is possible I would like the following [five literature items].

Thank You Sincerely,

—W. W., Akron, OH

RESPONSE: Thank you for the encouragement. Our work would not be possible except for the power of the Eternal. All praise to Him!

—Norman S. Edwards

Deep and Serious Questions

Letter: July 5, 1995

Mr. Edwards,

I just received Vol. 1, No. 3, your latest "Servants' News," and am a bit confused. On Page Twenty, in the article Why are there Divisions, you seemed to support the divisions within God's Church. However true it is that different personalities will always be present within God's Church, that does not give it credence for division within the personality of God. There will always be personality differences in physical family situations. (You can't choose your family, only your friends) BUT God puts in His Church whom He wants in it for whatever purpose HE wants that individual to accomplish, without our consultation. With God's Holy Spirit, however, that called out individual would be able to overlook the physical and dwell on the spiritual aspects. If only we all would live by God's inspired Word, and not judge others, but follow the principles set forth by God Himself. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment (judging your actions in relationship to Jesus Christ's), mercy (asking God for mercy and as He shows it to you, you show it to others), and faith (That God will do as He said, and that God does know what HE is doing): these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.;"

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"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." & "Let nothing be done through strife and vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

To continue. The second paragraph of the third column on page 20 may have me confused. How can you say that the New Testament does not reveal the kind of unity and harmony that we long for today? If you have God's Holy Spirit, and Christ working in you, then you will be unified and be willing to work together. Again the question of "Is it possible that He never intended the Church to be completely united in Theology and organization?" Can you not open your Bible and find anywhere (since the Old Testament seems not to be referred to anymore, try the New Testament) that God says it is ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT, ONE WAY OF LIFE, ONE SAVIOR, ONE ...etc.

RESPONSE: Yes, there is one body, but many members. 1 Corinthians 12:12-30 clearly indicates that people in the first century were having a hard time understanding the need for the great diversity in the body. While each one of us should accept the other members of the body, too many organizations are quick to claim that they are the only or most active part of the body. Both Old and New Testaments show us that there will be divisions for the purpose of testing us: "You shall not listen to the words of that [false] prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut 13:3). "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you" (1Cor 11:17). Diotrophes, a self-seeking man, was allowed to cast true brethren out of the congregation (3Jn 9-10). The Eternal allows false teachers in his congregations (2Cor 11:14-15). Revelation 2 and 3 show us all different kinds of doctrines that had gotten into seven churches within about 100 miles of each other, yet John does not say that only one of them is the "true Church." They were all His congregations, but with different doctrines—some were worse than others. Christ warned that his Servants might be found fighting among themselves when He returned (Matt 24:45-51). Romans 14 shows that we can be united without having identical beliefs. I know of no human leader that the Eternal has clearly set over his congregations at this time. I feel much division is caused by self-proclaimed leaders that set themselves up above other

brethren and organizations.

LETTER: Seems to me, what so many have forgotten is that there is something greater being done on this earth today than just the revelation of the Sabbath and the nature of God. I realize that those subjects are important and are a very intricate part of the message. But how soon we forget, that without the total message, we lose sight of the temporal goal. Reflect back to the total message God gave to us through Mr. Armstrong. Why are we here? Why did God call us today? What is the purpose of the Church? Why do we go to Services on the Sabbath?? Recall the total picture yet?? But since Satan has the minds stopping there, let's try to advance one step further. Why the Passover? Why Unleavened Bread? Why Pentecost? Even more so, WHY FEAST OF TRUMPETS, WHY ATONEMENT? WHY FEAST OF TABERNACLES? WHY THE LAST GREAT DAY? Has our association with WCG in the last ten years caused us to fail to remember what part we will have in what the last four feasts represent? And why we have to be united in minds and spirits today? If we aren't united now, do you think God will want to use us later when He sends His Son back to earth to CONVERT and UNIFY the entire world? I cannot envision the millennial reign of Christ being multi-faceted. I don't think God will allow it. (Too many scriptures in God's Holy Word of what Jesus will do to unify the world.) IF we can't cooperate and overlook our petty personalities now, then how can He trust us to build unity later??

RESPONSE: I have seen many examples of unity and working together during the Feasts. I do not think those people will have any trouble working together under the Messiah in the Millennium. However, I do not believe that the scriptures give authority to a man to enforce his unity on the brethren. At one time, the WCG taught that Pentecost was always on a Monday. Those that openly kept it on Sunday were disfellowshipped. Later, it was changed to Sunday. Those that did not agree with the change and openly kept it on Monday were disfellowshipped. If our Father insists on corporate unity, how could He allow this to happen? If either one of those days was correct, people were disfellowshipped for obeying the truth? Does the Eternal require us to practice what we know to be error in order to stay with an organization? No! (Rom 14:23). Those people disfellowshipped for correctly keeping Pentecost, are still in the ekklesia, but independent or in

another organization. The Messiah has not forsaken them! We could go over many other issues where people were disfellowshipped or left various organizations over other doctrinal questions.

Whom would you trust with authority over cities in the Millennium? 1) A person that cooperated for his whole life because he knew he would be fired or disfellowshipped if he did not, or 2) a person that voluntarily cooperated with other members and other organizations because the work they were doing was Biblically based and they had the faith to believe that our Savior was directing it. It would be nice to assume that people in the hierarchical organizations also have Biblical understanding and faith, but look how they chose to stay with the same organization rather than the same doctrine.

Some people will laugh at the idea that the Messiah's body includes a multitude of human organizations that will be perfectly unified in the millennium. However, the scriptures show that this is exactly what is being done. We are the temple of God (1Cor 3:16-17). "And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1Kings 6:7). Reading the surrounding chapters shows that the stones and wood came from a great variety of places. As this was an absolutely incredible building project, preparing all the pieces locally so that no more tooling was needed at the temple, so our Elder Brother and Savior is preparing each of us where we are, to be ready to fit into his plan in the Millennium. He can do it! He will know that the pieces will fit. We need to concentrate on letting Him make each one of us ready, not on creating our own brand of unity. After all, the Worldwide Church of God preached and enforced human unity for at least 40 years. Look what has happened to it. If God wants all of his people in one human organization, why didn't He "clean up" the WCG?

LETTER: In regards to the corporations that now claim to be doing God's work. You seem to be a bit confused as to where anyone stands. Global, in some minds, is definitely trying to continue to do God's work. (Also why aren't you and Tom with them anymore?) That is good. One question I have, though, is why do some of them continue, from the pulpit, to downgrade and criticize and condemn those of United? As one of their own ministers once said, "Unless we leave the attitude of condemnation and judgment, we will

never be able to do the work of God effectively."

RESPONSE: I think many corporations are doing parts of God's work. Global has produced The World Ahead magazine and telecast as a direct outreach to the unconverted world. I think this is a fine effort. Unfortunately, Global does not acknowledge that the Eternal may be working equally in other organizations. When the many thousands went to United, did Global and other organizations encourage them in their support of the Eternal's law? How many organizations ignored this good example in their sermons and publications. Was gladness overcome by sadness because the members and money were not coming to them? I think it is up to each person and each group to do the most they can with the spiritual gifts they have been given, and that we will be rewarded based on what we do (see the parable of the minas or pounds in Luke 19:11-27). I do not know of any organization or individual (including myself) that has perfect doctrine, but I and many others learned to repent, be baptized, receive the holy spirit and grow from an imperfect organization. I commend all organizations for the good works they do, and hope that they will correct their problems as our Father shows them.

I stopped working for Global for multiple reasons, one of which was that I felt I could not represent their point of view on some doctrinal issues. (I do not believe I know the "Tom" you mentioned.). However, I continue to attend Global services, United services, other organization's services and Sabbath meetings of unincorporated groups. I have encouraged these groups to accept each other and work together as much as possible. I know of cases where United, Global, and other groups have met together for picnics, services, etc. The people usually like it. The headquarters leaders are not so sure. What does our Father think?

LETTER: As far as United is concerned, maybe not all, but however there were some ministers who did "linger" behind in WCG to help and assist those members who were having difficult times. There are still true ministers of God there doing the same. Just because they didn't consider themselves and looked to do their ordained job, why do you and others judge? I do not believe that you know fully what is or was in their minds and how they felt about the decision that had to be made. I don't feel that criticism is due any of them. Only God can read the intent and the heart of another human.

RESPONSE: We are sorry that it

appeared that we were criticizing United. Indeed, these problems are not unique to United at all! We could have done a much better job by mentioning these problems in a separate section without the name of any organization attached. That approach would help those making a decision about where to go without appearing to condemn one particular group. **Our intent was to alert the brethren to beware of false teachers** (2Pet 2, Ezk 34). They need to realize that all teachers are not alike just because they are in the same organization. As you say, we do not know what is in these men's minds and God will ultimately judge them. Yet, when we are looking for a place to learn and fellowship, we must "test the spirits" (1Jn 4:1) and "test those who say they are apostles" (Rev 2:2). See page two of the July issue for more about correcting our mistake.

LETTER: Other organizations have split from WCG and are looking to serve other interests as well. That is fine. But ask yourself "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part." The only question to that is, Did Christ say that if they come in the name of the "Church of God" and keep the Sabbath that they are OK? Or could we turn around what He said and say "If they do lightly speak evil of Me (or My servants; or one of My churches) can they be doing My work??" (Many shall come in My Name Saying I am the Christ...)

RESPONSE: If we turn His saying around, it would be our saying and not His. When we read on to verses 41 and 42 of Mark 9, we find that the subject continues—those that help others do the work will be blessed, those that cause harm will be punished. There are other scriptures that deal with who is and is not "in the Church." We can certainly learn from this scripture that we should not try to stop other "works" that "follow not us." I believe the Worldwide Church of God was wrong for many years in declaring itself the only "Church of God" when there were many other smaller Sabbath-keeping groups that had doctrines that were extremely similar.

LETTER: On the critical side of United. Why don't you quote those who are setting up the charter? Why do you go to other sources? I am glad that United is in agreement with the 18 truths revealed to Mr.

Armstrong. If United is not doing all of them now, could it be that **UNTIL THE TRANSITIONAL STAGE** is over in December, that they may not want to do the "Top Down Government" thing right now. And you seem to be a bit confused on the matter also. On page one you are critical of them for not "moving when Meredith did" and condemn them for being slow to react to the government thing, but then a couple of pages later, you condemn the governmental system you think they should have. To go further, you seem to state that God maybe wants many forms of governmental structures out there (because as many corporations there are, there will be that many different governmental structures). Satan is the author of confusions and division, not God.

RESPONSE: I have read and quoted from United's foundational documents. However, since policies are determined by the board, which is elected by the entire ministry, the views of individual men are important. The point of the article is that there is a diversity of thinking in the decision-making body. If the existing UCG corporation is to have a "top-down government," the ministers will have to vote it into the bylaws. Some men have told me that they will not remain in the UCG if this is done. I cannot find any reference to Mr. Meredith in the June issue. It took me about two years from the time I understood the nature of the WCG's doctrinal path until I was ready to leave the organization (1992). Since I lived in Pasadena, it was much easier to discern their direction at an earlier date. I certainly believe that the exact time a person leaves is an individual matter based on a number of factors. But I have talked to men that have told me that they were staying put because they needed a paycheck.

Worldwide has taught us that the Eternal does not always correct the man at the top. It has shown us the result of a large group of people that are trained to accept whatever the human government says, not what they can see in the scriptures. Indeed, we see different methods of making decisions and choosing leaders discussed in the scriptures. We have enclosed a copy of my article How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? which goes into this subject in depth. Yes, we are disagreeing with Mr. Armstrong's restored truth #1. We believe his writing on "church government" in the 1939 Good News was much closer to the Bible (see the May Issue of Servants' News). We were not trying to condemn UCG, but

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"Open Letter", continued from page 1 broadcast and other programs that were reaching millions! We had a college that trained Christians for the service of God.

We kept the Sabbath, Holy Days, did not eat unclean meats, did not keep pagan holidays, did not marry or date outside the church, did many do's and don'ts. We first, second, and third tithed, gave offerings and preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world!

We were special: God's only chosen ones. The only ones with God's truth. We belonged to God's true and only church—doing God's work. We were called and chosen as the only true Christians.

It was great! Comforting. We assembled in peace and unity, fellowshiped with true believers, had our own lingo, and were fed and nurtured by "head-quarters and the local ministry."

The Holydays were the best time of the year! 150,000 strong! Record breaking offerings! Inspirational messages! Family time, making new friends, new places to see, things to buy, foods to eat—a happy time! We were special!

Then God stepped in—shook us from our sleep and when we opened our eyes we saw ourselves for who we really were.

WE WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES. We did not have the only truth—not even all the truth. We were not God's only "church" and people. Many things changed. Doctrine changed. Our focus changed. Our understanding changed. Our "truths" changed. What we believed in changed. Our understanding of God changed. We changed.

Brethren started asking questions. Reading "dissident" literature. Visiting "other" churches. People began to study the Bible—to prove if these things were so. A whole network of people began to take form. Brethren started calling brethren. Information, articles, study papers, other literature and understandings or other churches of God were exchanged and shared. No longer could internal information stay inter-

nal. We began to look at **everything**—not with a magnifying glass, but with a microscope.

Brethren began to leave "the church," ministers left and formed new churches of God (each one with its own focus). Many joined but many remained independent—proving all things—before even considering joining.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken us?

Slowly as the dust settled, the emotions waned and the shock was over. We began to see that God was there all along working out His purpose in us.

Why am I writing this open letter?

I would like all of the church of God groups to understand that I am no longer the "pay and pray, obey, sit and keep quiet, and believe and think only what we tell you" individual I used to be.

I can no longer allow any church, minister, or person to interpret doctrinal or scriptural truth for me nor dictate how I should live my Christian life. Nor how I should think or believe.

Nor would I again make church government of a church my idol. I cannot accept any doctrine or decisions just because "that is what the church says and that is what we should do."

Nor can I allow any church organization to prohibit me from fellowshiping, visiting, or reading any other church's teachings.

I will be very cautious of any organization that disfellowships members for their personal beliefs—that claims they are the only true church, with the only truth, doing God's only work, the only ones understanding prophecy and scripture.

I will be very cautious of any church with a one-man rule, with top-down government or even a church with a board of directors making all the decisions.

I will not join an organization that attacks other organizations rather than using its resources (magazines, booklets, and broadcasts) to reach and preach God's word.

If any church organization allows me the liberty in Christ to fellowship with all true believers, allows me to visit any other group I desire, allows me to study any literature from any other group, allows me to believe what God has brought me to believe, treats me as an equal in Christ rather than a subordinate, allows me to independently think for myself, allows differences and diversity in Christ, then I will fellowship with you.

Is any such group perfect? Is any group God's true and only church? Are there true holy spirit-led Christians in only one church organization? Does any one group have all of God's truth? God is working in many groups and churches but He has only one Church—the Body of Christ.

Christ said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Let us stop attacking, judging, condemning one another! Let us stop creating divisions, rumors and animosity between one another! Let us overcome the bitterness, the resentment, the hurt and hate we have for one another! Let us stop looking at our differences and share what we have in common.

Let us put our trust and hope in Christ, in God and in His Word. Let us love one another, fellowship with one another, tolerate one another and learn from each other.

God has called us to peace and unity under one faith, one body, one God. He did not call us to argue, fight and destroy one another but to love one another!

When I visit you, please treat me as a fellow believer, a fellow brother in Christ, as one of the saints of Christ's *ekklesia*, not as a "potential tithing payer" nor as a "potential dissident" nor as an ex-WCG member, but as a brother in Christ.

Thank you for your understanding and may we fellowship together in peace.

One of Christ's disciples,

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"Follow Me", continued from page 1
 vast majority of people of wanting to follow. Most people want to follow another individual or group or belong to some group, organization or cause. Life is easier and there is less work if you are a follower of some group. One does not have to think as much or take much responsibility in leadership. This is exhibited in many areas such as employee relations, unions, causes such as pro-life or pro-choice, political parties and especially in the area of religion. We need to examine this area of religion and examine what our Christian responsibility is regarding the topic of following.

Examples in Paul's Writings

Paul wrote in a number of places regarding "following". He wrote, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Also, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Again, "Brethren, be followers together of me,..." and, "...ye became followers of us and of the Lord...." And finally, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us.... but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." (See 1Cor 11:1; 1Cor 4:16; Phil 3:17; 1Thess 1:6; and 2 Thes 3:7, 9, all KJV.)

Does it not seem that Paul is making it quite plain that we are expected to follow him?

Jesus' Words

Jesus Christ himself gave similar exhortations. He said to one of his disciples, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." He told Matthew to "Follow me." He told his disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Jesus even told one wealthy individual, "...sell that thou hast, ... and come and follow me." (Matt 8:22, 9:9, 16:24, 19:21.)

We can't go wrong by "following" Christ in any respect, right? So what's the difference in the concept of following Christ and "following" a man?

Four Basic Concepts of "Following"

There are four different types of

"following" mentioned in the New Testament:

1. PURSUE:

The first type of "follow" is the Greek word "dioko" (διoko) which means "to pursue, to seek after eagerly, earnestly endeavor to acquire". This is used primarily for following after, in the chasing sense or pursuing after virtue and good things. The following scriptures all use this Greek word "dioko": "Let us therefore **follow after** the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom 14:19). "**Follow after** charity, and desire spiritual gifts,..." (1Cor. 14:1). "But thou, O

In every case where Bible translations tell us to "follow" Paul, the Greek meaning is, "Follow my example or imitate me as I follow Christ's example and imitate him."

man of God, Flee these things [previously listed evils]; and **follow after** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1Tim. 6:11). "**Follow** peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

These scriptures are quoted from the King James Version (AV or KJV). The New King James Version (NKJV) uses the word pursue in place of the word "follow". Further study will show that these verses also contain the Greek word "dioko": Romans 9:30-31; Philipians 3:12,14; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 2 Timothy 2:22; and 1 Peter 3:11.

This type of "following" that we are to implement in our lives is quite emphatic. We are to pursue or follow, with a high degree of priority, things like peace, love, spiritual gifts, righteousness, godliness and holiness. In one case, "dioko" is used when referring to the following of a man. "And they shall say to you, See here; or, see

there; go not after them, nor follow them" (Luke 17:23). This "pursuing after a man" or "following a man" is obviously expressed in a negative way.

We are not to pursue after a man, but rather we are to pursue after godly traits.

2. IMITATE

The second type of "follow" comes from the Greek "mimeomai" (μιμεομαι) or "mimetes" (μιμητης) which means "to mimic" or "imitate" or an "imitator". This is the word Paul used in all the examples quoted near the beginning of this article: "Be ye **followers** of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1Cor 11:1). "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye **followers** of me" (1Cor 4:16). "Brethren, be **followers** together of me,..." (Phil 3:17). "And ye became **followers** of us and of the Lord,..." (1Thes. 1:6). "For yourselves know how ye ought to **follow** us:.... but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to **follow** us" (2Thes 3:7, 9).

In all of these examples, most other translations and versions render "follow" as "imitate" or "follow my example". For additional study on "follow" when it means "to imitate", examine these scriptures also: Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; Hebrews 6:12; 13:7; 1 Peter 3:13; and 3 John 11.

Paul did not want anyone to "follow him". In every case where Bible translations tell us to "follow" Paul, the Greek meaning is, "Follow my example or imitate me as I follow Christ's example and imitate him."

3. FOLLOW FROM BEHIND

The third type of "follow" comes from the Greek word "opiso" (οπισω) which means "to the back". This connotes getting behind or follow from behind. This can also mean, "to go off in order to follow one, to join one's party". "Opiso" is quite commonly translated as "walk after", "come after" or "go after" someone or something. This word fits the concept we have today of following someone in the corporate, political or military

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realm or even as children play "Follow the Leader". This would also describe the natural human tendency of wanting to follow as mentioned earlier in this article.

Here are some examples in scripture which use this Greek word: "But chiefly them that **walk after** the flesh in the lust of uncleanness,..." (2Pet 2:10). "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and **going after** strange flesh ..." (Jude 7). "For some are already **turned aside after** Satan" (1Tim 5:15). Gamaliel was reviewing some recent history to the council and said, "After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and **drew away** much people **after** him:..." (Acts 5:37). Paul, speaking to the elders of Ephesus, said, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to **draw away** disciples **after** them" (Acts 20:30). Jesus said, "Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: **go** ye not therefore **after** them" (Luke 21:8).

These are examples of following the leader, of joining the group or getting behind some leader or cause. This is a common human tendency whether it is for good or bad. Now, there should be a degree of this type of following regarding our following Christ. Christ told Simon and Andrew, "**Come ye after** me,..." (Mark 1:17). James and John responded to the same call and "**went after** him" (v. 20). Jesus also said, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and **come after** me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27).

It appears that this type of "following" is only appropriate when it is Jesus we are "following"!

4. Walk With Me

There is another aspect that is overwhelmingly emphasized in the scriptures which is the final and fourth type of "follow". It comes from the Greek word "akoloutheo" (ακολουθεω) which means "to be in the same way with, to accompany". This signifies a "come

with me" or "walk with me" approach. This is the most common type of the translated word "follow". Jesus Christ used this quite often when talking to his disciples and others: "*Jesus said unto him, **Follow** me; and let the dead bury their dead*" (Matt. 8:22). "*And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, **Follow** me. And he arose, and **followed** him*" (Matt. 9:9). "*And straightway they forsook their nets, and **followed** him*" (Mark 1:18). "*Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and **follow** me*" (Matt. 19:21). "*And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples **followed** him*" (Mark 6:1). "*If any man serve me, let him **follow** me,...*" (John 12:26).

Jesus was not asking for his disciples to just get behind him or the cause that he stood for as if to join his political party. He was desiring them to accompany him, to walk with him or to go in the same way as he was going. Jesus spoke of this same concept regarding his sheep. "*But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep **follow** him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not **follow**, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.... My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they **follow** me*" (John 10:2-5, 27).

Christ's true sheep recognize his voice and walk with him in the same way. We should be humble—no doubt of that—but we shouldn't just get behind him like dutiful little subjects. **We should walk with him and accompany him!**

We Need to "Follow" Jesus

In light of all this, Jesus makes a very powerful statement: "*Then said Jesus unto his disciples, 'If any man will **come after** (opiso) me, let him*

*deny himself, and take up his cross, and **follow** (akoloutheito) me'*" (Matt 16:24; cf. Mark 8:34; Luke 9:2). What Jesus said was that if you wanted to exhibit the common human tendency of joining a group or backing some cause and apply it to him, you would then need to do more than just join the group. You would need to deny yourself, take up your cross and walk with him in the same way - accompany him -walk with him, not behind him!

There is a degree of independence here. God does not want a bunch of mindless, following automatons in his Kingdom. He wants individual, thinking beings full of the character of God capable of deciding and discerning what is right and wrong. This is a powerful statement by Jesus Christ. He wants us to be with him at his side. We are brothers and co-heirs with Christ.

Follow a Man?

Many today, as they have in the past, exhort their followers to follow them as they go forward in some mission or crusade. They use many of the scriptures above as they gather their following and support. Many of these causes and works are noble, right and Biblical. With this being the case, and now that we understand more of what the Bible teaches regarding the concept of "follow," **how** should we "follow" these men in their causes?

It is very human to want to be a part of a group following certain ideals, concepts or causes. It's easy to let some leader be in the forefront making the decisions and taking the responsibility. All one has to do is "follow" or get behind the leader. This is not to say that this tendency is always bad. It is neither good nor bad. But it can be a weakness if we do this in our lives to avoid responsibility. The number of places in the Bible this concept is used is more often shown in a negative light rather than a positive one.

We have also seen that Paul never asked, told or commanded anyone to "follow" him. In the places Paul appears to be asking for that, we have seen that what he actually wants is for us to follow his example or imitate him.

Let's say you and I have been good friends for years and one day you read in the Bible that you are to keep the Sabbath day holy. The next time you see me, you show that to me. If I am convinced and do likewise, I will follow your example or imitate you. That does not mean that I am "following" you or "going after" you.

That's what Paul was saying when he said, "*Imitate me, even as I also imitate Christ*" (1Cor 11:1). Paul did not once ask for anyone to get behind him to follow him as he went about his agenda. He asked people to imitate the good examples of himself, other leaders and even anybody.

What Does It Mean to "Follow" Christ?

It's obvious that if we want to be a disciple of Christ, we do have to get behind him and follow him (Luke 14:27). But is that all that Jesus Christ wants? Does he want us to just get behind him and follow him as he goes about his agenda? Not at all! **The overwhelmingly emphasized aspect of following what Jesus wants us to do is for us to join him. He wants us to walk with him at his side and not behind him. He wants us to accompany him!** Each of us has to learn to take responsibility for ourselves and others in the church. We all have to take responsibility in learning and knowing what the Bible says. After all, it is the Bible that sets doctrine, not some man.

Two Serious Problems With "Following" A Man

Two very serious problems arise when people follow a man rather than understanding the proper aspect of following and implementing it correctly:

1. **"FOLLOWING" A MAN KEEPS ONE FROM DEVELOPING SPIRITUALLY.**

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul fought the negative effects of people wanting to just follow a man. Paul condemned this kind of activity. The church at Corinth was

split up into contentious little groups, each claiming to "follow" or "get behind" their particular leader whether it was Paul, Apollos or Peter. It was because of these contentions and splits that Paul said he could not talk to them of deep spiritual matters. He could only talk to them on a carnal level. They were mere babes in Christ and could only be fed with milk and not meat (1Cor 3:1-2).

For one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? —1Cor 3:14

What did Paul say regarding this behavior? "*For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?*" (1Cor 3:3-4, NKJV hereafter).

These people were following different leaders in the "get behind" sense. Paul said that kind of activity is *carnal!* After all, the natural, human tendency is carnal (Rom 8:7).

Paul attempted to straighten the church members out: "*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase*" (1Cor 3:5-7). "*Therefore let no one glory in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's*" (1Cor 3:21-23).

Paul made it perfectly clear that this human habit of "following" different men is nothing but carnal. He showed that he, Apollos, Peter and any other leader were just fellow workers, servants serving God's temple. It is God and Christ that we are to look to. If we focus on God and Christ, we will then, and only then, be able to leave the carnal behind and

move on to spiritual meat. Once those people got caught up in that behavior, they were no longer receptive to true spiritual meat. Acting carnally obviously affects your spirituality.

Following a man today is still carnal. The churches of God are all divided up into smaller groups. Many are contentious, each following their own particular man "as they follow Christ". What has that produced? It

has produced envy, strife and divisions among the different branches. This does not undo the good that has been done in all these groups (Christ said good things about congregations

with problems in Revelation 2 and 3).

But the good doesn't undo this problem. Are we, in today's advanced, modern church age, spiritual? All too often, **we are still carnal!** As we "follow" our own particular man, as we get behind him "as he follows Christ", we all still end up acting carnal. One aspect of this trap of carnality shows up this way: on one hand they say to themselves and others that they are following Christ and not the man—then on the other hand they will extol their leader for various reasons and put down most all of the other ones. This, in actuality, is following a man and not following Christ. Is this the way we are to act? Is this spiritual? **Paul emphatically calls it what it is: It is CARNAL!**

Another aspect of this trap of carnality shows up this way: people, after much inner turmoil, will finally face the fact that their current leader is very wrong and possibly corrupt. They take the big step of leaving the fellowship of this one group and join another group following another man. Many of these people then extol this new leader and, at the same time, refuse to look at the actions of this new leader with the same critical eyes. Again, they are now following a man and not following Christ. Is this spiritual? **Again, it is carnal!** We have got to stop following these men and put aside all these problems so that we may go on to spiritual things.

Continued on next page

Problem #1 that arises when men follow a man: People remain carnal and do not develop spiritually.

2. SIN DISTANCES US FROM GOD.

Adam and Eve demonstrated another big tendency of mankind when they were confronted by Satan and had a choice as to whom they would obey: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:6, 8). From that moment Adam and Eve wanted to hide themselves from God. They did not want to deal directly with God. They pushed him away.

When God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, what was their reaction to God speaking directly to them? "Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die'" (Ex. 20:18-19). The people there did not want to deal directly with God, either. **They preferred to follow the man Moses as he followed God!**

Samuel was judge over Israel and his sons were more interested in dishonest gain, bribes and perverted justice. "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, 'Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' So Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, 'Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they

have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them'" (1Sam. 8:4-7).

God then had Samuel tell the children of Israel all the evil things that would occur — all of the oppression — from **any** king they chose for themselves (1Sam 8:9-17). And then, God told them through Samuel the result of putting a man between themselves and God — the result of choosing themselves a king: "And you shall cry out in that day because of your king which you shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day" (1Sam 8:18).

But, like so many people in the turmoil of God's church today, the children of Israel wanted to "follow" a man: "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" (1Sam 8:19,20). How much like these people we are today! Many people don't think it's a "real" church, unless they have a "minister" to tell them what to do and to "fight our battles" for us.

Apparently, the children of Israel (as do many of us today) felt that they were still too close to God and wanted to conform completely to the world's way of doing things. They were much more comfortable following a man and submitting themselves to a man's government than taking the personal responsibility to follow God's way, submit to him and stay close to him.

Problem #2 arises when men follow a man: "Following" a man puts distance between us and God!

"Following" A Man Is Idolatry!

When a person follows a man (as a spiritual leader) he is putting that man between himself and God. He is in actuality replacing God in his heart. What usually comes with the leader is some form of government. That government becomes an important fixture in the organization. What does God say about this?

"Now some of the elders of Israel

came to me and sat before me. And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak to them, and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols.'"

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations. For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the LORD will answer him by Myself'" (Eze 14:1-7).

God severely criticizes people for setting up idols in their hearts. I'm sure that they did not think that they were setting up idols in their minds, as do many today, but that is what happens when you start following a man in place of God. It does not matter who it is whether it is Billy Graham, the Pope at Rome or Herbert W. Armstrong. By following a man, an idol is set up in the heart. That's why Paul or any other apostle never once told, suggested or even hinted that anyone follow them.

That's why Jesus overwhelmingly emphasized that we get away from this "follow" mentality and begin to walk with him and accompany him.

God's Work is Diverse

So, what is the proper approach that we in our different groups should take?

All of God's people are different

and we all view the Bible a bit differently from each other depending on our backgrounds, experiences and what we see in life. We all have the basics, the fundamental elementary principles of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2). We all understand that God's law is important. We all have a basic understanding of who and what God is. We also know that God's ultimate plan for man is indeed a wonderful and incredible plan. We also know that we, as members of Christ's body, have some kind of work to do today. We look into the Bible and see that it tells us to preach an Ezekiel Warning, to feed the flock, to go into the world and make disciples, or to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God till the end comes. But what happens? We each put an emphasis on different parts of the work depending on how we see it. We then align ourselves with others who see things the same way.

We, as a group, then think that how we see it is more important than the way other groups see it, even though they may all be Biblical. A competition begins to develop to gain support for a certain emphasis. The leaders begin to stress "follow me, as I follow Christ" as they collect their following. Other members then exercise their natural human tendency by joining a group that closely suits their particular way of seeing things and end up following some man. We now have a situation not unlike the Corinthian one. **Are we all spiritual? No, "for you are still carnal..."** (1Cor. 3:3).

"Follow Me" Tactics By The "Leaders"

The real shame in all this belongs to the leaders themselves! They encourage this kind of carnal behavior. Many of them stress an importance of following them and not the others. They compete for the brethren as if they were prizes to be won. They describe how their organization is better and in so doing they often put down other groups.

They often boast about growth while playing the numbers game. They end up keeping the brethren restricted

to milk, preventing them from going on to meat. They keep them on the carnal level instead of bringing them along to a more spiritual state. Occasionally there is a leader who does not worry about building an organization, who is not interested in power or position and who actually feeds spiritual meat to any who will listen. Such men are few and far between!

"... Become as Little Children"

Another angle occasionally used by some who are building their own following is the misapplying or twisting of this scripture: "*And Jesus called a little child to him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven'*" (Matt 18:2,3). It is often said about this passage, "You are to have the faith of a little child - the innocent, trusting faith that little children have. After all, you will need that to enter the kingdom of heaven."

But is that what the Bible says? "*Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 18:4). The childlike trait that we are to have is humility not faith! The faith a child has is a *blind* faith, not a Christ-like faith. This is an entirely separate subject, nonetheless, men who use this tactic are twisting scripture to make it seem to support their "follow-me" appetites.

What Should We Do?

Obviously, the first thing we should all do is to stop following men! We have seen that nowhere does the Bible command, encourage or even suggest that we follow any man. The only individual we are to follow is Jesus Christ.

Joseph Thayer defined our following Christ as, "to cleave steadfastly to one, conform wholly to his example, in living and if need be in dying also." "*And he who does not take his cross and follow (akolouthei) after (opiso) me is not worthy of me*" (Matt 10:38; cf. 16:24; John 12:26, 21:22). Jesus

used both Greek words here. **No-where** are we told to give this kind of allegiance to a man! Christ said that we are all brethren (Matt. 23:8). We have to realize that we are all a part of the body of Christ. We must also realize that the work of God is diverse. If it's in the Bible, it is of God. All of these different aspects are important.

God does not tell us which is more important than the other. He does not prioritize one aspect over another. So, who are we to say which aspect is definitely the most important? Most will say the aspect they focus on is the most important and will back up their position with some form of Biblical reasoning. There is nothing wrong with doing what you understand to be best. We all have to prioritize things in our lives. However, to say we understand God's will for everyone else is extremely presumptuous. It is not our position to criticize or condemn someone else's priorities if it is also Biblical. In this context, we must remember that God sets the members in the body as it pleases him (1Cor 12:18).

Secondly, if you find a group that is following the Bible, and you agree with the emphasis they place on doing God's work, then support it with your time, service, prayers, tithes and offerings. But don't follow the man or the group. Imitate any good examples that you see. Pursue righteousness. Be involved and work with the group. Do not be afraid to support other works if they are also doing a work of God. Walk with Christ.

Thirdly, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12). Take control of your life. Fight against the tendency to just sit back and let others make decisions and take responsibility for you.

We all have to stop being carnal and begin being spiritual. We have to go on to perfection, moving on from spiritual milk to spiritual meat. Let's do this as we all pitch in to do God's work. There is so much to do and so little time in which to do it!

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If this rhyme... is not on time... drop us a line.

A few of our stickered or stapled newsletters have come apart in the mail. Since our package is nearly an ounce heavier this time, we are sending it bulk mail. This method is much cheaper, but will probably result in slower delivery. If you receive this mailing after August 11, please let us know.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many people as want it at the lowest practical cost. We are still giving you the choice of using a 3-ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip. So...

Please do find ... a way to bind ... if you don't mind.

"Letters & Responses", from page 15 point out that their position on 18 truths and their form of government are, at this time, somewhat contradictory. They will certainly straighten it out in time. While God is not the author of division, He certainly allows it both in the world (obvious) and in His congregation (1Cor 11:18-19, Rev 2 & 3).

LETTER: Well, enough ramblings. The main point that I am trying to make is that I will not belong to any church that claims they are "one of the ones" and then criticize, condemn and judge others. Nor will I allow any material in my house that will be used to support and uphold anyone who does. So, I guess, at this point, and until "Servants' News" and its writers quit condemning and criticizing others who are trying to live God's way of life, regardless of the corporate name, I no longer wish to receive it. Please take me off your mailing list. However, if you do start publishing anything that is positive

and reflective on what God's attitude is and how He wants us all to be, I would be happy to start receiving it again.

Sincerely,

—B. R., Albuquerque, NM

RESPONSE: Again, it was not our purpose to condemn UCG or any other organization striving to obey the Eternal, but to help people through the difficulties they are facing. Our writing was too critical of UCG and we are sorry for this mistake. Please notice that we did end the article with a paragraph of praise for UCG and then used a column and a half to let readers know where they could attend UCG. We use your same standards of non-condemnation for evaluating where we attend locally. We have found some organizations rather condemning at headquarters but forgiving at the local level. We also found rather intolerant local leaders in organizations that are officially tolerant. We believe this present crisis has been so stressful because members assumed that once they

"proved" that a certain organization was "the true Church," they could assume that God always worked through a top-down government (the corporate structure) and could always assume that they were being taught truth, both from headquarters and locally. We do not believe the solution to this problem is to carry that old "human government is always right" attitude into a new corporation. Hence, we were encouraging readers to "try the spirits" of their local leaders.

We very much appreciate your heartfelt letter and your striving to make sense out of the difficulty that most of us are going through. We can grow from questions and correction like this. We did remove your name from our mailing list, but we put you back on since we hope this next issue is "positive and reflective on what God's attitude is and how He wants us all to be." Please let us know whether you want to continue to receive it!

—Norman S. Edwards ☐

Literature List

Friends of the Brethren is making a wide range of literature available from a variety of sources. We have received many items and are still reading, editing, formatting and printing them. We have been so busy sending existing literature and reading new literature that our Literature List has grown only slightly. Please be patient!

We accept literature that does not attack individuals and organizations, does not hold up one group as superior to all others, and contains no obvious Biblical or logical errors. Please write or call about your ideas.

The Apple of God's Eye by Jim Rector, 13 pages. God's love for us is far greater than we imagine and we often take it for granted.

Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

A Call to Arms by Jim Rector, 16 pages. Valuable lessons we can learn *for today* from Revelation 2 and 3.

Does the New Covenant Do Away with the Letter of the Law? by Eric V. Snow. 32 pages. A "must read" for those that feel it does.

Did Christ Reorganize the Church? by Herbert W. Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.

Friends of the Brethren Statement of Income and Expenses, 2 pages. (Automatically sent to contributors)

God's Purpose for Your Life by Fred McGovarin, 40 pages, half-size booklet. A "first booklet" for people just becoming interested in the Truth. It introduces Hebrew names (Yahweh and Yashua) for God and Jesus.

The Heart of the Matter by Jim Rector, 31 pages. Our calling is to spiritual growth, not just attendance, socializing, politeness or legalism.

How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman Edwards, 34 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

Just What Does the New Covenant Do? by Joseph Chunko, 18 pages. Explanation of the difference between the law, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles by Allen Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of church history.

We want to send this newsletter only to people that want it! If you are not interested, please send us a postcard or give us a call: 501-872-1003, fax: 501-872-1004, eMail: 75260,1603@Compuserve.com