

# Servants' NEWS

Vol. 6, No. 4 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be Jul/Aug 2000

## Working with "Other Groups": How Do We Do It?

As the Church of God groups continue to break up into smaller and smaller units, the question "How do I relate to other groups?" becomes more and more important. For most young singles in the Church of God groups, that question defines their future.

Many long-time Church of God brethren remember either themselves or their children growing up in a local church of a few hundred people where there just seemed to be nobody suitable to marry. There may have been some others who were technically the right age and sex, but just not compatible or interested in each other. The hope was that young people would marry someone from their group—meeting them either at a multi-congregation activity, a Feast of Tabernacles or possibly at the Worldwide Church of God's Ambassador College.

Today there are many small groups, and most are made up of predominantly older people. Young people can sometimes honestly say, "I have met everyone near my age in my church group, there are

only a few that would make good friends and none that I think I could marry." For them, the need to associate with "other groups" seems clear and obvious.

But even if friends and marriage are not a concern to us, how we work with other groups usually becomes an instant question when a new person considers attending our fellowship. Anyone who is thinking about attending your group will obviously be trying to answer questions like "What group(s) does God want me to attend?" Claiming "this is the only true church you need to know about" simply does not work when there are so many similar Sabbatarian groups.

### We Have Always Worked With Many Groups

While some people may still long for the "good old days" when the centrally-controlled Worldwide Church of God did not have to work with any other groups, the truth is that we have always worked with

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## Feast Summaries Next Issue

We will publish Feast of Tabernacles summaries (including our own) in the next issue. Please send them to *Servants' News*, P.O. Box 107, Perry, Michigan, 48872-0107; e-mail info@servantsnews.com

The *Churches of God Newsletter* also intends to publish Feast summaries sent to them. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter or sending a summary, write to *Churches of God Newsletter*, P.O. Box 30272, Winston-Salem, NC 27130-0272; e-mail: rbeltz@mindspring.com or remj4@juno.com

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## Please Return Survey

I hope everyone will fill out and return at least the top portion of their survey (attached on separate sheet to this issue of *Servants' News*). If you would like to thoughtfully and prayerfully complete the middle section, we will use it in determining our future direction.

If you are already serving brethren in some way, or if you would like to do so more, I hope you will fill out the bottom section. I would expect that it would not result in well less than an hour of work per week.

People listed in this directory do not work for or represent *Servants' News* in any way. No one should view this directory as a chance to begin promoting their ideas to others, but as a chance to help others in the way that they want to be helped.

# Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.  
#54-57



*The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series*

**July 23, 2000**

The last time I went to the truck stop (two weeks ago), I wrote about a missed opportunity when the trucker mentioned how he and his wife were firm believers in the law of God. Well, this week was a time to reclaim that opportunity, as the same truck driver returned, and this time brought his wife.

I told her that I appreciated meeting her, as her husband spoke very highly of her and that she was someone I sincerely wanted to meet. Indeed, she is a bright, articulate lady who knows her Bible and is firm in her convictions.

I began by saying that our discussion of two weeks previous got me thinking about God's law, and that the materials I had planned for today related to that. It was indeed good that they were there. We began by reading a large section of James 2, which calls it a "royal law". In addition we read how faith and law work together, and I asked how this could be. We also discussed how Abraham's faith "wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect". We see in this chapter that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (v 24).

So how does one explain this in the context of salvation by grace?

We discussed how in the new covenant the law is internalized (Hebrews 8) by being "written on our hearts". Instead of it being an external thing imposed from without, it is something by which the love of God manifests itself. If we have love in our hearts, we won't even have to think about telling the truth, or refraining from stealing, or killing. Instead we will be willing to give (instead of steal), save lives (instead of take them), speak the truth in love (instead of obfuscating and lying), etc. So if you show me your faith apart from your works, I will show you my faith by my works (James 2:18).

Faith is doing what God says and trusting that everything will turn out okay, even though it might not appear so at the time. James uses the illustration of Abraham, who obeyed God even though what God told him to do made no sense to Abraham at the time. Abraham had the faith to know that God knew what he was talking about. Often it is that way with us when we look at God's laws.

As we discussed these issues, I decided to go out on the limb and ask them why most of Christianity these days, while outwardly professing a belief in the Ten Commandments, refuses to keep the fourth one. The lady replied, "Well, you tell us." I indicated that I wanted their opinion on it. The answer told me that they view Sunday as the New Testament substitute for the seventh day Sabbath. In any case, it is obvious that they see the benefit in a day

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Vol. 6, No. 4

Jul/Aug 2000

*Servants' News* is one of many ministries of the spiritual Church of God. We believe that the Bible contains the foundation of knowledge about our Creator and that He is actively working through people today. Our focus is to help and teach Sabbath-keeping brethren who believe Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah, but we realize that the Eternal works with many groups and individuals.

We believe the gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. *Servants' News* has nothing to sell and has no financial ties with other groups, but is supported by those who personally decide to help this ministry. We do not have IRS tax exempt status, but church groups are exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, p. 16, col. 1).

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**Notice:** *The people listed above do not necessarily endorse every article in this newsletter.*

*Servants' News* accepts articles for publication. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope for items that you want returned. We are happy to print corrections for any significant errors. Address articles, letters, and subscription, literature or change of address requests to:

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**Circulation from USA: 2210; Intl.: 250; e-mail: 10**

*Servants' News* is published bimonthly (six times per year). Subscriptions are free to people who request the publication and are genuinely interested in it. *Servants' News* is published by Norman S. Edwards (3690 Bath Rd, Perry, Michigan—this is not a mailing address). He reserves the right to refuse subscriptions for any reason. Periodical postage paid at Perry, Michigan (USPS 016-995, ISSN 1522-0621). Postmaster: send address changes to *Servants' News*, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107.



# News from Local Congregations



This column includes information sent to us from a variety of groups. *Servants' News* does not necessarily agree with the teachings or practices of these groups. Please ask about them before attending their functions.

## Lansing, Michigan Services

The Church of God Fellowship meets each Sabbath at 12 noon for singing and 1 p.m.–2:30 p.m. for a service, with a finger-food potluck to follow.

We meet in the Chapel Hill United Methodist Church building, 7501 Coleman Rd, East Lansing, Michigan. It is very close to I-69: Take exit 94 (there is only one way to go) and turn right at the second traffic light, which will be Marsh Rd. Go up the hill one block and Marsh Rd ends into Coleman Rd and the building is right in front of you.

About 40 people attend the services—families sign up to be in charge of the service for each Sabbath. Format varies somewhat based on who is hosting, but interaction is always encouraged. This fellowship is not sponsored or managed by *Servants' News*, some of the brethren do help with the publication. Several *Servants' News* subscribers have been in the area, but were not able to find information about the service, so we have published it. For more information call 517-339-8530.

— Norman Edwards

## Kansas City Youth Retreat

The fifth annual Youth Retreat for teens and young adults will be held in Kansas City December 28-31 at the Salvation Army Camp. The cost will be only \$25 and will include lots of fun activities such as volleyball, basketball, game room, laser tag, arts and crafts, a photo scavenger hunt and a dance. People from all groups are invited. Please contact Laurinda Armer for an application at shemp@swbell.net or write her at 6900 Lakeshore Dr., Raytown, MO 64133. To phone for an application,

call Paula Frazee at 816-461-3252.

— Paula Frazee

## West Tennessee Meeting

On July 29, 2000 the scattered brethren in West Tennessee held a "Fifth Sabbath" in Lexington, Tennessee. Over 60 brethren from most of the Sabbath-keeping fellowships in our end of the state came together to worship God and share fellowship with one another. Everyone that this writer talked to had a good spirit of brotherly love. How good and pleasant it is to see brethren dwell together in unity! The speakers were: Ray Bankston of the Last Ages Church of God; Bill Allen of the Church of God, Bethel; and Ray Wooten of United Christian Ministries. We had a potluck afterwards. It was wonderful to see so many brethren from differing fellowships, with differing beliefs all gathered together and just being brethren.

We call it a "Fifth Sabbath" because we are going to meet every month with a fifth Sabbath. We already have plans and speakers for September and December 2000. Our Featured speaker for September 30 is Rick Eckert; the Featured Speaker for December 30 is Norman Edwards. We hope to see you there. Everyone is welcome. For more information, call 901-427-8099.

## Court Rules Against PCG Publishing HWA Book

The Ninth U.S. Court of Appeals ruled against the Philadelphia Church of God, blocking their further publication of *Mystery of the Ages*. The vote was 2 to 1. The majority opinion was essentially that the copyright belonged to the WCG and they could do what they want with the book until it expires.

The minority opinion was that

## Send Us Your News!

Believe it or not, publication editors are not people who automatically "know what's going on". The only way we know about significant events is by somebody telling us, by reading a publication or by asking various groups what they are planning. We simply do not have time to contact numerous groups before each issue to get their current news. We receive a lot of publications, but cannot read all of them. Many groups do not have a publication.

The most effective way for us to provide timely news is for you to send an announcement 2 to 3 months before a special event takes place, or send a report a week or so after it occurs. Thank you very much for your help. ☐

*Mystery of the Ages* is an integral part of the PCG's religion and the WCG is simply trying to suppress doctrine in which they no longer believe. The latter is quite true as the WCG stated that they do not want to sell the copyright, but would consider making the books available on a cost-per-each basis.

They also considered annotating the book—adding parts showing where they believe it is in error. Either one of these two things could render the book useless to those who hope to teach from it. The cost could be made prohibitively high at any time, and the annotations of errors would be unacceptable if one were trying to portray the book as "all truth".

If the WCG really had a conscience about the "errors" that they believe are in *Mystery of the Ages*, one would think that their first priority would be to publish something correcting those errors.

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# Churches of God Conference 2000

The Churches of God Conference took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, July 28-30. The event was very well organized and delightful to attend. The schedule was sensible and followed closely enough to be convenient, but not so Pharisaically that we felt "herded". The meals and room arrangements were very pleasing.

The basic plan was to solicit proposals for preaching the Gospel on Friday evening, to discuss each of the proposals in detail on Saturday, and then to plan a course of definite action on Sunday. Each day was begun with a presentation—a short sermon—by a long-time Worldwide Church of God minister: C. Wayne Cole, David Antion and Ken Westby.

Also, a quite different and very interesting slide presentation was given by Ron Willhoite and Maynard Kappel entitled *Nations of the Earth and the Word of God*. These men gave a lot of technical information on the growth of the world population and the languages that are spoken. Of the 6 billion people on earth, only about one billion claim to be Christian. About 90% of the people in the world could get a Bible in a language they understand (though many of them cannot read). There is clearly a lot of work that could be done. Another aspect of the presentation focused on DNA research—showing that many scientists agree that the entire human race has descended from just one original woman. They further stated that there is more DNA variation **within** the three main races than there is **between** the races. While these gentlemen did not make this point, they reported powerful scientific evidence against the "serpent's seed" doctrine which is too often found among British-Israelite groups and claims that there are two different man-like races on earth, only one of which can be saved.

The conference was attended primarily by former Church of God members. There were about 150 people present on Friday and 250 for Sabbath services. The organization most represented was the Church of God Outreach Ministries which is largely

led by Lawrence Gregory, the organizer of this conference. But there were also men from the Church of God, Seventh Day, the Seventh Day Adventists, Messianic Jewish groups, various Church of God groups, and non-aligned groups. None from the UCG-IA or LCG came. One comment made by several was that "this is an older group." The majority were in their 60s and 70s.

## What Happened at the Conference

The purpose of the conference was to plan a way whereby the many Church of God groups could work together to preach the Gospel. But the first man I met at the conference said, "I don't expect some big new program to come out of this conference; I'm just here to meet old friends and to encourage the brethren."

The conference indeed served several functions. There is no doubt that it **reunited a great many friends** who had not seen each other in ten or twenty years. It also gave opportunity for many **brethren to meet many others** for the first time. It was nice to see some **apologies for hurts of the past**. Raymond Cole apologized for carrying out his WCG responsibility of going to Ken Westby's house, dis-fellowshipping him, and driving away in his lease car. Someone else apologized to the Church of God Seventh day brethren for calling them "Sardis" and "dead" for all of these years.

Many different local evangelism ideas were discussed. Louis Williams, a blind man, has a public access TV program in the Washington DC area which costs only \$25 per year. Arlo Gieselman spoke about his Truckers Bible Studies and passing out literature at a fair booth representing the Bible Sabbath Association. David Kenders talked about a 6-point program based upon Matthew 25:35-40: feed the hungry, water the thirsty, house the homeless, cloth the naked, visit the sick, visit the prisoners. Alfred Harrell and Manny Molinar spoke of the college that they were forming to train people to preach the Gospel. A number of groups dis-

played their evangelistic literature.

## Doing a Big Work

Many of the suggestions were far from local. Barnabas Grayson suggested a full page ad outlining the Gospel in a major newspaper like USA Today. Jeff Henderson suggested producing a web site, but said that it would have to be backed up with traditional media, print, radio etc.

Lawrence Gregory suggested TV programs aired via satellite. An entire continent can be covered for about \$500 per program. That would cost

## Representatives at Conference

[Provided by Lawrence Gregory]

Akers, Danny	Hinds, Chipper
Akins, John	Huizar, Peter
Andrews, Steven	Hulet, Arthur
Antion, Dave	Jacobi, Leonard
Arbogast, Darl	Justus, Tom
Barr, Chris	Keim, Marvin
Booth, Jeff	Kenders, David
Brown, Errol	Knight, Alan
Burchfield, Lawrence	Kurr, Ray
Burlison, Allan	Lamb, Eugene
Butrick, Hugh	Luecke, Bill
Cafourek, Dan	Marang, Frank
Cartwright, Dixon	Marlow, Robert
Chapman, Benjamin	McBride, James
Clement, Harold	McCulley, Carmon
Cole, Wayne	McLendon, Charles
Cruz, Julian	Miller, Don
Davis, Brian	Mitchell, Royce
Davis, Sidney	Molinar, Manny
Davis, Lee	Moody, Edward
Deakins, Donald	Porter, Fred
Dennis, Pat	Post, Terry
Dodson, Floyd	Reis, Rory
Edwards, Norman	Ruth, Alan
Faith, Bill	Simpson, Bob
Foland, Cosden	Smith, Mitchell
Fowler, William	Solinsky, Herb
Gieselmann, Arlo	Throgmorton, James
Gregory, Lawrence	Trescott, John
Harrell, Alfred	Ussery, James
Henderson, Jeff	Waller, Joe
Hicks, William C.	Westby, Ken
	Williams, Louis

\$25,000 per year for a weekly program—\$125,000 per year to cover the entire world. But viewers would need to have satellite hardware and need to find the right channel at the right time. Local congregations could pay to have local TV stations capture the signal and air the program locally. There was no definite plan for who would make the programs or what message they would preach. Mr. Gregory at one point suggested that some of the local ministers' sermons might be aired.

Other evangelism plans were suggested, but most of the people agreed that a smaller committee would have to be selected to evaluate specifics and determine exactly what was possible. The people attending agreed that an organization could be formed along the lines of the Bible Sabbath Association: dues-paying members would elect a board, but there would

be no management salaries. All of that work would be done by volunteers. When Mr. Gregory asked for hands as to whom wanted to form a temporary board to organize this project, he (and many others) seemed a bit shocked that none of the long-time "high-ranking" ministers raised their hands. After a bit of pleading, one of them said "We don't have much time, we have to work for a living, too, now."

Finally, someone suggested that since Lawrence Gregory was the primary motivating force behind the conference, that he choose a board after the conference was over. Nearly everyone at the conference agreed to this idea. The group also agreed, after some talking, on a name and a mission statement: *The purpose of the Churches of God Evangelistic Association is to facilitate the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and make disciples of all nations.*

Protests were raised that this name sounds too much like David J. Smith's cult-like organization, and that the name "Church of God" ties in our rather difficult past, but no change was made.

### Cart Before the Horse

Both myself and others at the conference clearly stated that any preaching of the gospel should be based around people who appear to have gifts from God in certain areas, not around money, technology and organization. Nevertheless, this latter approach seemed to prevail.

The temporary board that was chosen after the meeting consisted of Lawrence Gregory, president, Alfred Harrell, vice-president, Royce Mitchell, secretary-treasurer and Allan Burlison, parliamentarian. An advisory board was also formed consisting of David Antion, C. Wayne Cole, George Crow, William Hicks, Arthur Hulet, James McBride and Kenneth Westby. In order to avoid confusion, the name was changed to *The Evangelistic Association of the Churches of God* (PO Box 691499, Tulsa, OK 74169-1499). Two progress letters have been mailed, you may write the address above to be put on the mailing list.

The last letter listed three things necessary to preach the gospel: God's favor, money and workers. It is easy to find the first and third items in the scriptures, but not the second. As it is, over \$1600 had been collected, some of which will be used for an evangelistic campaign in San Antonio, coordinated by Julian Cruz and Alfred Harrell. The mega-plans to preach the Gospel to the world are being delayed a bit to help some people who already have a track record of success. That seems like a good idea.

Without spending a cent, some local evangelism was actually occurring at the conference. Wonderful Sabbath music was provided by a multi-CoG-group choir directed by Ray Kurr. One of the singers had no previous Sabbatarian experience, but jumped at a chance to sing with a traveling group. Now, she is interested in learning more about what those in the choir believe.

For much more conference information, ask for the Aug 31 issue of *The Journal*, \$22/year, PO Box 1020, Big Sandy, TX 75755. ☐

— Norman Edwards

## "Unless the Lord Builds a House..."

(Psalm 127:1)

The following are my notes for a brief presentation I planned to make at the Tulsa conference. Since all of these points were made by different people throughout the conference, I saw no need to present them all again. Nevertheless, the "results" of the conference differed greatly from these suggestions.

— Norman Edwards

1) "And **He Himself** gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11) We must realize that any evangelism we do should be what Christ is doing in us. Use a Christ-centered approach rather than a money-centered approach. Find someone who is successfully preaching, teaching or writing in a small way—someone who apparently has a gift from Christ—and help them to do it bigger or better. Do **not** collect a bunch of money, decide on a program (magazine, TV, radio, etc) then find someone to pay to produce it. This latter method will almost always appear to work and produce some kind of result—whether God is directing it or not.

2) The evangelism of the WCG became more like a marketing arm to perpetuate that group than it was a tool in the hands of Christ. I worked for the computer department there from 1977 to 1992. The cost to obtain a new subscriber, co-worker or member was a major factor in determining which kinds of evangelism were further promoted. There was little effort to determine whether these new people had a sound commitment to God and the Bible, or whether they were there to escape the tribulation, be on "God's good side", to join a nice conservative group that lets members drink alcohol, or for some other reason. When the WCG (and the CGI) broke up, it was obvious that members had come there for many different reasons, because they left to go many different places.

3) Any evangelism approach must embrace the many Sabbath- and Holy-Day-keeping groups in existence today. The days of saying "we are the one true Church of God" or even "we are the main church God is using" **are over**. The large number of Sabbatarian groups, plus the availability of information over the internet, virtually assures that new potential converts will be exposed to more than one group. If these new people know John 13:35, but see Sabbatarian groups that fight over minor issues, they may well give up on all Sabbatarian religion. ♦

**Working with "Other Groups"  
from page 1**

them. Yes, we worked with lots of Sunday-keeping Christians. But we only worked with them when the leadership told us it was O.K. to work with them. How did the WCG work with them?

We used their Bible translations. The King James Bible was the work of Sunday-keeping English churchmen. The WCG regularly admitted that there were some errors in translation and pointed them out in their literature. But the WCG never produced its own translation or even a comprehensive guide to what it considered KJV translation errors. (Other groups claiming to be the "one true Church" do produce their own Bible translation.) We also used the Moffatt and many other translations by Sunday-keepers. All these different translations represent the linguistic, historical and theological opinions of the translators regarding what the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures say. None were in the WCG and almost none were Sabbatarians. Even though many early Bible translators were put to death for making the scriptures available to the English-speaking world, the WCG classified them all as non-Christians. But we still read their work, because our leadership said it was O.K.

We used their Bible commentaries. WCG ministers occasionally acknowledged that they used Bible Commentaries to gain understanding of some scriptures. Works by Adam Clarke, Bullinger, JFB, Halley, and Scofield were often mentioned by name. The use of such commentaries was not confined to historical and technical data, but spiritual lessons and prophetic interpretation brought out in these commentaries made their way into WCG sermons and literature. WCG members were neither forbidden nor greatly encouraged to read these commentaries, but were generally warned that they were a mixture of truth and error. Since the commentators mentioned here were already dead, there was little chance that members would try to "follow" them. So some of us learned from these com-

mentaries by Sunday-keepers because our leadership said it was O.K.

We used some of their teachings. Past issues of *Servants' News* have shown how the WCG's teaching on British Israelism (Britain and USA being the lost tribes of Israel), *Has Time Been Lost?*, the goats of the Day of Atonement were borrowed (in some places word for word) from teachers in other groups. Often, the leadership pretended that these were original

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**The King James Bible was the work of Sunday-keeping English churchmen. The WCG regularly admitted that there were some errors in translation... but never produced its own translation or even a comprehensive guide to what it considered KJV translation errors**

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teachings, and highly discouraged members from even thinking about reading the works of other religious groups. But when pressed, WCG ministers would usually admit that some WCG doctrines came from other sources and assured us it was all "of God"—because our leadership said it was O.K.

We used their hymns to praise God. The Bible commands us to sing praises to God in many places, but the words and music sung in the WCG were almost all written by people that the WCG would classify as unbelievers. Many WCG members do not realize that Dwight Armstrong, who compiled most of the WCG's most-frequently-used hymnal, was a Sunday-keeper. While the words in that hymnal are usually paraphrased from the Psalms, he either composed the music or borrowed it from other Sunday-keepers. This staid music was not particularly inspiring to most people and seemed far away from the "leaping and dancing" that David did to praise God (2Sam 6:16). "Special music" at WCG services was frequently much more inspiring, but it was nearly always written by non-WCG composers.

When one reads about the circum-

stances surrounding the composition of some of the great Christian music, one reads about people who lost everything to do what was right, people who gave their lives for others, people who believe they had visions from God, etc. It was a very contradictory position to be inspired by such music in WCG services, yet believe its composers were unconverted and had no real experience with God.

Even though there were many skilled composers within the WCG, no effort was ever made to collect and distribute their music to the congregations so we all could praise God with songs all written by "believers." We continued to sing and hear songs from those outside our group, even with a bit of doctrinal error on some occasions, because the songs were inspiring and because our leadership said it was O.K.

**Difference Between Writings and Real People**

There is a difference between using the writings of "other groups" and working with real live people in another group. The WCG virtually never invited a religious teacher from another group to speak in one of their services. Writings are much easier to control. Leaders can "approve" certain writings or certain sections of writings. If some approved written work raises too many questions among members, leaders can study it and write arguments against it, or even "ban" it from the membership. But when one directly fellowships with people in other groups, there is no way to know in advance what they may say or what kind of questions they will ask.

But there is no need to deal in fear.

The principles of dealing with "other groups' writings" and the principles for dealing with "other groups" are similar. We have used these principles for many years, probably without thinking much about them, can continue to use them to help us in the future as we actually meet with other groups of real people. The processes that formerly took place over hours or days may now need to take place in minutes, but they are still much the same.

For example: years ago, a WCG-

member may have been considering which new Bible translation to buy, which commentary to buy or which piece of special music to select for services. The same process that he used can be applied today when we visit a new group or hear a new teaching that we have never heard before:

1. "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (Prov 18:13). One needs to actually read some of a Bible translation, commentary or special music piece before dismissing it as unsuitable. Similarly, one needs to understand the teachings of other groups before dismissing them as unsuitable. This does not mean that a person needs to read all of a Bible translation before they accept it or know every doctrine of a group before they work together—that would take too long. But one needs to read enough to understand it.

2. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Tim 3:16). All teachings (written or oral) should be compared to the Bible.

3. "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1Jn 5:14). "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13).

Prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to impart truth have always been available. A believer may pray for God's will before going to a store to select a commentary or a piece of music. When a believer is hearing a different teaching, they can silently pray for understanding and the wisdom to respond.

4. "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov 15:22—see also Heb 5:11-14).

Not all Bible questions have a simple answer. Which verses are literal and which are symbolic? If we just sinned with our hand, should we cut it

## "Church of God" Groups Stuck With Reputation?

**G**arner Ted Armstrong still continues to hold "campaigns" in major cities where he will speak for one or more nights in a local hall. Local news media frequently write a story on these meetings, but they are more often covered as a historic oddity rather than as a serious message. The size and sins or the WCG's past work are covered in as much detail as the words of the campaign. One example is the following article reprinted from the **September 14, 2000 Toronto Star**.

I will be the first to admit that this writer was more interested in entertaining the reader than he was in giving a balanced view of the facts of the meeting. Nevertheless, others who attended the meeting agreed with the important facts: few attended, and the message seems largely like a combination of sayings and stories from many years gone by. The interest was not great. The long range effect of what is happening is clear: GTA's message was heard by 67 new people, but the story about the problems of the past went to over a million Canadian homes, and was probably read by tens of thousands. In other words, for each campaign GTA holds, a larger segment of the population becomes biased against "Church of God" religion.

If all of this were based on lies, I could pray to the Eternal and ask Him to "take vengeance upon these evil newspaper people for printing lies about God's church". But I can't pray that way—because I think a lot of the problems mentioned in these articles are true.

Other Church of God groups still have this media problem, though to a lesser degree if they do not regularly reference Herbert Armstrong in their teachings. Nevertheless, neither the public nor the press always distinguish between the various Church of God groups. I can remember meeting someone once who said they attended the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church. I thought that "Creation" might just be a local name of a congregation and that this person was part of the major Seventh Day Adventist group. Not so! This is a completely

separate group that is rejected by the main denomination. Also, the "Creation SDA" has some new truth (they keep the Holy Days) and has rejected some of the error of the old group. But to me, at the time (and maybe to you), they just seemed like so many Seventh Day Adventists. **Please realize, that to the rest of the world, the Worldwide, Living, United, Universal, Intercontinental, etc. "Church of God" groups all seem about the same**—especially when they proclaim the same history and nearly identical teaching.

Please read the *Toronto Star* article below and please finish the main article (beginning page 1) if you have not already done so. I am not saying that God cannot raise up the Church of God groups and do a work, but it appears that He is not doing so. There are many other religious movements that have surged and done great works at some time, only to later break up and become ineffective. Sometimes, we can find individual congregations that will hold fast to the beliefs and methods of the group that did a great work 50, 100, or more years ago. I had a friend who visited a church of over 50 people where all but one of them were related by marriage—they had done a great job of holding onto their name and doctrines and keeping some of their children "in the fold" over the years, but were having almost no impact on the outside world. Is this what Christ commanded?

### The Voice of God (maybe) Garners 67 Followers

*Toronto Star—Sept 14, 2000*

NO OTHER VOICE was more immediately recognized "in"—as the man who introduced Garner Ted Armstrong put it—"the old days." Not Edgar Bergen's or Charlie McCarthy's (or Mortimer Snerd's). Not Jack Benny's. Not Churchill's. But none of theirs sounded like it might be the voice God would use when He spoke to His people. With Garner Ted's, you couldn't help but think: maybe.

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**"Stuck With Reputation?"**  
**Toronto Star Article**  
*from page 7*

Providing God was an American, and providing life was a western movie, things enough people accepted to make it a paying proposition.

And didn't he rumble?

But then, Garner Ted wasn't some common evangelist offering to save your soul in return for a donation to the address on the screen. He was a prophet, and before prophecy became the exclusive territory of the supermarket tabloids, attention was paid.

Not even God could get more exposure: 360 radio stations, 165 TV stations. And nobody else, not even God, could call their show *The Plain Truth About The World Tomorrow* and not get laughed off the air.

The plain truth was that Satan had you in his bombsight. The prophecy was "boom!"

There was the glossy magazine, there was Ambassador College, there was the Gulfstream II jet bearing the son of the founder of the Worldwide Church of God.

There was the fall. The legend of the founder and the church elders hastening to Penticton, B.C., to have a word with Garner Ted when he landed. Garner Ted sent away—vanishing! Into the wilderness. And the stewardess being reassigned, under a new name, to the church's work in New Zealand.

There was the cash flow collapse. Garner Ted was the star attraction. Income collapsed. So he was hauled back! He returned! After six mysterious months. No questions asked (actually, plenty were, but no answers were given unless you count his father saying Garner Ted had been "in the bonds of Satan").

A little prodigality always wears well; Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggert just didn't understand the meaning of "a little". And things took off again. Sort of.

There were schisms. Heresies flourished. Biblical prophecy couldn't compete in the special effects department with *Star Wars*. Garner Ted and his father were pushed aside (his romantic nature made even the most Christian

bean-counter twitchy). Nothing that is of this world lasts forever.

Fade to forgotten.

"For those of you who have lost track of Garner Ted Armstrong." The pitch in the flyers. And for those who had, good news: He was coming!

And for those who hung close to hear the first words uttered by the voice that had electrified the fundamentals of our being when everyone on Earth knew what the "brink" was, and how close we were to it, we heard a whispered murmur to his wife as he looked around the suburban hotel ballroom. "Pretty light," he said.

Increasing the volume, he expounded on the "Pretty light" theme to a nervous-looking acquaintance. "They handed out 10,000 flyers, the group here locally. They thought maybe 400 might show up."

And finally, in amplified flight, to the assembled. "They handed out 10,000 flyers expecting maybe 800 would show up. I told them, 'Oh, no. I'd be very happy if 150 came out.'"

But 150 didn't. Only 67 did. Leaving, very unhappily for Garner Ted, 205 seats arranged in tidy rows as empty as could be.

And time must have got extremely warped, or something, because it was hard to escape the feeling that if 10,000 flyers were directed to "those of you who have lost track of Maj. Douglas," the crowd that turned out to hear him refresh our memories about Social Credit, and run through the A plus B theorem, would probably be about this size, and look pretty much as distracted as this one.

Except there would probably be a lot more, because rising from the grave is likely to be good box office, and Maj. Douglas shuffled off in 1952.

All Garner Ted could offer by way of distinction was that "as my dad once said to all of us assembled, 'I'm not dead yet.'"

I watched to see what kind of reaction this drew from the man sitting in front of me. He took off his glasses and tied another couple of knots in the elastic band that was tied to the ends of the earpieces and went around the back of his head to keep them from falling off.

That was the extent of it. 📖

off? (Mark 9:43). If neither our Bible reading nor our prayer gives us an answer to a question, we can make use of the counsel of other believers.

Unfortunately, this point was overdone in the WCG, and some members referred nearly every question to their local minister, without using any of the previous steps. To whom should one go for advice? The qualifications of spiritual leaders are given in 1Tim 3 and Titus 1.

5. "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction" (2Pet 2:1).

Nearly every WCG member knew that there was a lot of false "Christian" teaching and teachers. Some may have classified every non-WCG teacher as false. But can one declare "false" the exhaustive concordances of Strong and Young? These men labored hard, before the time of computers, to make the Bible much easier for millions to study.

The most dangerous teachers are ones that try to secretly bring false doctrine—who know what they are teaching is not true but teach it anyway and hope nobody notices. I have been amazed at how many former Church of God ministers I have met who have said that they never agreed with the WCG's view of Church Government, prophecy, tithing, healing, etc., but taught it "so they could remain a minister".

On the other hand, there are many Bible teachers today who teach Sunday worship, Christmas, eternal punishing and other errors out of ignorance. Hundreds of years ago, these doctrines were secretly brought into Christianity by men who knew better.

Today, most who teach these errors assume that they are in the Bible, but have simply never studied it. If we are uncertain about a teacher, we can search libraries or the internet to find out about his history and to find a summary of all that he teaches. If we read works written against someone, we should look for facts and objectivity, not name-calling. (For example, a

book written against "Teddy Teacher" is useful if it quotes Teddy's writing where he teaches that "the moon is made of green cheese"; the book would not be useful if it primarily makes claims like "Teddy is a bulb-nosed, freaky heretic".)

Evaluating teachings to avoid those who are truly dangerous can be a difficult and time-consuming task, but a great amount of learning takes place in the process.

6. "And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam" (Rev 2:13-14).

This is one of the several clear examples in Revelation 2 and 3 showing that some groups teach a mixture of truth and error, yet Christ claims them as his own. The average WCG member looking for a Bible commentary would have realized this—he or she would expect a mixture of truth and error and would not throw out the commentary the first time they found an error in it.

So, today, when we fellowship with other groups, we should not consider them non-believers just because they have some of the rather serious errors mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. So many Sabbatarians take the approach of: "In order for me to consider someone else a believer, they have to know as much truth as I know"—it is good that Christ does not take that approach!

7. "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom 14:21-23).

If a WCG member of the past heard a fellow believer read from a commentary that he disagreed with, or sing a song he thought was doctrinally in error, he probably would not reject him as a brother. Romans 14 talks about how some people thought it was a sin to eat meat and others did not. Paul, rather than clearly teaching the solu-

tion to this problem, clearly teaches that we should not offend fellow-believers even when they are mixed up on a point of doctrine, and that we should not expect them to do the right thing when they do not have faith that it is right. (This does not eliminate sin—people still suffer from doing the wrong thing, and once God shows them that it is wrong, He expects them to change it.)

### How Much Error Is Too Much?

I hope that you can understand that there is need to be willing to fellowship with those who do not understand as much truth as we do. The very next verses after Romans 14, quoted above, are: "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (Rom 15:1-2).

Is there any limit to how much error we can fellowship with? Yes. The Bible shows that some errors are far more destructive than others are. Several doctrinal problems are mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, yet Christ neither commands the individuals in those seven churches to leave their group nor does He tell them to "kick out" the heretics. He commands everyone who "has an ear to hear" to repent. But other scriptures do show there are some errors with which we cannot fellowship.

**1. Those who reject Christ.** Both in the first century and today, there are people who claim to believe the Bible, but who do not believe that Christ actually came in the flesh. (Some people will say that all "Trinitarians" fall into this category, but please realize that professional theologians are about the only ones that actually understand and believe the various "Trinity" doctrines. Since these doctrines are not found in the Bible, the average Bible-reading Christian believes that the Father sent His Son in the flesh to the earth, and that they later gave the Holy Spirit to dwell in Christians.)

2Jn 7, 9-11 "For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist... Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of

Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work."

**2. Those who preach unbiblical limits regarding who can be saved.** Some during the first century were teaching that without circumcision, men (and their wives) could not be saved. This teaching exists today among some Jewish Christian groups and is still responsible for breaking up families when one parent feels it must be done so that the children can be saved, and another does not.

A very similar but even worse teaching of our day is the serpent's seed doctrine—the teaching that only some of the people on the earth are true children of God through Adam and the rest are children of Satan and have no possibility of salvation. This doctrine also breaks up families, congregations and communities since, because of a person's ancestry, they can be regarded as no more eligible for salvation than a dog. It is very difficult to fellowship with a group when they reject the majority of people on earth as "unsaveable".

Acts 15:1 "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'

Galatians 5:6, 10, 12 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love... But he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is... I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!"

Titus 1:10-11 "For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain."

**3. Those who cause division.** The Church of God groups are good at quoting these Scriptures, but they were not as good at using them. If a member tried to form a new group that would follow only himself, the Church of God groups would do the right thing

and disfellowship the person for “causing division”.

People who insist that a certain set of doctrines or certain human leaders are necessary for salvation are indeed causing division. But more often, a CoG member with a different doctrinal understanding, or one who openly complained about the church group's leadership was also “disfellowshipped” for “causing division”.

These people with questions were not “causing division”, but merely raising questions—and possibly offending some brethren. In these cases, the leadership “caused division” by casting out the brethren rather than answering their questions or charges—or being honest and admitting that they did not have the answers.

Today, it is primarily the leadership of the various Church of God organizations that are causing division. Local brethren frequently would like to get together for joint activities, but the corporate leadership opposes it.

Rom 16:17 “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.”

Titus 3:10 “Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition.”

**4. Those who will not listen to the Apostles.** In the first century, the apostles were trained directly by Christ, worked many signs and wonders, and were an obvious source of truth. Today, we do not have any universally-recognized Apostles—though we do have their universally-recognized writings. Today, I believe we should withdraw from people who claim to be “Christian”, but who do not believe that the Bible is the source and guidebook for our belief.

2Thes 3:6,14 “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us... And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

**5. Those who will not hear the decision of the church (a congregation).** Matthew 18:15-17 contains a most effective formula for fairly solving most problems among people in a

congregation. It can be used for personal conflicts or doctrinal issues that at least one person thinks are very serious. These verses do not usually come into play until a group has actually fellowshiped together for a while.

Matt 18:17 “And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

**6. Those who are flagrantly sinful.** All believers sin (1Jn 1:8), but 1 Corinthians 5 explains that flagrant sinners should not be allowed to remain with the body of believers until they change. The specific sins to avoid are covered in two passages below. As I read through these lists, I realized that a number of them corresponded directly to one of the Ten Commandments. I placed commandment numbers in braces { } after each word that directly fit one of the Ten Commandments. The results were interesting. Only one commandment was missing. Which one?

1 Cor 5:11 “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral {7} or covetous {10}, or an idolater {2}, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner {8}—not even to eat with such a person.”

2Tim 3:2-5 “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers {3}, disobedient to parents {5}, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers {9}, without self-control, brutal {6}, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God {1}, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

The fact that the Sabbath is not mentioned here does not undo the Eternal's command given at creation (Ex 20:8, 11). Whilst Saturday-versus Sunday-worship was probably not an issue when this was written, soldiers, slaves, and certain others may have had difficulty keeping the Sabbath. It is interesting that the New Testament contains no command to avoid fellowship with Sabbath-breakers.

### Let Us Be Honest

Viewing ourselves as an outsider would view us—as the Eternal would

view us—is a very difficult thing. “But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment” (1Cor 11:31). Please take time to read these few paragraphs, even if they may be distasteful to some of you. Please try to judge fairly.

Consider the reputation of the Worldwide Church of God in the public news and then look at the verses above. WCG leaders were publicly accused of doing nearly every one of the sins in those verses. I will not go into all of them here, but you can read about the accusations on the Internet:

<http://homepage.altavista.com/AmbassadorReport/files/home.html>

Many will say, “these are only accusations; they have not been proven true”. Some have, some have not. The WCG's own documents prove some of the sins. They show the spending of large amounts of money on luxuries whilst members were asked to sacrifice and “go without”. They show denials of sins by the leadership, only to be followed by admissions of it.

They show setting of prophetic dates, followed by claims that “they never set dates”. They show members were encouraged to seek only divine healing, while leaders went to doctors. There are many other accusations where there are two or three witnesses.

In my attempts to look into these accusations of flagrant sins by the WCG leaders, I have found some proof that they are true and very little proof that they are false. As a matter of fact, I have not found anybody who personally was with the WCG leadership who will deny much of any of the big accusations leveled against them. (If you know of someone, please write.) Most simply refuse to talk about it.

A number of people who were not present when the events allegedly happened will make statements like “those accusations can't be true because that was God's Church and God's Apostle.” But these are not witnesses; these are unknowledgeable people with an opinion.

So what should a person do who is considering fellowshiping with the WCG or one of its “successors”? If they read about the leader's sins, from which the Eternal says “turn away”, why should they not leave? Having

taken calls for the telephone book advert about our "Independent Sabbath-Observing" local fellowship for several years, I have spoken with several people who want to assemble with believers on the Sabbath, but will not assemble with people who have come from the WCG. They know all about Ambassador Report, the "Tangled Web", and other books about the financial abuse, lying, sex, and other problems.

But there are no books I can recommend to them to refute those accusations. The WCG leadership either ignored them or mentioned them in vague terms. The WCG leaders should have publicly confessed their sin in the charges that were true and upheld the integrity of "God's Work" by denying the charges that were false. Instead, it appeared that their strategy was to try to say *little enough* that those members who were ignorant of the charges would remain ignorant, but the same time say *just enough* that those who knew about the charges would think that the WCG had an answer for everything, but was not going to bother with taking time to explain it all.

Some will point to Christ and say, "He did not defend Himself, so neither should Church leaders". The comparison is totally invalid. First of all, Christ did not answer, because if He would have told the truth and used his infinite wisdom, He would have been able to show each person involved the gravity of their sin and talk His way out of His execution. But He let himself be led like a lamb to the slaughter. Secondly, Christ never sinned—but the Church leaders did. None of the charges against Christ were true and an unbiased person could have figured that out. At least some of the charges against the WCG leadership are true (by their own admission) and the rest are difficult to either prove or disprove.

### No "Clean up" in Sight

The entire "Church of God" mess could have been cleaned up if some of the now-deceased WCG leaders spent their last days either acknowledging and repenting of the sins of which they had been accused or else refuting the false accusations. The mess could still be cleaned up if Garner Ted Arm-

strong, David Antion, Ben Chapman, Otto Lochner, Rod Meredith, Raymond McNair, Aaron Dean and others who really know about some of the situations would sit down and write a book explaining how the accusations in Ambassador Report, the "Tangled Web", and other books are either true or false. But many others and myself have written letters to them on these subjects—nearly all of which go unanswered.

Certainly, much truth was taught by "Church of God" leaders, and the Holy Spirit came upon many of the members (including leaders) and many lives were changed for the better because of what God did. But the sins of the leaders will be forever documented by Ambassador Report and other similar works, with no opposing documents to show, point by point, where they are wrong.

Furthermore, the older writings of the WCG may no longer be publicly available as the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, on Sept. 18, 2000, ruled in favor of the Worldwide Church of God, opposing the Philadelphia Church of God's efforts to reprint old WCG literature. The judge ruled that the old writings are corporate property and cannot be reprinted without permission. This ruling has caused others with old WCG literature on their internet sites to remove it. If these rulings in favor of the WCG stand through additional legal challenges, and if the WCG continues to pursue copyright violators, the available history of the WCG will be that of its sins, not of its good teaching.

Could the Eternal suddenly change all of this? Could He restore that work through one of the existing WCG-offshoots, or a new group? Yes, of course He could! And if He builds such a work headed by righteous men, I hope to be one of the first to recognize it! But now He is allowing the present CoG organizations to fade, and for their sins to be better preserved than their truths.

I realize that these things will be hurtful and depressing to some people, and that they are hard to think about. But if we want a future for ourselves and our children, we need to begin thinking about them now. If we want to follow the Eternal, He will take care of

us. If he wants to move us beyond the WCG-splinter-groups, we need to be ready to follow.

### The Love Factor

Before we discuss where we might go, let us consider one other important factor. Christ said His disciples would be known by their love for each other:

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

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1Jn 4:7-8,11).

At the local level, many "Church of God" brethren have great love for each other. They help each other—will even risk being kicked out of their own hierarchical church group to help a long-time friend in need. But as one climbs the levels of hierarchy, love gets harder to see. First of all, understand that it is easy to appear loving through writing, tapes or television. These productions are usually reviewed by a fairly large group of people and if a part of them does not sound loving enough, it will be re-done. To see if a person really has love, it is necessary to work or live with them for many hours—to be there when things go wrong.

It is also easy to pretend to be loving at a once-per-week worship service. Nearly all Christian churches preach a lot about love and claim to have it—though *hearing about it* and doing it are two completely different things. Many groups preach "love" to the exclusion of law, history and other truth in the Bible. So those who hear that message and do not develop Godly love end up with nothing. In order to worship God, we must have both love through His Spirit, and truth (John 4:23-24, Gal 5:22, Col 1:8). How can we tell if we, or other groups really have love?

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or con-

ceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Phlp 2:1-3).

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving

preference to one another" (Rom 12:10).

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

The concept of laying one's life down for one's friends is not found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament said "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18), but not "more

**Greater Love Than This...**

**M**y cousin, Joyce, and her husband, Bob Sterner, are missionaries with Wycliff Bible Translators. When Wycliff wants to help a primitive tribe learn the Bible, its standard practice is to obtain approval from the government of their country to set up a base there. Governments usually allow these bases to be set up because they are often at a loss as to how to deal with these sometimes very violent primitive tribes. One other standard government tactic is just to machine gun them all, but that can look bad if the international press find out and it sometimes result in a guerrilla-type war. So, these governments are usually happy to let the religious people risk their necks to "civilize" a tribe that otherwise might never become so.

The base Wycliff establishes usually contains a group of technicians that give medical, radio and air support to the support the missionaries. The missionaries' first job is to simply make contact with the tribe—which sometimes can be fatal. After the missionaries establish a relationship, they move in with the tribe and learn the language and culture. Then they write the language starting with an alphabet. Then they translate the Bible into that language.

To give you a time frame as to how long this may take, Joyce's parents, my Uncle Paul and Aunt Esther Powilson, just retired from the mission field after 42 years with the Yagua tribe in Peru. They had just finished the New Testament and several books of the Old.

There is usually a lot of trouble with the local shaman (witch doctor) and his power in these circumstances. I have heard some stories that make the best horror, slash and gash movies look like home videos. I actually met one of the most dangerous head hunters and cannibal chiefs in South

America. He had been converted and was helping write the translation in a Wycliff base in Peru called Yarenaculpa where my parents were missionaries. As a 10-year-old boy, I would go to sleep with the sound tribal drums pounding in the not too far distance as the local natives were doing their pagan rituals.

My Dad was the clinic administrator at the base and had to help care for a native that was brought in on a airplane with a machete that was buried across his head all the way down to his ears. He lived. It was a problem with someone messing around with some one else's wife.

I have talked with missionaries that lost everything in the Congo 30 years ago. They almost were murdered by government death squads. This kind of violence is very common in third world countries. We in the USA are so very fortunate.

My relatives, Joyce and Bob, were at a base Ira Jira, Indonesia, until it was forcibly closed down 5 years ago by the new junta in that Government. Till now, they were technicians at a Wycliff base in Davo, Indonesia. The government there has recently let anti-Christian forces get away with murder there. The following is a letter from Joyce. When she talks about the translated scriptures and translator helpers being lost, it probably means the loss of at least 20 years of work. ☞

— Wes Gordon  
e-mail: wj jcg4@busprod.com

**Wednesday, July 05, 2000  
Subject: Prayer needed**

Dear Ones,

Well, things have not been real great here these last couple weeks. On a general note, one of our teams here works with a group in north Halmahera which has been devastated by the recent violence. The village they lived in has been burned, all the Scripture portions unsold burned in the

church office, and at least seven folks who worked closely with them on the translation have been killed. They don't know where the others are. Additionally, the boat missing had 290 from their village on it, and all but 10 people on board drowned.

Additionally, we just received word today that our Ambon office and apparently all other SIL member and employee houses have been burned, the Christian enclaves remaining are surrounded by well-armed Muslim forces and there is no food. Only God can understand what is happening and bring good from it. Our hearts are sooo heavy. Please pray for the Christians in Indonesia. This does look like a concerted effort to wipe out all Christians. If they succeed in Maluku the chances are great that they will move on to other areas.

Much love and need for your upholding prayers,  
Joyce, for us both

*Can anyone think of any better way to teach the truth of God to a primitive people, than to give them a written language and write the Bible in it? What value are booklets about the Sabbath or Holy Days, if the people cannot look up the Scriptures? Can we all acknowledge that the Sabbatarians have never preached the Gospel to these tribes? I hope that nobody in the Judgment will try to say that these people were not committed to obeying God. They just need to understand more truth. We probably do, too.*

*Christ said that people would know other believers by their love for each other (John 13:35), and these people have the greatest love—they are willing to lay down their lives for their friends (John 15:13). Before anyone says "God must not be blessing their work because they are having so much trouble", remember what happened to the apostles in the New Testament. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:10).*

— NSE

than yourself'. Christ's teaching is not some kind of "spiritual suicide" where all the good people die and all the bad people win. Rather it is a process where we develop love for others and even suffer for them, that we "might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb 11:35).

Are the "Church of God" groups the most apparently "loving" of all church groups? I do not think so—but I think they are far from being the worst. I have attended Sunday groups where people were just "doing their religious duty", or were there to make business contacts.

But there are other church groups where people spend a large portion of their disposable time serving others, sometimes at great danger to themselves. Some teach the Bible to those in areas where violence and infectious diseases are a way of life. Others take worse risks at overseas missions. In Muslim and other countries where the killing of Christians is accepted by governments, captured believers literally do give their lives for others—by not telling who and where they are. Very few Church of God brethren have ever had to make this choice—though many have had to lose all of their friends (be disfellowshipped) in order to do what their believed was right.

I will be the first one to admit that a high percentage of the ads and stories about "dangerous Christian missions where people risk their lives daily" are so much advertising propaganda to raise money. Nevertheless, some of these life and death missions are real—see boxed article, "Greater Love Than This...", on page 11.

It is not my purpose to judge exactly which people have the most love and which do not. That will be judged in the resurrection. But if we think that because we have more true doctrine, we have more love, I think we are wrong.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1Cor 13:2).

We can have knowledge without love. An interesting thing is happening in some big cities where there are many corporate Church of God

groups. Sometimes, most of the brethren will, a few at a time, move to one particular group. Is it because that organization has better doctrine or preaches the Gospel better? Probably not—because the organization that people gravitate to is not the same in every city.

It may be UCG here, LCG there, and another group in some other city. The point is that there are ministers and brethren who obviously have more love for others—and fellowshiping with that particular group is just so much more uplifting. This writer knows of corporate church headquarters employees who prefer to attend another organization's services when they are in certain cities.

Love is evident. It matters.

If we are searching to fellowship with our Father's people, we need to consider love as the major factor that the scriptures say it is. We do not "have to" fellowship with people who are regularly dying for each other. But fel-

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**there has been no consistent set of doctrines held by any group throughout church history. We should not give up on what we know to be true, but we should not demand that others know as much truth as we do before being counted as believers**

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lowshipping where people are willing to do whatever is necessary to help their fellow believers is as important as a lot of doctrine. Learning to be a person with that kind of love is also as important as knowing a lot of doctrine.

**Error is not Tolerance is not Ecumenicism**

We must recognize that we have not *been* and are not *now* perfect Christians. There are things that we can learn from other believers, and that there are things we can teach them. We should be willing to treat others as believers, even though they may have serious error—just as Christ did in Revelation 2 and 3. Tolerating others

with error and fellowshiping with them is completely different from joining in their error. We, like Christ, can be among people with error and set an example—as long as we do not let it affect us. Notice Paul's instruction:

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:1).

If someone is finding themselves falling into doctrinal error or some other sin because they are fellowshiping with people who do the same thing, then they should leave until the problem is corrected.

**Tolerating others** is not ecumenicism—it is not joining the "one world church" movement. Ecumenical movements seek to unite the ministries and administrations of church organizations. The Bible condemns members for aligning themselves with different leaders (1Cor 3). It encourages all believers to work with each other, though it shows that bad church leaders will sometimes stop that process (3Jn 1:10). An ecumenical "one world church" movement is the ultimate church hierarchy—the ultimate mistake. Believers cooperating with each other and tolerating each other's weaknesses is the way the church should be (Eph 4:1-6).

The reality is that most Church organizations, and a fairly large number of independent churches are not the least bit interested in having Sabbath-keepers among them trying to share their knowledge with their members. Only a small fraction of professing Christians really read the Bible regularly and try to do what it says. But since that small fraction is a fraction of the over one billion professing Christians, the total number is quite large—certainly larger than the Church of God groups.

**Where Is It All Going?**

I have spent a lot of time over the past few months in correspondence or on the telephone with a great many believers, both in and out of the Church of God groups. It seems that people are stirring in religious groups every-

where. Those who have spent many years in a religious group are suddenly wanting to learn directly from the Bible, rather than their organization's dogma. Other independent Bible churches and Bible study groups seem to be willing to start their study afresh and do what the Bible says—no matter what long-cherished ideas they will have to change.

There are probably millions who have long ago figured out that obeying the Bible does not require a "church organization", but humble people who will read the Bible, give their lives to Christ, and do what He says. These people do not build buildings, create organizations or register anywhere, so we do not know how many there are or how many people they are teaching. But God knows.

Working with other groups does not require that all existing Church of God groups break up and that the members just wander off to some other group to tolerate a bunch of error. The entire purpose is for all believers to share what the Eternal has given them and to teach it to new people. The Church of God organizations are producing some very good literature and teaching some people. But most of the congregations are simply getting older—and smaller. **The following suggestions are made in the hope that Church of God brethren can recognize what the Eternal is doing among all of His people now, and be better prepared to be a part of it.**

1. Stop thinking that the only way the Gospel will be taken to the world is by the Church of God groups getting back together and doing a "big work".

2. Realize that there has been no consistent set of doctrines held by any group throughout church history. We should not give up on what we

know to be true, but we should not demand that others know as much truth as we do before being counted as believers.

3. Realize that a person who has never heard of the "Church of God" may have the Holy Spirit and be a believer.

4. Realize that other groups may excel in loving their neighbors, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, preaching Christ, praising God and other Biblical commands. We may excel in understanding and teaching doctrine. If we expect our "gift" to be acknowledged and respected by other believers, we need to acknowledge and respect theirs.

5. Look for other Bible believing groups in your area—especially those who allow interaction in their services. The phone book, newspapers and internet sites can help.

6. Pray and ask the Eternal to show you where you can be of service. (I have met many people who found other groups by the most unusual of circumstances.)

7. Visit other groups as it makes sense for you. Most groups are usually very eager to welcome visitors—especially those who are not members of any other church organization. Some brethren will find it best to visit other Sabbatarian groups, some Messianic Jewish groups, others Sunday groups and some weeknight Bible studies. Some, especially parents with young children, may simply have very little time outside the Sabbath to devote to fellowshiping with other believers. (Whenever you visit a group, ask people if they know about small, independent Bible study groups. Word of mouth is often the only way to find these groups.)

8. Learn what you can about each group—go early and stay late so you

can talk to people. Treat them as brethren. Let them see your light shine and let them provoke you to good works. Don't be shy about what you believe, but do not disrespect those who do not know as much. Explaining what we believe by using only Scriptures and history (no CoG booklets) is a worthwhile experience in itself.

9. Realize that the environment you are creating is much better for new believers than the typical Church of God environment where "everyone seems to already know everything". New believers need to see a variety of people who love each other and are all striving to live by the Bible, even though they may have different opinions about what it says.

10. Let Christ work. Realize that we do not have to "do it all", but neither should we "do nothing". He is the Head of the Church throughout the world and He will see that the necessary work is done.

The future of the Church of God brethren is something that I have prayed, studied, and thought about quite a bit. I cannot say that this is His will for anybody beside myself. Christ gives individuals many different things to do as He sees fit. But I think this approach will be much more beneficial both to ourselves, our children and the believers in other groups that we will meet. It will certainly be better than arguing picky points of doctrine and watching our groups gradually shrink.

There may not be a time in the future when we are able to teach a group of people all of the doctrine that we know. But which is better, to teach someone a lot of truth or to teach them to use the Bible and the Spirit of God to find truth?

— Norman Edwards

## Teaching Other Groups—One Example

What we have stumbled into amounts to spiritual "under cover work"—that is, under God's covering, not man's. It is potentially dangerous because family members are impacted and could have been potential victims if our family order as outlined in 1 Corinthians 11:3 were deficient.

God is a supernatural being. But not everything that is supernatural is of God. We encountered some supernatural phenomena that appeared as though it were the work of the Holy Spirit. We measured these manifestations against all of the Word of God, not just parts of it. Thus 'spirit viruses,' containing truth and error were

able to be dismantled and inoculated against. Using the Word of God for verification, God has taught us and used us supernaturally as shown in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

My family fellowshiped with a non-Trinitarian, "Lord's Day" (Sunday) keeping group for a period of several weeks. We believe God led us

to do so for His own purposes. They are diligent. They meet together for Bible study every morning. The group does not celebrate Christmas, Easter, or other pagan holidays and even keeps the Passover. The group knew and most of them respected that we kept the Sabbath and holy days. We thought we might actually learn some things from them about the Holy

good feelings made to appear like the workings of the Holy Spirit. We just have to hang a question mark upon some of the things we saw. We dropped out of fellowship with them on friendly terms.

Seeing that a particular family was in danger of being split by the interference of group leaders into their home, I shared with that couple some of the things I had seen in my past church experiences. I had seen families split over doctrinal dissonance, with the approval and encouragement of the ministry. The children, the divorced parents, and the church, not to mention the

community, were all losers. I mentioned the scripture about what God has joined together, let no man put asunder, and other scriptures in my conversation. I felt led to pray for them as I was leaving and they received it, adding their own amens. Praise the Lord!

God did it, not me. A day or two later, the couple visited our home, knowing that we were about to leave on a long trip. The woman tearfully asked to hitch a ride with us to get away from those in her group who might try to confront her and get her back into the group and split up her family. It was a request for temporary asylum at a crucial time! She said that the scripture I mentioned made a difference because she remembered how God had miraculously brought her and her husband together. Without going into details, the perfect timing of many elements and events could have only happened with God's intervention. There was no coincidence in the timing of any detail.

That couple is coming along well. The husband is stronger and the wife is stabilizing in her resolve not to go back "until God straightens things out." That is a huge step for her. Her trip away, hitching a ride with us to another state, gave her time to gain strength in her personal relationship to God. She thanks us for "standing in the gap".

Our visits to them have been at crucial

times and I believe the timing is due to the leading of God's Holy Spirit. It seems funny; not having a group to invite them to, only a way of living that they see us practice in our daily lives.

My family has visited a number of different groups, most of them Sabbath keeping, some are former Seventh Day Adventists with their own peculiarities. A Presbyterian woman's group has recently invited my family to sing for them at a 'praise and worship' breakfast meeting on a "Saturday" morning. There will be some of their children and teenagers present. The leader heard us sing at a wedding. They know that we are Sabbath keepers. I mentioned that we do not eat some types of meat that might be served at a breakfast meal and the leader was happy to make a note of it. It is another opportunity for us to give some personal testimony.

*The author of this article asked for anonymity to protect the people involved. Nevertheless, he is known to me and told me some of the events of this story as they happened—from the excitement of meeting the group, learning some things from them, and hoping to share new truth—to his departure and the partial breakup of the group. This story shows the dangers of groups, be they large or small, that have a lot of truth, but then do not fellowship with others because they think they know more than the others do.*

*When a person leaves one overly controlling group, they do not need to simply go to another overly controlling group. They need a group of believers who will help them where they are ready to be helped, and who will not look down upon them for their past. 📖*

— Norman Edwards

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## God is a supernatural being. But not everything that is supernatural is of God

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Spirit, and at the same time we might shine a light by keeping all of God's commandments while in their midst. We shared our musical ministry with the group while we were among them. My family was judged and accepted for the way we dress, the love of God seen in our eyes, for our attitudes, and for the behavior of our children. I did not reveal my past affiliations to them so we were not labeled by our past. Their testimony of us is that we follow God.

Things went well for several weeks and we met many loving and devoted people who love God and seek to serve Him with all of their hearts. Over time, we began to notice a Nicolaitian spirit in some of the leaders of the group—cult-like tendencies in the amount of control these leaders exerted over the members of the group. Seeing the alternative of evil in the outside world, the members put up with it even when they disagreed.

Oh, the leaders also revealed what special roles they would play as the characters who would personally fulfill many Bible prophecies. I let them know that I did not believe this to be so, and that I knew of many others who also thought that they were the two witnesses, etc., etc.

Finally, one of their leaders got up and began to preach against keeping the Sabbath. God led us to see that we had done all that we could do among them. After sifting out the error, we did learn some things about the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in some of them. The error we had to sift out can only be described as delusion led by

### Correction — Servants' News, May/June 2000, Vol. 6 No. 3

On page 8 at the beginning of second-to-last paragraph, the line "Why does the Bible record God giving Adam and Eve a healthy warning against Satan...?" should, of course, read: "Why does the Bible NOT record God giving Adam and Eve a healthy warning against Satan...?"

The staff of Servants' News apologize for this error.

# Small Groups and Evangelism

## Active Bible COG, Chicago, Illinois

The Active Bible Church of God is a former CGI congregation that went independent in 1996 after learning about the problems of Garner Ted Armstrong. They have an average attendance of 25 members.

Their service starts with 35 to 45 minutes of interactive Bible study, everyone reading a verse, followed by a group discussion of the reading. The person moderating the study alternates from week to week. Occasionally part of this time may be given to a member with something of special interest. A church member who told about a recent trip to Africa is one example of this. The Bible study is followed by a 45-minute sermon. Four members alternate in giving sermons with others speaking occasionally. Michael Linacre, the pastor, mentioned the group is trying to follow the New Testament model of multiple leaders with a just as important secondary objective of using everyone's talents and abilities. Even though theirs is a small congregation, they have some musically talented individuals and are presently trying to form a church choir.

Their main evangelistic efforts go to helping Ron Dart's ministry, Christian Educational Ministries. Although they have tried advertising and radio, they feel the most effective way to reach

new people is still done by individuals; evangelism on a one-to-one basis.

The church is located in the inner Chicago area, five miles south of the Sears Tower. The congregation is predominantly African-American. Most of the members do not have cars, so convenient bus transportation is important to their location of services. Using bus transportation has turned out to have an evangelistic advantage. Some members have been able to witness an aspect of the Truth to a fellow passenger as they share a lengthy bus ride together. The location is also convenient for the pastor because Michael teaches Psychological Measurement at the nearby University of Chicago.

Occasionally outside persons using the meeting hall will sit in for a church service. An unusual aspect of the Active Bible COG is that three of the persons who attend are blind. To help the blind members, one of them, Mark Marino, has put the blue CGI hymnal into Braille. Anyone interested in this Braille edition, is urged to contact Michael or Gerry at the numbers below.

A major project right now is their extensive web site, [www.abcog.org](http://www.abcog.org). Unlike many COG sites, theirs is directed toward



new people, the general public rather than COG members. The site includes articles on Pearl Harbor, Christmas, Easter, etc. Michael thinks their Saint Valentine's Day page is especially different and helpful. The site also includes past sermons by a powerful religious speaker, Dwight Moody. (Only those particular sermons, of course, which are biblical and follow COG beliefs.)

Their most popular web page is probably the one from Mr. P. Harben, a now deceased member of the CGI congregation in Dallas. Mr. Harben wrote about his experiences as a member of the U.S. military during the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941. The page was discovered by the

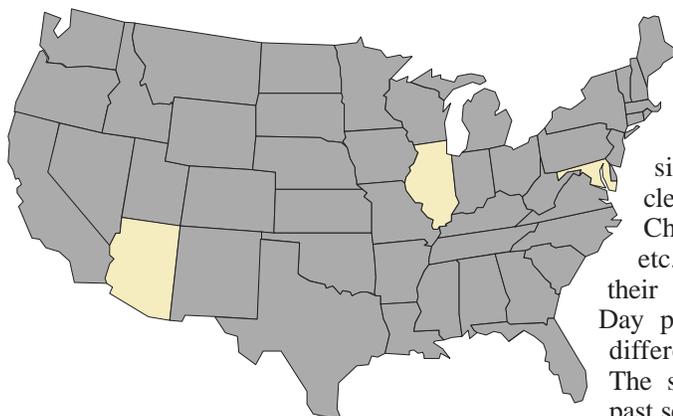
President of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association who found it so interesting he asked if he could add some information to it. His comments are now part of this popular web page.

Michael says students are a large percentage of the church's web site visitors. Students are directed to the site by various search engines as they look for information on Pearl Harbor, Christmas, Easter and other topics as a result of school assignments. The site also receives many requests from people looking for a COG church or fellowship group. The web site receives about 100,000 visits a year.

Michael believes every group should have a web site, even if it is only one page that simply gives service times and a few details. His observation is that "Having a web site today is like having a church building used to be."

The Active Bible COG meets at 10:00 a.m. at the Hyde Park Neighborhood Club. The address is 5480 S. Kenwood Avenue, (near 55th Street). Michael can be reached at 773-288-5650. Or, Gerry Bernardo can be reached at 630-322-8132.

— "One-third Century in COGs"



new people, the general public rather than COG members. The site includes articles on Pearl Harbor, Christmas, Easter, etc. Michael thinks their Saint Valentine's Day page is especially different and helpful. The site also includes past sermons by a powerful religious speaker, Dwight Moody. (Only those particular sermons, of course, which are biblical and follow COG beliefs.)

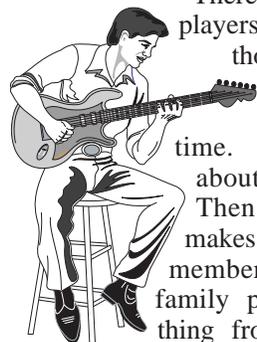
## Meeting Together in Mesa, Arizona

It's 6:30 p.m. in Mesa, Arizona. A low buzz of conversation and laughter drifts into the kitchen from the living room as the table is set and everyone is called for dinner. The home group where Marc Amino and his wife, Tracey, gather weekly with other believers has convened.

Tracey, with whom we spoke, said, "We rotate homes every week so that it isn't a burden to any one family and so that no one has a tendency to take ownership of the group." The host family provides the meal and a member of the family facilitates the meeting. The facilitator does not control the meeting; just "keeps the meeting flowing".

Meetings are unstructured. After dinner, the "instrument basket" is brought in—a large basket of the type in which one might carry a baby. It's chock full of musical instruments: tambourines, shakers, and drums. Anyone who is interested selects an instrument from the basket.

And the singing and worship begin.



There are four guitar players in the group, though only two guitarists play at any one time. Singing lasts about a half-hour. Then someone makes coffee and a member of the host family presents something from his or her personal Bible study. "We ask everyone if they have anything to share. We have some really shy people and we try to be sensitive to them and encourage them to contribute. Sometimes we pray for special needs, special situations, and for healing. We are sensitive to opportunities for ministry and sometimes ministry begins at the dinner table. That's especially true with the children. We ask how their week went and if there is anything that they would like for us to pray about," Tracey said.

"Our meetings don't have any set time to end. We just know when the meeting is over, but then we usually sit

around and talk for a long time. Oftentimes we don't get home until 1:00 in the morning!"

The Mesa group is awash with musical talent. Several members of the group write music. Some of their songs have literally come into being during worship. A few chords played on the guitar, someone sang a few words, someone else added to it and, as Tracey says, "Just like that, the Lord gave us a song."

The composers do not claim ownership of what the Lord gives. One member, Victor Palagano, is employed in the music industry and is putting together a CD of small group music.

All songs are original. Some were composed by members of the Mesa group. Other groups are also contributing songs. When the CD is complete, it will be offered for sale at production cost. Most of the songs are praise and worship. "We don't want

to make money on our music. We just want to make it available to other groups," Tracey said.

This group first met in February 1998 when Marc and Tracey moved to Mesa from California. Both were educated for the formal ministry, but as they proceeded into traditional ministry they felt that God was leading them in a different direction—to the small group. They tried first to start a group in California but it "just didn't work". Then they moved to Mesa. Tracey's sister, who lives in Mesa, was a new believer. She and several family members had been injured by a hierarchical church system and had dropped out of church. After Marc and Tracey's arrival in Mesa, the family began to gather for worship and the Mesa, Arizona, group was born. They have since added others to the group, which presently has about 12 members.

They encourage the children to take part as full-fledged members and "sometimes they have really profound things to share." Since the entire meeting is not brief, the host family sets up

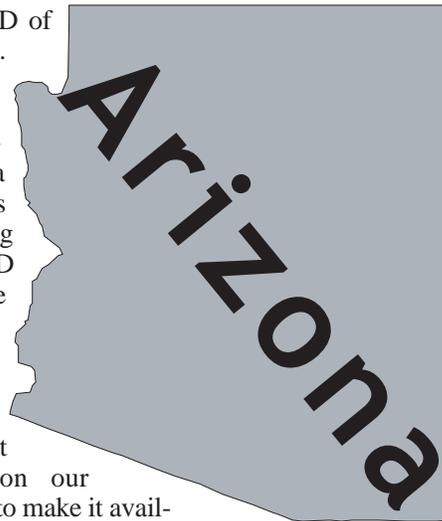
games, chalkboard, and other items in an adjoining room where the children may go if they become bored. Most of the homes have both living room and family room. Tracey said, "We can keep an eye on the children without leaving our meeting. So far we have had well-behaved children. If that were to change, we would have to take turns staying with them."

Tracey thinks that a lot of people go into small groups with unrealistic ideas. They don't realize that, when you get into the close relationships in the small group, "a lot of junk is

exposed"—areas of our lives that need to change. Also, we have to learn to stick by, in love, others whose personalities rub us the wrong way. These are things that most of us need; yet many don't want to risk. "People need to understand that coming to a small group is not the

answer for everything. It can be that, but you have to be realistic. You are dealing with people. It is also hard for some people to accept that we can fellowship with others who don't agree with us on every point," Tracey said.

Conflicts challenge us with how to handle them with wisdom. For example, one woman was preoccupied with the idea that "all things will be restored". She thought that Satan and fallen angels would be "restored" and wanted to expound on it at every meeting. Since this was not a salvation issue, they continued patiently with her. One member gently suggested that she drop the subject. It didn't help. Tracey said, "We prayed about what to do because it was interfering with the meetings. We decided we were not going to throw anyone out. How can we say we are not hierarchical if we put someone out?" They would continue to bear with her. Shortly after that decision, the woman stopped coming. The problem was



solved—but not the way they had hoped it would be.

*[Matthew 18:15-17 shows that there are times when an entire congregation may need to put someone out of a group when that person refuses to hear one witness, then several witness and then the entire congregation. In a hierarchy, one person could put someone out of the congregation. Nonetheless, one can never fault praying to the Eternal for a solution—especially when he provides one. — Norman Edwards]*

It is important to understand, when embarking on the intimacy of a small group, that situations are likely to arise that must be handled with care and prayer. Some will try our patience. Troublesome situations and people make opportunities for us to practice our unconditional love on personalities that we find abrasive. As with anything else—performance improves with practice!

— Arlean Kelley

Contact Marc and Tracey Amino at 480-986-2250, e-mail: TraceyRed@aol.com or Victor and Gretchen Palagano, 480-986-5728, e-mail: palagano@aol.com Tracey hosts an Internet web site, including an e-mail discussion list, for those interested in small groups at <http://www.homechurch-homepage.org>

## Remnant Group Still “Hanging In There”

Karen Brinkley, of Linthicum, Maryland, tells us about a group that she is associated with. About twenty people are left from approximately 100 who made up a former CGI congregation. As experienced by all too many of us, when the leadership fails the membership—in this case, when the “shenanigans” of Garner Ted Armstrong surfaced—many members became demoralized and the congregation disintegrated.

Some people left to study and worship alone. Some left to form small home fellowships. Many, however, gave up entirely and have gone back into keeping Sunday, Christmas and Easter and the rest of the things they had come out of.

As Karen points out, when people are focused on the group or its leaders, instead of on Jesus Christ, it is easy to become discouraged when human leaders fail the members.

*[Comment: As 1 Cor. 3:11 warns us, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” NOT being founded on Jesus Christ helps explain why the WCG was, from its beginning, doomed to failure. As most former members know, few sermons were about Jesus Christ. Instead, the focus was on government, group salvation, and on the members passively obeying their human leader.*

*One example showing that Jesus Christ was NOT the foundation comes to mind. I remember the Detroit minister in 1964, as he approved me to come to church services, forewarning me that the WCG had composed its own hymns. He went on to explain that they did this because most Protestant hymns were “not scriptural”. (Yes, I now realize such behavior is one of the signs of a cult.)*

*A very revealing factor, however, is that of the 82 songs in the WCG hymnal composed by Dwight Armstrong, only one of those songs has the name of Jesus or Christ in them! Jesus*



*Christ, the only lasting foundation, is NOT in 81 of 82 especially composed (and supposedly more “scriptural”) songs.]*

This remnant of about 20 meets together once a month with a CGI congregation in Columbia, MD. In the interval, once a month about five people of the 20 alternate in meeting at one of their homes. Their faithfulness and “hanging in there” should help encourage all of us. Even more so when we realize that two of the ladies have understanding spouses that are not COG members.

The remnant group is looking for a place to meet just off I-70 somewhere close to the border junction of Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. If they are able to find such a place, it is possible there would be a congregation of about forty people. This remnant group can be contacted through Chris Mace, 410-636-5789.

— “One-third Century in COGs”

### Do You Meet With a Small Group? A Living Room Church?

If so, you have valuable experience that may inspire and encourage someone else. We need to hear from you!

How did your group start? What challenges have you faced and resolved? What is your meeting format? What is unusual about your group? Anyone doing special ministry (jail, nursing home, etc.) or recently led someone to Christ?

We’re even interested in your unresolved problems. They will help us choose subjects for future issues.

You don’t have to be a large group to qualify. Remember—where two or three are gathered... you are the church! You don’t have to be a writer either (although you may be). Just contact us and we’ll do the rest!

Contact Arlean Kelley 561-663-9417, or 933 Frangi Pani Dr., Barefoot Bay, FL 32976 or [arleankelley@yahoo.com](mailto:arleankelley@yahoo.com)



# 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. To avoid any difficulty, writers should specify how much of their name and address they would like us to print.*

## Correction To Elders Article

### LETTER:

Sept. 21, 2000

Dear Norm,

When I saw the letter I sent you in the *Servants' News* it seemed to convey an idea that was entirely opposite to the one that was intended. There was a copying error on the second page that implied that elders at Antioch were subordinate to, and took their instructions from, the congregation. Under normal circumstances this is not true. The decision whether new Gentile converts were required to be circumcised was made by the elders and the Apostles (which are also elders), not the congregation (Acts 16:4). The whole purpose of quoting Acts 15 was to demonstrate that elders were subordinate only to Christ and the Father. This is why James 5 tells the sick to call on them for prayers anointing.

In Acts 15:3 where it states "the church sent them on their way", it simply means as a group the congregation sent the delegation, but did so by the authority and leadership of the Antioch elders. The congregation most likely helped supply transportation, food and money for the journey to Jerusalem. To give an example of how this same phraseology is used today, in the second world war the army sent an invading force. This force although sent by the army, was really sent by the authority and orders of the generals overseeing the army. The soldiers didn't gather together to work out a plan so they could instruct the generals what to do. Many times in the news we see a ship aground on a sand bar. It is true the ship did strike the sand bar but it was the officers in charge who steered it that way. It was not each crew member taking the wheel and directing it. That would be a mutiny. The

real sending took place in Acts 15:2, where it states "they determined" (Strong's 5021). The people given the responsibility of shepherding the Antioch congregation would determine who to send to Jerusalem.

Again, I would like to focus on the New Testament elders to show that they are not subordinate to the congregation while they hold that responsible position. Although it is true that the elders are chosen by the congregation provided that they meet the criteria laid out in 1Tim 3 and Titus 1 (as shown in Acts 1:22-23 and Acts 6:3), and also true that a congregation can remove an elder as their overseer if he no longer fulfills the required criteria (3John and 1Tim 5:19-21), but while he holds the position of elder he answers directly to Christ and the Father. The congregational discussions to remove would most likely be led by other elders in the congregation. Elders are always spoken of in the plural (Titus 1:5, Acts 20:17). The remaining elders would be subordinate to no person or party (completely impartial in their decisions) and have a good track record (1Tim 3 and Titus 1).

**A.** Elders must be able to teach in their congregation (1Tim 3:2). The question is: do teachers get instructions from the students or are students instructed by their teachers?

**B.** John was an elder (3John 1), but also viewed himself as a father to God's people (verse 4). The question is: Is the father subordinate to the children or are the children subordinate to the father? Also, a father has responsibilities in his own family but has no authority over the neighbor's family. All he can do there is point out to them areas of concern.

**C.** Elders are compared to shepherds over God's people (1Peter 5:1-2), and answerable to the chief shepherd (verse 4). The question is: Is the shepherd subordinate to the sheep or are the sheep subordinate to the shepherd? The shepherd is only responsible for his own sheep not every sheep in the countryside; they are the responsibilities of their own shepherds.

**D.** Elders are compared to an overseer (Strong's 1985, "a superintendent i.e. Chr. Officer in gen. Charge of a (or the) church") (Acts 20:17-28). The question is: If a person is an overseer of a group of people is the overseer subordinate to the people or are the people subordinate to the overseer?

**E.** An elder is said to be one with authority (Titus 2:15, 2Cor 10:8). The question is: If a person has authority over God's people is he subordinate to the congregation

or is the congregation subordinate to the one with authority? Authority is a word that many ex-Worldwide Church members dislike because of past abuse of this authority. However, were these elders in the Biblical sense, or simply people appointed by, and subordinate to, a religious party?

**F.** Elders are spoken of as a person who rules (1Tim 5:17). I am puzzled why anyone would think elders are subordinate to the congregation.

I have every confidence that the Antioch elders fulfilled their responsibilities as shepherds, overseers, rulers, teachers and fathers to the congregation. These elders used their authority correctly in this case and sent the delegation including Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-3). This was a very difficult question because all the congregation had to go on was the old testament, so these people from Judea had a very good point.

The point of my first letter was that the majority of today's elders are subordinate to religious parties or independent congregations (mostly because they are paid by them), which makes them different from their New Testament counterparts. They in no way, shape or form resemble the Antioch elders.

Norm, there is a world of difference between the New Testament elders and most of the elders today, yet people think the result will be the same when anointed by these modern elders when they are sick. I'm not denying that some miraculous healings do occur, among the Sabbath observers as well as Sunday observers, however I believe that healings are granted not because of the authority of the elder, but instead because of the faith and pure heart of the elder and the ailing congregational member. Few elders or the members they are anointing are aware of the difference between these modern elders and their New Testament counterparts.

Your Friend,

— John Leitch, Canada

**RESPONSE:** John, I thought I was clarifying your article in a couple of places. I think you agreed with some of my changes, but I'm sorry when I made it worse in one place. You are quite right that the meaning of "sent" in Acts 15:3 does not mean "sent a subordinate", but more like "helped on their way". You have outlined many scriptures showing where elders were responsible to God for the people, yet we can also see where brethren chose leaders (Acts 6:3, 2Cor 8:19) and where they are responsible for rejecting bad ones (Rev 2:2;

2Cor 11:13; 1Jn 4:1).

I think the problem of how leaders can be **both** appointed by the people, yet “over” the people can be understood from the Old Testament. God commanded the people to appoint the elders (these were the same people who were commanded to give offerings three times per year in the previous two verses):

“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous” (Deut 16:18).

But once a person was appointed a judge, he had authority over the people, and those who defied them were to be put to death.

“Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, **or the judge**, that man shall die. So you shall put away the evil from Israel” (Deut 17:12).

This may seem like a paradox, but the answer is quite simple. The majority of the people appointed a judge, and then the judge had authority over **individuals** as they came to him. If an individual disagreed with a judge’s decision, there was not much that he could do. But the **majority of people** could remove a bad judge.

What stops the majority of people from rejecting righteous judges and appointing evil judges? Sometimes, the Eternal in His mercy will intervene. But, often, He does not stop it. Today, there are many unjust judges, and only a very tiny percentage of people ever bother to vote for judges. The Eternal warned that people often like unrighteous leaders:

“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?” (Jer 5:31).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to

fables” (2Tim 4:3-4).

Obviously, elders are responsible to God to do what is right and just. Brethren should follow those elders, unless they believe the elder has departed from the Eternal--in which case they should first talk to the elder, then to others, then to the entire congregation (Matt 18:15-17).

Thanks for your article and letter. I hoped that everyone learned from it.

— NSE

## Women Praying in Services

**LETTER:** Sept. 6, 2000  
Dear Norm,

Undoubtedly, woman was created equal in value to man. There are many examples of the ministry of women in the Bible. Yet for all this, Christ did not tell women to “feed my sheep” (John 21:17). Nor did he choose any women as apostles. Paul excluded women from authoritative teaching role of pastor or elder (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Question: Is it appropriate for women to give opening/closing prayers in front of the congregation during Church services? This issue has become a controversy in our congregation where opinions are divided on the matter.

Shall be grateful if you will please enlighten me on the subject with scriptural notes if possible. Thank you.

— Dr E H Tiku, PhD, via the Internet

**RESPONSE:** The issue of what women should and should not do in a service is an emotional and difficult one. It is emotional because so many people have lived their lives with specific ideas of their own roles and their spouse’s roles; making changes at this late date is like starting over from scratch. It is a difficult issue because there are disputes about the correct wording and translation of Bible manuscripts.

As one example of the debate, you said that Christ did not choose any women apostles, and that is certainly true of the original 12. But notice Romans 16:7 in the NIV: “Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” Greek manuscripts differ here as to whether the name should be “Junias” (a man), or “Junia” or “Julia” (a woman). The KJV and NKJV actually say

“Junia”, but they use the expression “of note among the apostles” which makes it sound like they were simply someone the apostles “noted”, rather than being apostles themselves. Nevertheless, many translations clearly say that these two were apostles. Since they were believers before Paul, they may have met the qualifications given in Acts 1 when Judas was replaced.

We cannot thoroughly cover this issue or all the many other difficult issues regarding the role of women in the Scriptures.

Fortunately, the issue you asked is fairly straight forward. The issue of women praying and prophesying is covered in 1 Corinthians 11:4-16. Some people will say that Paul is talking about the way people pray and prophecy at home. To me that is inconceivable as Paul starts chapter 11 by commanding them to keep the traditions he gives them, and ends this little section by saying: “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God” (1Cor 11:16). Can anyone be contentious about the way someone else prays or prophecies **at home**? How would they know whether others do it at all? Furthermore, the **purpose of prophesying is to edify the church** (1Cor 14:3-5).

These verses in 1 Corinthians 11 show that it is **acceptable** for women to pray in services. I do not have a definitive answer for whether this scripture is talking about long hair or some other kind of head covering. A woman should do what she understands it to mean. Some people are quick to point out that the singing of Psalms were considered “prayers” at that time and that this verse is simply allowing women to sing along—much as they do in our church of God tradition.

I do not see these verses limiting women in that way. Even in the CoG groups, a skilled woman could write a prayer or brief message, set it to music and sing it to the congregation as a part of “special music”. Why not let women who cannot write songs pray, also?

The Bible actually gives us **three examples of women praying in a group**. “They [the apostles] all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:14, NIV). “On the Sabbath we [Paul and others] went outside the city gate to

the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there" (Acts 16:13, NIV).

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, **who did not depart from the temple**, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:36-37).

Here is an example of a woman both praying and prophesying in a public place—the same as the instructions we find in 1 Corinthians 11. The Bible actually says very little about classes of people who should not or can not pray. It says that everyone should pray, but prayers are not heard because people are sinning or because they ask for the wrong reasons (Pslm 66:18-19; Jms 4:3).

Nevertheless, there are many objections that people might raise to the idea of women praying in services. No one should ever be forced or coerced to pray publicly. If there are no women in a fellowship who want to pray publicly and some brethren who think the concept is wrong, then it does not seem sensible to divide a group over a moot point (though someone has related a case where this actually happened).

Of course, if anyone hears a woman (or a man) pray and disagrees with it, they need not say "amen" after it.

I hope that your group is able to come to a decision that the members agree is Biblical and acceptable to everyone.

— NSE

## SN Helps a Variety

**LETTER:** August 14, 2000  
Dear Norm,

[personal paragraph omitted]

My mail is forwarded sporadically, so I read the new SN when I get it, and the old ones, too—enjoy them all. My appreciation and thanks to the Eternal, and to you and all the SN staff and helpers for keeping the SN coming.

[personal paragraph omitted]

The requests from readers and your newer approaches to articles and letters of the Work being done by individuals and groups of brethren are inspiring. I hope many are encouraged to enter their stories. Brethren visiting prisons, teaching orphan

boys in Texas, blanketing cities with flyers and training local churches to help hold a campaign to bring the public together on a certain topic as Alfred Harrell is doing, others working with Sunday-keeping acquaintances as one lady does, and Barnabas Ministries on the net, reaching an impressive number perhaps for the first time (Nov-Dec 1999 and Jan-Feb 2000 issues).

What do you think of the idea of putting *Shelter in the Word* in waiting rooms of various professionals and businesses, etc. if readers wish to photocopy some and do this? Just on a very casual basis? A local member's home number could be added at the end for info. If seems that there are so many people who are looking for a good Christian, non-CoG connected paper with sound doctrine/articles.

For those long-time readers of the Servants' News tired of WCG problems and solutions, I would like to make this point: There are those with a WCG past that are fairly new readers, perhaps even some leaving PCG, and do appreciate these articles, who are perhaps still trying to put it all in its rightful place. I hope those fortunate enough to have "discovered" your magazines a long time ago, will not mind bearing with this help to the newer readers. I know of lots still caught up in the confusion of organizations, past and present, who may well "become acquainted" with your paper, and be able to see the hierarchical error. With comments in this area interspersed throughout your articles and related subjects, it is so important at the first for the new reader, and the "veteran" readers can receive advanced material at the same time.

Of the tapes and literature I have come in contact with, only a few, I feel, are as helpful or teaching and inspiring as the *Servants' News* and *Shelter in the Word* and your other papers that you have written. I truly look forward to each issue. There is a purity, honesty and humbleness here—you do not extol your experience in a given matter to be the complete and irrefutable answer. No pedestals here, thank you!

I hope you are able to continue such a level of Christian help, and I pray the Eternal gives you the guidance, strength and ability to keep on helping for a very long time.

Thanks Norm, and have a great Feast.

Yours truly,

— Marilyn Harris, Canada

**RESPONSE:** Thank you very much for your encouragement. There are times when I sit in front of my computer and think: "Are not there thousands of others with the Holy Spirit who are being taught

directly by the Eternal? The answer is undoubtedly "yes". "Then who am I that I should be teaching the Bible to other people and receiving money for doing so?"

The answer is, "I am not anyone 'special'—not any more 'special' than the many other children of the Eternal—one whom He is now teaching and has given specific gifts and jobs to do. As your letter so well pointed out, people are at many different stages. Some Servants' News readers are just coming out of the PCG and other controlling hierarchical groups. Others have been out for a long time and are more interested in how to have effective local meetings and teach others.

I have no difficulty with putting *Shelter in the Word* in waiting rooms. Some of the back issues were good, but the many that dealt with Y2K are no longer relevant. The latest 4 issues were very short, except that they contained the eternal judgment articles. I will try to avoid putting something so long in them in the future. I hope that the future issues will be good material for a waiting room program. Placing them in an attractive binder would probably be a good idea. Thanks for your suggestion.

— NSE

## Identity of 12 Tribes

**LETTER:** August 28, 2000  
Dear Norman,

I became a member of CGI back in 1989. Garner Ted convinced me of the truth about the 10 "Lost Tribes" of Israel.

I believe I am a descendent from one of the Tribes. However, the present groups from CGI seldom if ever mention the tribes, which I find very disappointing.

I realize that they want to attract more members and think preaching the Identity [of modern-day Israel] movement might have a negative effect on some groups of people. But the Identity message seems to me to be of important substance. How do you feel about this subject? I assume you are an Israelite descendent.

My wife and I enjoy and appreciate the Servants' News. Keep it coming.

— JDC, Lillian, Alabama

**RESPONSE:** I believe that the 10 tribes of Israel now live in North America, Western Europe, Australia, and other places. I think some information written on this subject is good and some writ-

ings try to "help" the history and form conclusions that are not correct.

Personally, my father's family is descended primarily from English, but partly from French families. My mother's parents came from Czechoslovakia where numerous ancient peoples settled and passed through. I do not have extensive genealogies going back hundreds of years for either side of the family. I cannot "prove" that I am an Israelite. Neither can millions of others.

I do not see that knowing for sure that I am or am not a descendant of Israel would make much difference in my spiritual life. Paul taught: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). Being descended from Israel does not make it harder or easier to follow the Eternal.

Nevertheless, the fact that there are millions, maybe billions of descendants of Israel shows that God does keep his physical promises to His people in the Old Testament. If ancient Israel was supposed to be a model nation for the rest of the world because they had the Old Testament scriptures (Deut 4:6), how much more so are the descendants of Israel today to be a "light to the world" with the New Testament?

Nevertheless, I am saddened when some preachers teach that "who you are" (who you are descended from) is more important than "what you do with your life". Some go as far as teaching that salvation is **only** available to descendants of Israel—which I believe is completely wrong. A mixed multitude left with the Israelites from Egypt (Ex 12:38). Later, Paul wrote: "but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Rom 2:29).

I have heard that some groups attract more new members by preaching "identity" doctrines, and some lose members by doing it. When I was first studying the Bible, I found the doctrine very interesting and it spurred me to study more. Obviously, the teaching is probably most interesting to those who might actually be descendants of Israel. It is less relevant to African or Oriental brethren.

Paul's general principle for services was "Let all things be done for edification" (1Cor 14:26). If the Eternal stirs

someone to preach this doctrine, then they should preach it. If He stirs men to preach something else, then they should preach something else. If someone is preaching the "identity teaching" just to feel superior to "non-Israelites", then they are making a mistake.

Thanks for your encouragement.

— NSE

## Sabbath Same Worldwide?

**LETTER:** October 4, 2000

Thank you for your careful article. I believe from my own research that the Roman method of time-keeping is not consistent with God's way for man because its subtle implications deny the separation of the week into a clear seventh day sabbath and six-day work-time for all mankind. The inconsistency arises, in direct opposition to the Spirit of Truth, not only for people such as spacemen or eskimos who cannot experience timings by sunset locally, but more disastrously for anyone crossing the dateline or travelling by supersonic plane or rocket; these people move in and out of the sabbath as it artificially rotates round the globe under our current false time system, making a mockery of God's Law by defining there to be anything between zero and two days of sabbath per week. There is no way around this anomaly by "ministry" within this way of reckoning time by the overhead **sun** being 12:00 hrs for everyone worldwide. We are so used to this system that we are blinded to its cruel deceit of most of the world and untenable unresolvable anomalies for a few. The bizarre possibility of certainly missing sabbath completely simply by moving an inch across a man-devised invisible line just before sabbath is so obviously wrong that Satan seems to have fooled mankind curiously well with this one... People I mention this to, just shy away, possibly because it is very hard to admit that something as basic as time-keeping has been corrupted worldwide, and we do not like to admit that we are keeping the wrong times, that we too have been deceived and are missing part of our sabbath by that deceit. The only way around this fundamental paradox is to see that time is the same for everyone (worldwide or in space), sunset is a specific time only for a specific place and a person at rest relative to the earth. Clearly the place is well-enough defined for synchronising the sabbath from the words of the Bible, it is the realisation that the event is at the same time for everyone that has somehow been stolen from mankind... God was not father to

this inconsistency and deceit, it cannot be too soon to straighten this out and return to God's (definitely not Roman) consistent timekeeping, allowing everyone to benefit from the true sabbath at the same time, without missing or duplicating it by crossing a line, going to fast, or simply rejoicing at the wrong time because of a false inconsistent, but worldwide, ancient inconsistent tradition... this one is insidious and very hard for some to see, but look at the consequences... a massive and evil deception attacking the very sign of our God.

Yours sincerely,

— Roger William Chamberlin (internet)

**RESPONSE:** I agree with you that using sundown to start and end the Sabbath may not provide anything close to a 24-hour Sabbath for people in airplanes or spacecraft, or for people who live on the international date line or north of the Arctic Circle. However, I think you will agree that this is a relatively small portion of the Earth's population.

If people all over the world all kept the Sabbath between sundowns in Jerusalem, they would all have a Sabbath very close to 24 hours, but how would they know when to keep it? We must remember that electronic communications are only about 100 years old and accurate clocks are only a few hundred years old. For most of history, people told the time by the sun. If one traveled directly east or west from Jerusalem, one could learn a sun position for any local area that would correspond to sundown in Jerusalem (e.g., Sabbath would begin Friday, about 2 hours after sunrise in Los Angeles). But if one travels hundreds of miles north or south of Jerusalem, (to Rome for example), the time difference between local sundown and Jerusalem sundown will vary from summer to winter—a rather complex calculation.

When Paul wrote the Romans, did he carefully explain when they should start the Sabbath? How could people at sea or those migrating over land keep track of Jerusalem time and know when to start their Sabbath? Can you find any biblical or historical evidence of people far from Jerusalem keeping the Sabbath via Jerusalem time? An obedient person on the international dateline, arctic circle or in space can find a just way to keep a 24 hour Sabbath. A disobedient person can break the Sabbath anywhere. Let us not introduce solutions that are worse than the problems.

— NSE 

**"Truckers Study" from page 2**

of rest in order to reorient someone to the true values in life. Their belief—and it is probably a correct one—is that “blue laws” were done away because of a desire to make more money. Their stand is that “blue laws” were a good thing because it forced employers to give people a day of rest.

I told them that I keep the seventh day because I see it in the Ten Commandments and I see it as an ordinance from creation. Their stand is that one day in seven is fine, and to keep the seventh day is legalistic and that the principal is the important thing. They also had some contradictory comments about how Jesus worked on the Sabbath when He picked grain (so a day of rest isn't necessary after all?), but I opted not to get into a theological food fight and instead just plant the seeds. They did take some literature regarding the Sabbath with them, so we'll see what happens.

I pointed out that Isaiah says the Sabbath is supposed to be a delight and not a bondage, and that it was a tremendous gift that God gave to mankind. The Israelites were slaves, and God actually had to teach them that it was okay to take a day off in order to spend time with family, friends, and God. That is a lesson that many in our society would do well to learn.

We spent additional time talking about problem resolution in the church. They apply Matthew 18 for problems within their congregation. The people are told to settle it among themselves before getting the pastor involved. If they can't settle it among themselves, then they bring in an arbiter from outside their congregation in order to mediate. If they have a problem with someone from the outside bringing in heresy or a personal non-biblical agenda, then the pastor handles that one directly.

They also have few socials, per se. They do have study groups, but their pastor wants them to be involved in the community. I presume the idea is to keep the church from becoming a closed social club, but also to provide light and salt to the community around them.

This was a good day at the truck stop.

**July 30, 2000**

Arlo was in Tulsa this weekend for a conference, so I flew solo today. There was one trucker, a fellow from California. He retired from the Marine Corps a few years ago, and he's trying to determine what God's will is for his life. He feels a call to the ministry, not so much to pastor but to be involved on the ground in solving social problems with a God-based approach. He mentioned his work with “Toys for Tots” during his days in the Marine Corps, realizing how many people there are who need help.

It was gratifying to talk with this man because he is a man with a good heart but a humble spirit. He was very up front about his lack of Bible knowledge (until today he owned only a New Testament), but asked good question after good question about God and the Bible and claimed that he wanted to learn more and more.

He kept coming back to controversies in some churches regarding homosexuality. On the one hand he sees the Bible condemning such behavior, but on the other he sees scriptures that talk about not judging and having compassion. How does one resolve this tension? We discussed this at some length (hate the sin, love the sinner type of stuff). Jesus did not condemn the woman caught in adultery, but also told her “you can go now, but don't do it again.”

There is a difference between a sinner who comes into your midst and wants to change and one who is arrogant about one's lifestyle. If someone wants help in overcoming, that is what the church is there for. If in your ministry you are working with someone who has led a sinful life but is looking to change, should we not reach out to him? We were able to discuss that repentance is not only saying you are sorry for your sins, but also turning around and changing your way of life, a concept that was rather new to him.

He understood that sin is transgressing the Ten Commandments, but we took it a step further and looked at how Jesus magnified the law in the Sermon on the Mount.

He wanted to know if God created a

devil, and we studied Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14.

As you can see, his interest and curiosity has been working overtime. One topic in particular shows how he has attempted to take the Bible for what it says. He has come to see that death means death, and that we don't have immortal souls. He could not reconcile the concept of a resurrection with going to heaven. He asked my opinion, and we reviewed the classic scriptures about “the soul that sins, it shall die” and the resurrection chapter (1 Corinthians 15). He was also curious about the nature of the resurrected body, which is answered in that passage.

He was appreciative of the fact that I answered his questions by reading from the Bible. He had posed this question on the soul to a chaplain at a truckers ministry in Georgia, and the man there simply reasoned with him rather than turning to the scriptures. The trucker is savvy enough to know that the immortality of the soul idea is of Greek rather than Christian background.

Space and time won't allow me to list all the topics we covered, but two hours passed quickly today. He took a stack of literature and four Bibles with him, one for each member of his family.

**August 6, 2000**

Rod Keese and I were joined by one trucker today.

The trucker was reading the scriptures this week and was struck by a passage in Luke's Gospel: “Therefore settle it in your hearts not to meditate beforehand on what you will answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist” (Luke 21:14-15).

When talking to loved ones, how does one follow the leading of the Holy Spirit rather than trying to figure it all out ahead of time? How do we let the Holy Spirit lead us?

We discussed how sometimes one's job is to just put the truth of God out there. One sows, another waters, but it is God who must give the increase.

We reviewed James's Epistle which discusses the need to live the life, setting the proper example that will be

attractive to others so that they will want to follow that example. Having said that, they must be willing to take the initiative. They must take it upon themselves to study the Bible and try to live godly lives.

Sometimes people are not open to God's call. At Pentecost some heard the apostles speaking by miracle in their own languages. Others thought they were drunk. When the Father affirmed Jesus in John 12:28, some heard an audible voice, while others just heard thunder. Some people just seem to be more attuned to things of God than are others. Some people hear God's still small voice, whilst others have to be hit over the head with a "two-by-four" (Saul of Tarsus being an example).

The trucker took a fist full of tapes with him and seemed to be pleased and encouraged with our discussion.

**August 27, 2000**

In today's Bible study a gentleman from a local Baptist church joined us. He had met with Arlo at a truckers study previously and asked about him (Arlo was unable to make it this morning because of a prior commitment). He feels a calling to a truckers ministry and wants to find some ways that he can help out at the truck stop without competing with us. He seems very sincere and does not seem put off by our acceptance of the seventh day Sabbath. He hopes to be able to serve at the truck stop during the week, which frankly is a real need. The more we do these Bible studies, the more we realize that the truckers are a lonely lot and often need a chaplain of sorts to talk to on more than just one day per week.

Our truck driver today came in a few minutes later. This was a mountain of a man. He literally had to bend over to get in the door. He said he was 6'11", and I don't doubt his word. He had spent some time on the football field trying out for various NFL teams.

This was a troubled soul. Due to mistakes in his past, he was faced with a bitter ex-wife and her husband who spend a good deal of time verbally abusing and threatening him and his mother. He says one reason he is out on the road is to avoid being near them so that he doesn't do anything violent. He is constantly fighting the attitude of hatred toward them and therefore feels less than adequate as a Christian and wonders if he is no better than a hypocrite. We spent a long time discussing various scriptures about praying for one's enemies, even praying that God would turn his tormentors around and cause some to know Him. They are pushing his buttons and getting the payoff by seeing him come unglued. Ultimately, he is the one being hurt by this.

The fellow I mentioned earlier who asked to help us pointed out Romans 7, indicating that Paul had struggles in life—that we all do. He even went so far as to write "O wretched man that I am! Who shall save me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). Of course the answer is in the next verse: "I thank God—through Jesus Christ". We cannot lean to our own power to change, but must ask God to get us there.

As to whether he is a hypocrite, the parable in Luke 18 about the publican and the Pharisee praying should set his mind at ease. The real hypocrite hasn't a clue that he is a hypocrite. The one who cries out to God for compassion is the one who is justified.

**R**eading Lenny's request for workers for the harvest caused me to reflect back on the many years where I thought my primary spiritual duty was to "get behind the work"—which essentially meant come to services regularly and send in lots of tithes and offerings. Sometimes, I prayed that the money I sent in would specifically be used to help people in need of the Gospel. But most of the time, I just sent it in—my attention was focused on something else at the time.

Since Christ numbers the hairs of our head (Matt 10:30), He certainly knows how every cent was spent in every group or troop that ever laid claim to His name! Someday, I will be interested to know what percentage of the many thousands I gave was used to actually help people, and how much was used to buy expensive lunches, plush office furniture, artwork that stayed in storage, etc. Some people say that "once you give the money to God, it is out of your hands and no longer your responsibility".

To which I can almost hear Christ responding: "Tell me, when you considered a house for yourself, did you just give the salesman money and then accept whatever house he would give you? Or did you inquire diligently as to what you were buying? And if a salesman refused to give straight answers to questions about what you were buying, did you not go looking for another salesman and another house?" To which many people will say, "Of course we tried to make sure our money was well-spent—you can't always trust a salesman." To which Christ will probably respond, "If you did that for your own house, why didn't you do it for Me?"

It is a lot of work to check into a ministry to make sure that money is being well-spent. Nobody can be perfect in doing this—just as we sometimes buy physical things that later turn out to have major flaws. This can make giving or shopping a great disappointment. Nevertheless, I am not saying that nobody should ever give to a ministry—that make no more sense than saying nobody should ever buy anything lest they get a bad deal. But we all need to be good stewards of what God has blessed us with. That requires effort and can sometimes be very frustrating.

For something completely opposite, I hope our readers will consider a ministry like this Truckers Bible Study. Here, there is little question whether or not one's effort is actually serving the Eternal. The ministry does not have to be a ministry to truckers—it can be to anyone. I have prayed that there will be laborers for the "Oak Grove, Missouri harvest"—as well as many other harvests around the world.

Starting something like this requires a few things that many of us have:

1. Knowledge of the Bible.
2. Life experience living by the Bible through the guidance of Holy Spirit.
3. Love for the people whom we will serve.
4. The organizational skills to get it set up and get it started.
5. The endurance to stay with it, even when attendance and interest may be low.

Some of us have a "pioneering gift"—more skill at starting something new. Others of us are better at helping something that is already working. "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:20). — Norman Edwards ♦

I pointed out the example of Peter, who changed from a man with no backbone to one who was literally willing to go to jail and even die for his Savior. The difference was his receiving power from on high on the day of Pentecost.

It appeared to me that the man had a lot of fear—fear that he was coming up short, that he is not good enough for God. I ask him why he seemed to be afraid, and I think my supposition was correct. We talked about how we all fall short, but it is through God's grace that we are made right. Our own attempts at righteousness are simply not enough. It is God's will that none should perish, but that all should come to eternal life. In the parable of the prodigal son, the father goes after his son even while the son is a long way off. God will not abandon us unless we totally and willfully turn our backs on

Him. But if we decide to turn back, God is there for us.

I hope we helped the man today.

### Special Prayer Request

I want to make a request for prayer specifically for the Truckers Bible Study.

The trucker today mentioned to me that Saturday would be an excellent day to have someone down at the truck stop. Many truckers hang out at the truck stop on Saturday and leave on Sunday for their Monday deliveries, therefore the place is usually busier on the seventh day of the week. He says he thinks we'll have more people come in than what we might think.

There is also an opportunity to do a booth at the truck stop in September on the 25–27 (during the week) for a truckers jamboree.

Here's our problem. While we

would love to take advantage of some of these opportunities, we simply do not have the manpower to pull it off. Money is not the issue. The cost for what we do is so very minor. The issue is getting enough people involved to take advantage of the opportunities that we have. Arlo and I both work for a living and have other responsibilities in life. We simply can't do it all.

Jesus once said to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into the field. That's partly what we are asking for, but also that we know what God's will is regarding our little efforts. Would everyone please join us in prayer on this one?

Thank you!

— Lenny Cacchio; 705 Ne Bryant Dr  
Lees Summit, Missouri 64086  
L\_Cacchio@yahoo.com ☞

### News from Local Congregations from page 3

The WCG's attempt to stop the spread of an idea by forcibly preventing its publication sounds like they have learned little from the old "hierarchy" days.

Whether or not the court ruling is fair, there are two vital lessons that Church of God brethren should learn:

1. If anyone writes truth and wants it shared forever, place it in the public domain. (If one's goal is to make money or control a church, then copyright it so no one else can use it now.)

2. Because of the WCG's legal pursuit of this case, it will be much easier for them to pursue internet sites and others who are reprinting HWA's writings. Those who teach any doctrine "because HWA was inspired of God to teach it" need to realize that his writings could be very hard to find for many years—until the copyrights lapse. If we cannot teach a doctrine from the Bible, and if we cannot explain it ourselves, maybe we should not be teaching it.

— NSE

### UCG Attendance Policy Raises More Questions

Recently, at the UCGIA Inc. congregation where I attend, on the informa-

tion table, was a paper titled, "Attendance Policy—United Church of God, an International Association".

The policy reads as follows:

"All members and elders of the United Church of God are encouraged to show Christian hospitality and outgoing concern to all and to warmly welcome visitors having a sincere desire to peacefully worship or with us and learn God's way.

It should be understood, however, that Church services and most other functions and meetings of the United Church of God are designed primarily for members or affiliates of the Church and are essentially private meetings, the participation in some of which may also be limited to members only and that restrictions can also be placed on attendance by persons who are not members or affiliates in good standing. The Church is also not obliged to tolerate disruptive, antagonistic, or contentious behavior or those who have been asked not to attend with us and may exclude such individuals from Church meetings or functions.

Consequently, in accordance with the foregoing, attendance at all worship services or other Church functions may be limited by the local pastor or other presiding elders of the Church, or their designee(s), as they deem appropriate under the circumstances."

Besides the general question of "Exactly what does all of this mean?", several other questions suggest themselves:

1. Exactly how is the "United Church of God" referred to in the policy different from the UCG-AIA Inc. which is enacting the policy on behalf of the United Church of God?

2. Who are the "members: referred to in this policy?"

3. Finally, who are the "affiliates of the Church" and how are they different to members?

Anyway, that's the latest from corporate COG Inc. and UCGIA Inc. style. This is looking more and more like this corporation is borrowing from the South African apartheid model for how they relate to the world around and among them. Or as George Orwell observed in *Animal Farm*, "All men are created equal, it's just that some are more equal than others."

— Posted on LM by Tim McCaulley

### Living The Way Website

Jack Lane has introduced a new website: <http://LivingTheWay.org>

It contains an index to all of its new articles and to those on the old "The Way" website. (These sites replace *The Way* magazine, of which *Servants' News* used to give away sample copies.) ☞

## Partial Literature List

All items are free upon request. All back issues of *Servants' News* are available as well as a **Complete Literature List**.

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

## Items New This Issue (or Last Issue):

### Mature Literature

**Learning From the Psalms** by Duane Sholly, 40 pages. Contains one large paragraph of commentary on every Psalm—a couple pages on Psalms 119 and 132. Large print.  
**Don't Tell Me That Ellen White Did Not Write About Feast Keeping** by Stephen W Kraner, 6 pages. Two uses: 1) It may help Seventh Day Adventists to keep the Feasts because it contains quotes from their prophetess, Ellen White. 2) It may help WCG members see how they look to others—as most WCG members would rather hear the Bible, Not Ellen

White, about the Feasts; so most other groups would rather the Bible, not Herbert Armstrong, about our doctrines.

### Study Resources and Information:

**Church of God Organization/World Wide Web Addresses** by Alan Ruth, 14 pages. Mailing addresses for “Church of God” groups of all kinds. Many group web sites, also.

### Basic Literature

**Young Child's Bible Story Coloring and Activity Book**, 24 pages. Coloring, questions and word search for ages 2 to 10. We have a lot of these left. Many children would enjoy them.

## Items About the WCG Past:

**Church of God 7th Day Old Documents About Herbert Armstrong**, 20 pages. Shows Herbert Armstrong served as a Church of God Seventh Day minister from 1934 to 1938, and that he plagiarized their booklet, “Has Time Been Lost?”  
**Herbert Armstrong Co-Worker Letter Reprints**, 110 pages. Complete text of co-worker letters demanding money referenced in SN December 1998 page 24 article.  
**May 2, 1974 Member Letter about Church Government** by Herbert Armstrong, 26 pages; analysis by Norman Edwards.  
**The Elijah to Come** by Richard Nickels, 12 pages. Shows similarity between Elijah and John the Baptist, and difference between those two and Herbert Armstrong.  
**Remnant of Israel, An Analysis of G. G. Ruppert** by Richard Nickels, 36 pages. In the early 1900's, Ruppert taught doctrines similar to those later taught by Herbert Armstrong.  
**Many Articles: *Servants News* Nov 98, Dec 98 and Jan 99.**

## Corrections: May/June Issue:



1. The front page of most USA copies was printed with “Vol. 6 No. 1” but should of course be “Vol. 6 No. 3”. International copies were printed correctly. If you save your copies of *Servants' News*, you may wish to correct it to avoid confusion in the future.
2. The address and e-mail for Bernard Kelly on page 11 are both in error. (Bernard Kelley submitted an article to the WCG that he believes was the original inspiration for the book *Mystery of the Ages*.) The correct details should read: 130 W. Huntington Dr, #120, Arcadia, CA 91007-3025; e-mail: bhkell@juno.com

## Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

### Mature Literature

**Assembling on the Sabbath** by Norman S. Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.  
**Biblical Calendar Basics** by Norman S. Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the issues about the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)  
**Did Christ Reorganize the Church?** by Herbert Armstrong in 1939, 8 pages. Very different than his later approach: Christ never set up a hierarchical government.  
**How Do We Give to the Eternal?** by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages.

Biblical study of giving and tithing.  
**How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?** by Norman S. 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.  
**The Worldwide Church of God Splits: Their Triumphs and Troubles** by Alan Ruth, 56 pages. Facts and analysis of the last 20 years of “Church of God” history.  
Study Resources and Information  
**Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog** by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages.

Free, mostly Sabbatarian literature & tapes sources.

**Giving and Sharing Order Form** by Richard Nickels, 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books, and fine literature on floppy disk.  
**The Journal: News of the Churches of God** edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best single source of news about Sabbath-keeping groups. 24 pages.  
**Servants' News Statement of Receipts and Expenses**, 2 pages.  
**Servants' News Complete Literature List & Index**, 36 pages.

**Servants' News, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107, USA**

Tel: 517-625-7480, Fax: 517-625-7481, E-mail: Info@ServantsNews.com

International brethren will receive literature more quickly by writing or e-mailing the nearest address on page 2.

# Servants' NEWS Response Page

Vol. 6, No. 4 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be July/Aug 2000

To continue receiving *Servants' News*, please fill out at least the top of this form:

- Continue to send my *Servants' News* to the same address.
- E-mail *Servants' News* to me in PDF (Adobe Acrobat) format. (Stop mailing it.)
- Send me an e-mail link to *Servants' News* when a new issue is ready. (Stop mailing it.)
- Continue to mail *Servants' News* to me and also send an e-mail link.
- Stop sending *Servants' News* to me in any format.

Even if you receive SN on paper, you may wish to include an e-mail address to receive other occasional SNe-mails.

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

To qualify for our greatly discounted "requester" postal rate, we need a signed statement at least every 3 years from over 50% of our subscribers. Please return this page, even if you previously signed a card.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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 First fold top flap down along this line, then fold bottom flap up and tape along the top. Put a stamp on it and mail.

We want to send *Servants' News* in the most convenient form to whomever wants to read it. If receiving it via e-mail would mean that you would be less likely to read it or pass it on to others, we would rather send you a printed copy. Also, we would like to know which aspects of *Servants' News* are most important to you. Please place one check on each line below:

Very important to me	Not important to me	<input type="checkbox"/> Stories of independent groups' local evangelism, including Truckers Bible studies.
		<input type="checkbox"/> Reporting on Church of God group news (future events calendar and stories of previous events).
		<input type="checkbox"/> Publishing and answering of subscriber letters on a variety of subjects.
		<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of current Church of God groups' practice and policy (government, cooperation, etc.)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of Herbert Armstrong and past Worldwide Church of God teachings and practice.
		<input type="checkbox"/> Articles on how we can work together with other groups to preach the Gospel.
		<input type="checkbox"/> Doctrinal articles on typical CoG controversies (Passover, Pentecost, calendars, sacred names, etc.)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Doctrinal articles on other subjects (eternal judgement, Holy Day symbolism, etc.)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Provide organized access to other biblical writings. (We already have about 100 documents which we have printed, put in our index and offer freely. There are hundreds more we could sift through and make available.)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Publication of Shelter in the Word--our magazine for those with no Church of God background.
Less important to me	<input type="checkbox"/> A new basic literature series: booklets that are mostly scriptures about one subject with additional explanation as necessary. Examples: <i>What Does the Bible Say About Law? ...Salvation?, etc.</i>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Assist others in starting independent groups (results may not be in SN, but this still takes my time).	

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 First fold top flap down, then fold bottom flap up along this line. Tape along the top. Put a stamp on it and mail.

If you would like to be included in the *Local Servants Directory*, fill out this part:

The *Local Servants Directory* lists believers who are willing to use their **physical and spiritual gifts** to help others. I receive many calls and e-mails from brethren looking for fellowship or help of some kind. I think many of these requests would be better handled locally. This directory is for mature believers willing to help others and discerning enough to recognize when they cannot help someone. (For example, some people will take many hours of a believers' time talking about the same problems, but will do nothing to solve them; others will go from one believer to the next, repeating the same questions and problems and/or asking for a handout.) Putting one's name on this list is likely to bring about a certain amount of unwanted mail—maybe persecution. It will also bring about growth. Each person needs to "count the cost" and decide for themselves how they will participate (Luke 14:26-35, Matt 10:32-33). Fold down the top third of this page to read the introduction that will be on the directory. **If you would like to be included in the directory, please enter at least one of the items below.** (You decide how it is best for individuals to contact you.) We will automatically include your name, city, state and country.

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone numbers: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief statement about your gifts: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Individuals concerned about privacy might consider a separate post office box, e-mail or telephone number used only for this purpose. (A second phone number can be routed to an existing phone line and produce a "distinctive ring"—costing as little as \$2 per month.)

Return Address:

Tape across top



Put postage here. In USA: 33 cents.



*Servants' News*  
*PO Box 107*  
*Perry, Michigan 48872-0107*  
*USA*

We would prefer not to have to send you another one or to discontinue your subscription.

Thanks for returning your survey.

# Back of Return Letter

## Local Servants Directory Introduction

The book of Acts describes an early Church that was largely unified. Believers were being taught by Apostles who had been taught directly by the Messiah. A stranger in a city could ask where the followers of Jesus (or Yeshua) meet, and expect to find meetings similar to those of believers in other cities. Later, sectarianism began to develop (1Cor 3), and in the letters of Peter, John and Jude we find there were false believers teaching error.

Almost 2000 years later, a stranger in a major city can find hundreds of “Christian” denominations in the phone book—teaching a great variety of doctrines, many of which are not directly from the Bible. Many different Bible teachers and “prophets” claim to have **the truth** revealed from God—but they nearly always differ from each other. The original apostles are all dead, and they did not answer every possible question in their writings. In spite of this apparent confusion, there are individuals (in and out of religious groups) who have learned from the Bible, claimed its promises and radically changed their lives.

I have asked people to place their names and contact information in this directory **if** they are willing to share their spiritual

gifts and biblical knowledge with other individuals. I have asked that they **not** promote any religious group as **the** solution to anyone’s spiritual need, though they may certainly mention meetings of believers which they recommend. I have not approve everyone in this directory and cannot be responsible for their actions. (If presented with spiritual grounds, I can remove someone from future issues of the directory.) I Pray that the Eternal will lead you to spiritually helpful people and grant you discernment to avoid those who are advancing their own agendas.

On the other hand, my experience has shown that some people will use the addresses in this directory to send their own literature. We ask that no one do this. In the Bible, servants of the Eternal never had to beg for an audience. They were sometimes punished or killed for what they said, but people willingly listened.

I pray that people will use this directory to find fellowship, compassion, understanding, prayer and spiritual help. If one person in the directory does not help you, **please try another**. Christ said that His followers would be known by their love for each other (John 13:35). Grant us that love! —Norman Edwards