

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 7, No. 4 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be July/Aug 2001

The Living and the DEAD

“THIS IS A LIFE AND DEATH ISSUE!” That expression means that something is very important. Yet how many of us like to talk about real issues that involve real life and real death? King Solomon wrote a lot on the subject. One saying:

“...a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing...” (Eccl 9:4-5).

If we have goals for this life, we need to accomplish them while we are alive and healthy. It is not a sin to be severely ill or dead, one simply cannot accomplish much in those states. While this point may seem overly obvious, we often do not live our lives as if it were true. We sometimes have great fear of illness and death, but have little fear of temptations and sins that we encounter on a daily basis.

The purpose of this article is to help all of us lose our fear of death and to seek a righteous life. If one has lived a life that is largely righteous (no one is righteous enough to save themselves—Rom 3:23), it is a very dangerous thing to fall into sin:

“But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be

remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die” (Ezk 18:24).

The previous three verses show that a man who sins most of his life, but repents in the end is better off than one who lives a righteous life and turns to sin in the end. This is why Solomon said:

“The end of a thing is better than its beginning” (Eccl 7:8).

As a man or woman builds up years of following God, they should be more

concerned about turning to sin than dying or becoming disabled. When one’s life ends in righteousness, it is a good thing. Three friends whom I considered righteous men died during this year. Now, I realize that I cannot “preach them into the kingdom”. God will judge them. But as far as I know, they were generally righteous men.

Mitchell Smith of Lindale, Texas, died instantly when the crane he

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Building A Healthy Church

by Jim Butler

It is a paradox but true, the more mature one’s Christianity the more one realizes how little one knows about Christianity.

If truly converted we once believed that our minds are deceitful above all things. Many of us do not believe that about our own minds anymore. Most of us have been converted for many years. Surely our minds, our thoughts, are not deceitful. We all strive to be sincere, but sincerity is a slippery slope. If you only take one concept from this article I hope it is this: our thought process is often faulty, deceitful self-justifying. Perhaps two other points

as well. We just don’t know all that much, and we come to conclusions much too quickly.

Most have now settled into one of many organizations/groups. Let’s look at what has happened and attempt to make some sense of it. If we are still teachable and willing to look at our collective experience from, perhaps, a fresh perspective we can move forward. Often we cannot move forward until we understand and have dealt with the past.

There are reasons why the Church of

This article is an honest and accurate look at the church of God groups from a man who has been a member for 31 years. Our last issue included *Starting a Local Congregation*, which was a general biblical and historical study of what a congregation should be like. This article focuses specifically on the Church of God groups and what they need to do to change now.

Change is not instant. If the leadership of one of the Church of God groups were to suddenly announce to their members they

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Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#82-84



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 8, 2001

I did not write a summary from the previous week because it was a bit discouraging, but contrasting it with this week bears a lesson worth sharing.

Last week we had three truck drivers, and one of them wanted to talk about his personal struggles in dealing with his past and how he still struggles with sin. He expressed extreme discouragement. This is not all that unusual for a driver to be this transparent in a room full of strangers. Usually, the other drivers in attendance will rally around, share their own struggles and lend encouragement of various sorts. But not this time. The other two just completely shut down.

This was discouraging because I began to second guess whether I should have let it go in this direction, but concluded that the man wanted to talk and was asking for help, and it was the right thing to let him do so.

This week we had a similar experience. We had seven guests, one of whom wanted to share his struggles and ask for encouragement, and the others were eager to encourage and lift him up. There was definitely a different spirit there today.

The point to make here is that this truck drivers' ministry provides a place where these people can go to pray and study together. We're surely not going to add to our local congregation with it, and very few new Church of God members will likely result. But we are providing a service for people in need, and ultimately that's the important thing.

Both this week and last we spent quite a bit of time in Romans 6-8, where Paul says "O wretched man that I am! Who will save me from this body of death?" And his answer of course is "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 8 also talks about the Holy Spirit, which in my mind we do not pay enough attention to. We should ask God for more of His Spirit.

Today was a good one, because we were able to form a bond among us as we shared God's Word and assisted each other in dealing

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You can also receive an e-mail notification for when the latest issue is available on the website (www.servantsnews.com). Thus the four options are: **1.** snail mail only; **2.** snail mail and link to website by e-mail; **3.** link to website sent by e-mail; **4.** PDF file sent by e-mail.

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Servants' NEWS

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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 Jesus (Yeshua) is the Messiah, but we realize that the Eternal works with many groups and individuals.

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 501(c)(3) status, but church groups are tax exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, Nov 1999 ed., p. 15).

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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.

Sabbath Campers Fellowship Aug 23-25, 2002

Mark your calendars for the August 23rd weekend, 2002. Sabbath Campers Fellowship will be getting together at Shady Green Pastures near Charlotte, Michigan.



This is a Christian camp that operates on a donation-only basis. It has a lot of recreational facilities and a rustic hall that will seat over 200 people. More details will follow in later issues of *Servants' News*. If you are interested in helping out (organizing games, special music, speaking), contact:

— Kelli Brophy
Kellibrophy@yahoo.com

2001 Edition of Directory of Sabbatarian Groups

The 246-page ninth edition of The Bible Sabbath Association's comprehensive catalog of seventh day (Saturday) Sabbath-observing groups is now available! The *Directory* lists over 400 Sabbatarian groups, and over 1,600 congregations. Alphabetical, geographical and website indexes make it easy to locate the groups that interest you. Originally published in 1957, this edition is the largest compilation of Sabbatarian Groups in the BSA's history. There are many international congregations listed.

The Bible Sabbath Association, founded in 1945, is a nondenominational organization whose sole purpose is to promote the Sabbath, and co-operation among Sabbath-keeping Christians. BSA members and leaders include Seventh Day Adventists, Seventh Day Baptist, Church of God,

and many other affiliations, as well as independents.

The Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups is available for \$15, postpaid, from: The Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Drive, Gillette, WY 82718.

Or, you may order by credit card by calling 307-686-5191, e-mail: info@biblesabbath.org, fax: 413-228-0483; Internet: www.biblesabbath.org.

— Sidney Davis, BSA president

[This publication is different than the Local Servants Directory or the Living Room Church of God Directory. The BSA directory contains all Sabbatarian groups for which they have information. A few of them may not believe that salvation is available to all people or that the New Testament is accurate. Some may not accept visitors. But many of the groups would welcome visitors and provide an experience from which we could learn something of value. — NSE]

Independent Sabbatarian Wins Suit Over Firing

According to *The Denver Post*, July 18, 2001 issue, a Denver federal jury awarded \$2.25 million to a former Pueblo air traffic controller who was fired for refusing to work on the Sabbath. The jury concluded that employers may not force religious worshippers to work on the Sabbath if it is their "sincerely held religious belief".

"In a land where people question if justice still exists, I stand here to tell you it does," said a tearful Donald Reed, who now works for AT&T Cable in Pueblo.

"Freedom of religion is why this country exists—the people who founded it were escaping religious persecution."

Reed does not belong to any organized religion but honors the Sabbath by praying and resting from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday. He was fired by the Federal Aviation Administration in August 1995 after working in the Pueblo control tower for five years.

Two managers had accommodated his request, but a third, George Hof, called his religious belief "a scam", then fired him after he missed six Saturdays, according to testimony in the five-day trial.

A jury of six men and two women in U.S. District Court in Denver took five hours to reach a unanimous verdict in the First Amendment case.

Jeff Dorschner, spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office, which defended the case, said the government was disappointed by the verdict and "it is now under review".

The verdict caps a six-year legal battle waged by Reed, who received the second-largest religious discrimination award from a federal jury since at least 1984.

An Orthodox Jewish broadcaster was awarded \$7.3 million after he was fired in 1999 for refusing to work on the Sabbath at a television station in Bergen County, N.J.

Reed, who turned 45 on Tuesday and is the father of four, received \$248,356 in back pay, \$508,088 in future lost pay and \$1.5 million in compensatory damages for emotional pain and suffering. Congress in 1991 limited compensatory damages against the government to \$300,000, so the \$1.5 million automatically will be reduced.

The law also allows Reed to collect attorneys' fees, which are estimated to be in excess of \$100,000, according to lawyers who argued the case, Theresa

Corrada and Ed Ramey.

But they will not receive the money because their Denver firm, Isaacson, Rosenbaum, Woods & Levy, agreed to argue the case free of charge for the American Civil Liberties Union, which filed the original complaint.

If U.S. District Judge Edward Nottingham, who presided over the case, awards the attorneys' fees, they will be given to the ACLU.

Reed credited his lawyers for the victory and his faith for his perseverance and strength. Reed had a number of setbacks, including administrative denials, before suing in federal court in 1998.

"Things are revealed to you along the way. Once you understand (your place in life), then you have a commitment to act on it," he said.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark Pestal and Peter Krumholz defended Hof and the FAA by arguing that their primary responsibility was to keep air traffic safe. They argued that the FAA was not required by law to pay overtime in order to accommodate Reed, and that it could not hire or transfer in enough new people during a shortage of controllers.

Reed, who said he believes "in the word of God" rather than a formal religion, said his belief in resting on the Sabbath comes from the book of Genesis, in which God, after creating the universe, rested on the seventh day. "He set the example," Reed said.

Reed was an air traffic controller for the Air Force for six years before starting work at the Pueblo FAA tower in 1990. For three years, his managers accommodated his requests, either by allowing him to use leave time or by assigning him to a quality assurance/training position with normal work-week hours.

Hof became manager in Pueblo in December 1993 and, according to testimony, immediately began harassing Reed. Reed testified he called Reed's religion "a scam" and told him he'd fire him "if I could".

Reed offered a variety of solutions by offering to work all holidays and Sundays, by paying shift differentials to other controllers forced to work on Saturdays for him and by offering to work longer shifts during the week. Hof rejected other proposals, then gave

in once the union threatened several grievances.

A union representative offered a reorganized schedule for Saturdays, reducing the number of controllers from five to four.

Hof rejected the plan and then, after Reed was fired, adopted the plan and made it part of the permanent schedule, testimony showed.

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[It is amazing what has been accomplished by an independent believer—not a member of a big organization.

Unfortunately, many Sabbatarians will look at this and say, "He shouldn't be involved in courts and the government." But do we realize that the reason it is possible for us to avoid work, school, tests and other important scheduled activities on Saturday is because others before us have stood up for the Sabbath in legislation and court cases? Does God need court victories like this so we can be Christians? Absolutely not. There have been plenty of very dedicated Christians who lived out their lives in prisons in countries that are Moslem, Communist or tolerant of only one Christian state religion. But a Christian life is much easier and more peaceful in a country that has real freedom of religion.

I am sure that Donald Reed did not bring this suit because he hoped to make a few hundred thousand dollars. The way he was willing to adjust his work schedule so that he made less money for himself shows that he was not "in it for the money".

Paying damages is the court's way of telling the loser (the FAA in this case) that they will be punished for discriminating against sincerely held religious beliefs. The recognition of an individual's beliefs (as opposed to a corporate doctrinal statement) is a very important thing for believers not aligned with a corporate church.

—NSEJ

Christian Leadership Academy

The Christian Leadership Academy (CLA) is an organization that *Servants' News* has not mentioned enough. The Christian Leadership

Academy exists to help individuals and groups preach the gospel of the Kingdom in all the world and to make disciples of all nations. CLA presently offers these three major options:

A) The school of evangelism which teaches leadership skills and tools for evangelism. Instruction is available as both face-to-face classes and as tape/workbook lessons.

B) Public campaigns to reach the people in your local area. CLA provides speakers and organizational skills. You provide the meeting hall and advertising.

C) Evangelism seminars in your local area to help local groups with evangelistic activities.

The CLA is not a church organization. It works with local congregations or individuals whether they are affiliated with a larger organization or not. Anyone may join and participate as little or as much as they are able. They have just produced a home study course, entitled *The Pursuit of Truth* which comes with tapes and a workbook. It does have a price, but some "scholarships" are available to those who cannot afford it.

The Christian Leadership Academy was founded by Dr. Alfred Harrell who has five degrees in speech, journalism and educational areas from Arkansas State University. Most of the members have a Church of God background. The CLA is an all-volunteer organization—no salaries are paid. The board consists of Lee Davis, Tim Hall, Alfred Harrell, Fred Porter, and Billy Stefek. Some of the course materials are being developed by Ian Hufton, who served in the Church of God International for many years. Rosy Haley, known for the prayer list she maintains, is a major part of the newsletter production.

For more information, or to subscribe to their newsletter (post or e-mail), contact the Christian Leadership Academy, P.O. Box 8654, Hot Springs, AR 71910-8654; tel: 888-776-0002, e-mail: info@CL-academy.com, Internet: www.CL-Academy.com.

Wisconsin Special Sabbath

As I expected, the Special Sabbath of August 4th, at the Berean Fellowship was very enlightening. We had two

guest speakers. Gary Pifer spoke Friday night on faith and healing and Art Mokarow spoke to us on Saturday. Tapes of the presentation are available.

Art spoke about how Satan confuses the church. He had many points, but the bottom line was that Satan makes us comfortable at the level where we are at, and after that we don't grow anymore. He has been keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days by himself—he and his wife. He stated he stopped reading other people's literature and listening to tapes and that he concentrated on what he could glean from the Scriptures on his own.

His presentation was reminiscent of a person who doesn't speak often and so attempted to share everything he has discovered—much of which deserved some interactive discussion. But his presentation was very interesting; he was very comfortable talking about major events in the history of the Worldwide Church of God and the people at Pasadena. He didn't speak as a man who was bitter, but rather as a person who was there and knew firsthand.

He resigned from his position in Worldwide in 1979 and the hierarchy was concerned he would start a church of his own. That was not his intent, but rather he could not find compatibility with what they were doing, what they were teaching, and what was in the Bible, so he resigned. I got the distinct feeling from what he said that now he would like to start producing tapes and distributing them. He has some very strong feelings on corporation churches and a paid ministry, which he bases on the Scriptures.

He stated he was sorry he had accepted money for doing the work of God and said he had repented and would never do that again.

— Ken Omick
aok71@juno.com

New Internet Forum

I started a new forum called Fellowship Forum. It has an open door policy. No password is required. Links to other ministries are allowed, as well as links to articles with encouragement to discuss these links. There is an anonymous post option. The only thing not tolerated is active sin. Someone's past



sins are forgotten. There are e-mail notification and post preview options. Feel free to come in and join the discussions. Promote your ministry, and be ready for some engagement.

The URL is:
www.boards2go.com/boards/board.cgi?&user=KevinWelch

— Kevin Welch

Plan To Replace Most A.C. Buildings on Campus

The finalization of the sale of the former Ambassador College campus and Worldwide Church of God headquarters has again been delayed until at least Spring 2002. The purchase by Legacy Partners is being delayed for additional meetings assessing the impact on the community.

Legacy is prevented from destroying the old mansions because they are historic buildings protected by city regulations. However, they plan to demolish the old Administration Building, Student Center, classrooms, dormitories and other buildings built by the Worldwide Church of God.

The only A.C.-era building that will be preserved will be Ambassador Auditorium, which Legacy Partners plans to "give" to the City of Pasadena. "Give" is in quotes because Legacy plans to destroy the existing parking garage, making it necessary for the city to build a new one for the auditorium—one that will be no where near as convenient. Also, Legacy has guaran-

teed the City of Pasadena against operating losses on the auditorium for up to \$1 million a year—but the WCG lost nearly \$2 million in some operating years. The auditorium is of fine quality, but it lacks enough seating to make most concert series profitable.

Legacy intends to build almost exclusively housing on their newly acquired property. There is almost no open land in the Pasadena area, and most all new housing units come from the replacement of houses by multi-unit buildings. Legacy originally planned to put 1,943 units on the campus, but has now reduced it to 1,727. Nevertheless, that would still increase the population of Western Pasadena by more than 40%. The West Pasadena Residents Association (WPRa) has recently raised serious concerns about the traffic jams that are likely to result from the great increase in population. You can look at the WPRa information and more campus photos at:

www.wpra.net/NewFiles/neighborhoodalert.html
www.wpra.net/NewFiles/Photopage.html

I personally went to college and worked on this campus for 13 years. It was a beautiful place and I enjoyed it very much. Many people worked hard to make it beautiful and keep it that way. God knows that. I have received a few letters prophesying that God will yet give these facilities back to a CoG organization and do a great work from there. Other people feel that it is a monument—much like the estates

of dictators—to the extravagance of leaders who neglected the poor who faithfully supported them.

— Norman Edwards
(with information provided
by Harry Curley)

Field Guide to World Religion

The Field Guide to the Wild World of Religion is now up on the Web. It's still under continuing construction. Right now the emphasis is just on providing information. You'll find a Religious Lingo Lexicon giving short, basic definitions for terms that may be unfamiliar to the average person on the street—everything from Preterism to Pentecostal to Petra and Heresy to Hierarchy to Hermeneutics. These are the kind of words you can't just look up in most dictionaries, as they may have very specific connotations, depending on the religious circles in which you travel.

Another section has more extensive explanations of some concepts, such as the difference between Pentecostal and Charismatic; and overviews of a number of contemporary religious movements, both Sabbatarian and non-Sabbatarian.

I'll be adding a section soon on "Religious Urban Legends" debunking such perennial chain e-mails as the one alleging that "scientists at NASA confirmed the miracle of Joshua's Long Day", and the one that alleges that some representative of Proctor and Gamble appeared on a TV talk show and revealed that company profits are going to the Church of Satan.

The purpose of the website is to provide a central repository of information, documentation and commentary about the religious ideas, groups, movements and teachers of our modern world to assist readers in sorting through the conflicting claims out there in the religious marketplace. The site is aimed not at just Sabbatarian COG folks, but the general public. There are, however, sections which will no doubt attract more interest from those with a background in the COG movement because they hit "closer to home". Yes, there are already sections on the Hebrew Roots movement and the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert Armstrong.

The website address is
<http://www.isitso.org/guide>

— Pam Dewey

Would You Help Hyperlink?

I would really love to find a volunteer who'd be interested in hyperlinking all the verses of the 32 lesson Ambassador College Correspondence Course. I can produce all the files needed and tell whoever how to do it. I just need someone with a computer who could spare a few hours each week to hyperlink the verses. If we could get a few volunteers we could knock such a project off pretty quickly.

— Roger Waite
rwaite@optusnet.com.au



Tapes Available for Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully 2001

Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully Tape Ministry has audio tapes of the presentations made at the last Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully Sabbath Conference held at Andrews University May 25–27, 2001 (see website www.andrews.edu/services/sabbathconference/2001). The conference theme was The Hebraic Roots of the Advent Faith.

If you would be interested in having these tapes please contact **Candace Powers** at blainchris@yahoo.com.

Speakers for the 2001 conference are in **boldface**, below, followed by their message title in *italics*.

Albert P. Wellington, PhD, Project Gamaliel, a retired psychologist with a broad academic background that includes theology, law, and philosophy, founded Project Gamaliel in 1981, and has since remained the project's executive director. He has concurrently filled the role of both publisher and editor of Crossroads (begun originally as Project Gamaliel Newsletter), as well as its principal contributor.

Judaism/Adventism: Two Houses Divided. Is There Hope? The speaker

will attempt to highlight—with the help of scriptural and historical sources of evidence—the great advantages both of these groups have been endowed with by the GOD of our Fathers, the Creator of the Universe. At the same time he will try to point out some of the reasons each remains a house divided, and why attempts at dialogue meant to remove the stumbling stones that keep them apart remain at the dream stage. In the process the speaker humbly hopes to at least begin to unveil the answer to the question posed by the subtitle.

1844 Revisited: A New Look at the Sanctuary Investigative Judgment "Doctrines". An examination of what, in the speaker's own opinion, has been one of the greatest contributions Adventists have made to the study of scriptural truth for our time. This remains an object of controversy among Adventists themselves, not to speak of the wider rejection or at best gross skepticism on the part of other groups in the Christian community.

Tom Stapleton, Grand Fork SDA Church, British Columbia is an electrical contractor from Canada. Married with three children, he presently serves as an Elder of the Grand Fork SDA Church of Grand Forks, BC. Reared as a Catholic he accepted the Advent faith and the Sabbath truth in 1983. Since 1990 he has studied the Biblical festivals as they relate to Adventist prophetic interpretation. His studies have resulted in discoveries of how the "daily" and the "prophetic" time periods of Daniel relate to the festal calendar.

Does the New Testament Support Festal Celebrations? The speaker will address the New Testament texts that have a bearing as to the continuity and validity of the Biblical festivals for Christians.

How the Ancient Festivals Hold the Key to Victorious Christian Living: A New Look at the Festivals of the Hebrew Economy. God blessed abundantly in the Old Testament during the festivals. This study will uncover powerful principles God established in blessing and cursing. Understanding these principles as revealed in the biblical festivals have a fundamental basis for right thinking and for making right choices. These principles when studied

and practiced produce powerful results in one's life. The speaker will share how an understanding of these sacred principles has changed his own life.

Pastor Richard A. Washington, from Inkster, Michigan, has been a pastor and evangelist in the Seventh Day Adventist Church for approximately 26 years. Currently he is the pastor of the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church in Inkster, Michigan. He also serves as a chaplain at the William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan. Pastor Washington is married to Carolyn Washington who specializes in herbal therapy for both the preservation of health and their remedial usage for illness. He has two adult children who are pursuing their college education.

The Hebrew Roots of the Dietary Laws in the Seventh Day Adventist Church. While the dietary practices of vegetarianism in the Seventh Day Adventist Church is admired and practiced by both Adventists and non-Adventists alike, where do we find in the Hebrew Scriptures any mandate to become vegetarians? If vegetarianism is taught from the Hebraic roots, then where can it be found? The speaker will explore both the practical and theoretical view of vegetarianism from the Biblical or Hebraic perspective.

The Hebrew Roots of the Doctrine Concerning the State of the Dead in the Seventh Day Adventist Church: A New Look at a Distinctive Fundamental Doctrine. In this symposium the speaker will discuss the state of the dead as understood in the Hebrew faith. As the Hebraic concept of this doctrine is contrasted with the Greek concept it sheds light on the resultant conflicting theologies of this doctrine in the Christian Church. The speaker will also explore how these conflicting ideologies have an impact on the eschatology of the dead.

Dr. Sidney L. Davis, Jr., Great Lakes, Illinois is a Naturopathic Physician (N.D.), a graduate of Bernadean University (Los Angeles 1975) and the Anglo-American Institute of Drugless Therapy (Scotland, UK 1977). He presently serves as a petty officer in the United States Navy where he specializes as an analyst in Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometry at the Naval

Dental Research Institute, Great Lakes, Illinois. Dr. Davis was ordained as a Deacon in the Shalem Seventh Day Adventist church in Waukegan, Illinois (1999). He is the president of the Bible Sabbath Association, organized in 1943 and headquartered in Fairview, Oklahoma. Dr. Davis is the principle editor of "Proclaiming The Sabbath More Fully" newsletter and research journal and the principle organizer of the annual PTSMF Sabbath conferences since 1998. In July 1999 Dr. Davis was knighted into the Honour Guard of the Imperial House of Sellassie of the Solomonic Dynasty and serves as the Commander General of the English Obedience in recognition of his ministry and service to the Ethiopian people and the African Diaspora. He is of Ethiopian ancestry.

The Hebrew Roots of Sabbath Observance as It Relates to the Observance of the Biblical Festivals in the Seventh Day Adventist Church: Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully. Is the practice and observance of the Biblical festivals contrary to Adventism? If the Hebrew roots of the Sabbath and the festivals are the same, why do SDAs believe that Sabbath observance is okay for Christians but festival observance is for Jews only? This presentation is an "apologia" to the article *Biblical Questions Answered "Reinventing Ancient Rituals?"* by Angel Manuel Rodriguez that appeared in the *Adventist Review*, February 10, 2000 (see <http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/Biblequestions/reinventingancientrituals.htm>).

The Hebrew Roots of Women's Ministry in the Seventh Day Adventist Church: A New Look at Women's Ordination. The speaker will present evidence from Judaica and early Church documents that the role of women in temple and synagogue worship served to define the roles and functions of women in the early centuries of the Christian church. These findings will be compared to New Testament evidence of women's roles with an emphasis on those New Testament texts traditionally interpreted to exclude women from the ordained ministry in the Seventh Day Adventist church.

— Sidney L. Davis, Jr

[It is good to see these Seventh Day Adventists looking to their doctrines to see exactly how supportable they are from the Bible. It would be great if all religious groups did that. It is interesting to note that some of the issues are very similar to those experienced by the Church of God groups and some are very different. For tapes, contact Candace Powers at blainchris@yahoo.com. — NSE]

Andrews University To Host Sabbath Conference 2002

Andrews University will host *Proclaiming the Sabbath More Fully Sabbath Conference 2002* on **May 17-19, 2002** in Berrien Springs, Michigan at the V.E. Garber Auditorium in Chan Shun Hall.

"He shall think to change the times and the law" (Dan 7:25).

Prophetic history shows that anti-Judaism has played as much of a role in the abandonment of the annual Holy Days as it has in the abandonment of the Sabbath. The abandonment of these Biblical institutions was due to their becoming negatively associated with the Jewish religious system. The strong anti-Judaic reason for rejecting Sabbath observance is also the fundamental reason given by early Christian writers for condemning the observance of the annual Holy Days. In both cases the "beast" power of Daniel chapter 7 did not "nail to the cross" the Holy Days and the Sabbath, rather it replaced them.

The New Testament reveals they existed and were universally observed in the early Church.

The "Christian" theology of contempt against the Jews has influenced the repudiation of Biblical institutions such as the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days. Since their abandonment various theological positions have been advanced to justify their non-observance in the Christian Church. This conference is an attempt to show the truth that God gave the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, not as trademarks of Judaism, but as signs of His saving plan for the whole human family. These together "proclaim the Sabbath more fully."

Continued on page 18

Rightly Distributing the Word of Truth

by Rabon Vincent (with Norm Edwards this time)

 I read your article that mentioned the need for commentaries with great interest. I've been thinking about doing a commentary on Revelation. Of course, there is the admonition at the end to be careful not to add to or take away from the words.

With that in mind, I am hoping to use the purest Greek text I can find to be the source document from which I produce the commentary.

In order to find the purist Greek text, I have been using well known corruptions (1Jn 5:7, 1Tim 3:16, etc) as a litmus test to help me in my search. Using this technique I have, so far, come to think of the Scholtz text and the Aland-Black text as purer than many of the others.

However, the thought occurred to me, there is probably someone who has gone down this dusty trail before, making the comparisons, possibly coming up with a computerized version of a 99.999% pure text. If so, there is no need for me to re-invent the wheel. I would gladly use their text.

Do you know of any source material (on or off the Internet) that could be of use in this project?

Take care.

Have a great feast!

— Wily Elder

email: wily@wilyelder.com
askyourbible.com wacogate.com
beastmark.com wilyelder.com

I am not as knowledgeable of the various Greek manuscripts as you are. I have looked for English translation books with the significant differences among the various Greek manuscripts and have not found any. Nevertheless, it is clear from various Bibles that note some manuscript variations, that Revelation has the highest percentage of alternate readings of any book.

I would not be concerned about the admonition not to add or take away words as long as your objective is to convey what the best Greek manuscripts say. If you believe that you know the true doctrines of the Bible or

that you understand prophecy and then you translate the Greek words (or choose Greek manuscripts) so that they agree with your ideas, then you may be in trouble.

If you end up with what appears to be a right translation, but you cannot explain its meaning, then I would just leave it as is and go on. I think most of the manuscript discrepancies that we have now came about because somebody decided that he could more clearly explain what the Bible meant—but may not have been right.

I would be somewhat careful with the “test scripture” approach. Manuscripts are usually copies of copies of copies of... A manuscript might fail on one of your “test scriptures”, but otherwise be one of the best manuscripts available. One of your “test scriptures” could have been corrupted by a copyist many years ago, but then since then all of the copies have been faithful. Other manuscripts may pass your test scriptures, but be faulty elsewhere.

We would be served well if all copyists did nothing but make perfect copies. That way we would have exact copies of the originals. But sometimes, the spelling of words changes over the years, and copyists decide to use the new spellings that everyone else is using (when you hear Bible critics talk about the numerous thousands of “discrepancies” between the Bible manuscripts, nearly all of them are spelling discrepancies—there is no question at all in meaning). Sometimes, language changes over the years, and copyists decide to update the manuscripts to use current words and language structure. Sometimes, the names of places change, and copyists decide to put the new name of a place rather than the old one. And sometimes, there are scriptures that are unclear, and the copyist believes they know the “whole story”, so they add things to clarify it.

If the copyists were always right in their “improvements”, we would be even better served than with the ones who simply make perfect copies every time. However, they are all human, many did not understand the doctrines,



and some worked for church organizations that tried to make sure that the Bible reflected their version of doctrines.

Why has God let this happen to us? Why didn't he give us perfect manuscripts of the Bible so that we could obey Him?

I believe that this is answered by the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14–30). God simply does not give the same amount of truth to everyone, but judges us fairly on what we do with what we have. Just as God lets parents either enhance, help or mess up the lives of their children for generations to come, He lets copyists and Bible scholars enhance or mess up the future of other believers for generations to come. In both cases, He put us in a world where we can really make a difference and He wants to see what we will do—but He also limits the damage so that His plans may continue.

We certainly need honest people, who desire to believe God in spite of traditional religion teaching, to study the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts and to write which they believe are most accurate and why. Most people do not have the skills or time to do this, but many would be benefitted if some people would do it. It is the purpose of the Holy Scriptures Version to make this kind of research available for future generations.

Thanks a lot. Please keep up the good work. I am not sure of the manuscript issue with 1 Timothy 3:16. It would be good to publish a list of what you believe are other important “test scriptures” to at least check in a manuscript.

I will publish your letter so that others can contact you [see e-mail above] or Rabon Vincent Jr, 324 E Albion St, Avilla, Indiana 46710-9434; e-mail: rabon007@ligtel.com. 

Analysis of Annual Audit of the United Church of God, *an International Association*

The Sept/Oct 2001 edition of the *United News* includes the CPA's annual audit report. Some interesting information can be gleaned from the report.

The total budget for the year ending June 30, 2001 was **\$16,183,488**.

Of this amount, ministers' salaries were **\$5,053,458**.

In addition, ministers' Feast bonus¹ was **\$523,695**.

In addition was **\$429,999** for Public Proclamation. Listed under salaries, we have to assume this went to the ministry as home office salaries were under their own separate category.

This means the total wages paid the ministry was **\$6,007,152**.

In the July 2001 issue of the *United News* Mr. Pinelli said the church employs **98** ministers.

Dividing total wages by 98 means the average minister wage was **\$61,297**.

This \$61,297 compares with the US *average household income* in 1998 of **\$38,885**².

The average minister's wage of \$61,297 is **157.6%** of \$38,885.

In addition to ministers' salaries the auditors listed insurance and health care. This was **\$1,134,114** for all employees. How much of this went for ministers and how much for office employees? The auditors did not say. We can make a good estimate, however, by adding 25 home office employees to the 98 ministers. (Although 25 seems too many based on the writer's experience as chief operations officer of a large mortgage banking company,

let's err on the high side to be fair.) \$1,134,114 divided by 98 ministers and 25 employees computes to a cost per person of \$9,220³. Thus it appears each minister's share of insurance and health care costs were: **\$9,220**.

Travel, mileage, meals and lodging was shown as **\$1,042,977** which per minister was a figure of: **\$10,642**.

Thus adding together salaries, insurance, health care, and travel, a total yearly cost per employed minister seems to be: **\$81,159**⁴.

The previous audit had listed \$7,888,045, which is **\$52,586** per month, for all salaries for the 15 months which ended June 30, 2000. That compares with the 2001 auditors' figure of 12 months all salaries of \$7,395,640, which is **\$61,630** per month. Thus there was a yearly increase in the salary category of **11.7%**.

This 11.7% increase can be compared to the inflation increase for year 2000 of **3.5%**.

For those who like overall percentages, the following may be of interest:

As a percentage of budget: all salaries, insurance, benefits, and travel was: **59.1%**.

As a percentage of budget: all radio and print media was: **7.1%**.

For the rest of expenditures refer to the *United News* Sept/Oct 2001 .

Are Members Responsible For Church Spending?

Many church organizations teach that once a member "gives money to God", he or she is no longer responsible for how it is used. However, this writer knows of no scripture that says that. But some scriptures say the opposite:

Mark 7:9-13 shows that first century denomination leaders allowed people to dedicate property to God in order to avoid caring for their parents. But Jesus taught the people that they were responsible for following God's commandments, not the human leaders.

In **1 Corinthians 9:6-12**, Paul states that giving money to Barnabas and him would be better than giving it to other teachers, but he does not say all believers must give only to him.

2 Corinthians 8:19-21 states that Paul agreed with the Corinthian congregation in selecting a man to travel with a large offering to make sure it was spent correctly: "providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men".

Most of the requests for money in the New Testament are for a specific purpose—brethren could choose to give or not to give. There is no example of collecting money "for future expenses" and no example of spending money from a previously collected fund.

The writer of this article attends the UCG-IA, but asked to remain unnamed so that his relatives attending would not be persecuted or asked to leave. His hope is that the UCG-IA leaders will be more honest with their members about finances.

I, Norman Edwards, have not verified these figures, but did write to the UCG-IA over six weeks before publication, asking them to submit any kind of corrections or clarification. I received no communication from the UCG-IA.

If anyone is wondering about finances associated with *Servants' News*, a statement is available for the asking, and is automatically sent to those who give over \$10 in one year. — NSE

FOOTNOTES:

1. Most members are not aware of the ministry's annual 10% Feast bonus. There it is in the audit report. Moreover the Feast bonus has been known to this writer since 1974 when he first did home mortgages for some WCG ministers.

2. Source: The latest US Statistical Abstract published year 2000.

3. At \$9,220 per year, **\$768** per month, this health and insurance plan costs nearly twice as much as the average one. Why?

4. How many members know their minister's salary and perks? Do any? Shouldn't they? Does it not seem proper that salaries and perks would be fully disclosed to the members who pay them? Why should this attempt to figure them out be needed in a church that claims itself to be a True Church. Should this be showing members how to wisely spend money? Should it not be setting the example of the Christian principles of truth and not evasion, openness and not concealment, light and not darkness?

[name withheld] 

**"Building A Healthy Church"
from page 1**

God is divided. We have each come to certain conclusions as to the reasons. This article will describe a healthy Church and give some reasons for the division.

Leadership is critical. The Bible speaks clearly of ministers, shepherds and of proper government/administration. The important questions are how does a Godly minister and Godly administration operate.

Each of us wants to be part of a healthy, growing, vibrant church that has a vision of how Godly families operate. Above all, a healthy church understands how weak, how sinful, how lacking all humans are. Again the paradox, a healthy church understands how unhealthy it is. Christ came for those who realize they are sick and need a doctor. Those that believe they are healthy are not quite ready yet. Those that once believed they were in need of a doctor but have come to believe they are healthy need the message to the Laodiceans, in large doses. Denial of one's current state is a hallmark of the Laodicean mindset. Judgment is upon the Church of God (1Pet. 4:17) and God cares nothing for our opinion of our spiritual state.

The truth will set us free. It will also unite us. We have much truth about doctrine, but each of us is weak in its application. Just because a church or a person says something does not make it true—a "blinding flash of the obvious", but still part of the thinking of all of us.

God used Mr. Armstrong mightily to restore truth that was greatly needed in the Church as a whole. This is especially true in understanding how the holy days reveal God's plan, and in particular, this is not the only day of salvation. Have we forgotten what he said on a number of occasions? One of the proofs of the true Church is that it is willing to change when error is discovered. Some organizations are established on the basis that nothing will be changed. Mr. Armstrong was willing to change. Are we? Probably the hardest thing for humans to do is to admit wrong and change.

Causes of the Division

In volume 2 issue 6 of *Church of God*

News in the article "Recapturing the Vision for Family Relations", Brian Orchard makes the statement, "Government does not need to be an ongoing problem for us in the Church of God—if we see it as a family." I agree completely.

This concept gets at the very core of the problems and division within the Church of God. However, when only a few in the family make virtually all the decisions, it makes for a very unhealthy family. We are all brothers and sisters. The only parent is God, the Father. Christ is our brother. Many in the family truly believe that a few brothers have "the rule over the rest of the family" using Heb. 13:17. The mistranslation and misunderstanding of this scripture must be rooted out of the Church of God.

The word "paradigm" is used several times, although I don't really like the word. I suppose it is associated negatively with Worldwide and their use of it. The meaning of the word, however, is what's important. One definition is our overall way of looking and thinking about something, our overall perspective on an issue, how we view something which is based on certain concepts and whatever "angle" we might be viewing the issue. When our paradigm is wrong or faulty, then our conclusions are as well. Often, when people disagree, the main reason they do is they are coming from different paradigms. All of us have some faulty paradigms. We all strongly resist paradigm changes because we look at our present paradigms as a core part of who we are. Usually a paradigm is mostly subconscious, or even part of our unconscious thinking. A lot of emotion is usually involved. When a paradigm change begins to occur it is like a light coming on.

Try to identify some of your paradigms in this article. Attempt to emotionally detach yourself from them and strive to look at them from a new, fresh perspective. Not all paradigm changes are for the better.

Two examples. Many in the Church have a negative paradigm regarding the concept of psychology. Psychology is simply the study of the mind, emotions, and behavior. Is there a lot of ungodliness and misunderstanding involved in how man uses psycholo-

from page 1

are immediately implementing all the biblical principles covered in *Starting a Local Congregation*, most of the people might find it so different that they would not even study it, but simply leave to form another group that is like what they have now. The article suggests a reasonable "middle ground" that could be achieved within the existing organizations while moving them toward a more biblical method of functioning.

The article's author, Jim Butler, had no knowledge of the other articles in this *Servants' News* issue, but on his own concluded "the corporate churches of God are dying of old age".

Jim Butler lives with his wife, Beverly, in Rancho Cordova, Calif. (e-mail: jim-beverly@msn.com). They have 2 children; their son Scott, and their daughter Jennelle, who is married to Scott Crain. They all live in the greater Sacramento area and are active in the Church of God.

— NSE

gy? Of course! What doesn't man botch-up? But the study of the mind, emotions, and behavior is in large part what Christianity is all about, only true Christians understand the need for God's spirit, and the sacrifice of Christ and all that entails. But God expects us to continue learning how our minds and emotions work, and the causes of our behavior.

A most damaging paradigm is the idea that a church organization is "God's government on earth." While this concept seemed to make some sense earlier in our history, in our present context, it simply indicates how arrogant we all can be at times.

Services and Activities

Individually we must not get too busy for the Church. Our relationship with the Father, with Christ, and with each other should always have priority.

Dealing with the "nitty-gritty" of everyday life from God's viewpoint motivates us to grow and change. Services should serve as a starting point from which we can build relationships—encouraging each other to be real, to think, to ask questions, to express emotions and needs in an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, not judgment.

In a truly healthy church, services are, in a sense, incidental. People in a healthy church are interacting, sharing their lives with several during the week. We should be friendly and respectful to all; close with a few. This simply is reality and all we have time and effort for.

The local church is very important. Because the Church is such a motley group and often the only thing in common is the truth; true, close friendships are in some ways more difficult. The smaller groups make this even more true. One of the biggest problems in our modern world is a lack of meaningful connectedness with people. In our communication especially, if not a generality, **we must come to understand that much of what we say is simply our opinion and just so much speculation.**

Let's not be afraid of opinion and speculation; often that is all we have. Generalities have their place but specifics are needed for people to change and grow. Let us get rid of the idea that any man speaks for God. Humans can be inspired by God and are, but let's strive to be humble enough to admit our many limitations. The more we know the more we should realize how little we know. Let's not be afraid of questions. Questions help us to learn. Our church culture, historically, has been afraid of questions. The paradigm that only a minister has the answer to spiritual issues is inaccurate.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 has quite a bit of instruction on how services should be handled. Much of this instruction has been ignored by the Church of God in our lifetime. Please read these scriptures.

Some suggestions that would make our services more useful and biblical:

1. Every three or four months have a "town-hall" church meeting where ideas, feelings, plans can be discussed.

2. Interactive services or Bible studies held once or twice a month. The topic, with an outline, could be announced and handed out well in advance. (many could obtain their outline over the Internet) This will allow for more useful discussion. The interaction should allow all to hear the contributions of the others. Wireless

microphones can be utilized. Written questions or comments should also be solicited from those who do not wish to speak. While interaction should be orderly, it should not be overly controlled. The most useful interaction occurs when the entire group participates and the moderator serves as a skilled facilitator asking the right questions and keeping the discussion focused. The problems with interaction can be minimized or eliminated through proper instruction and mature discussion of any problems.

3. When services include a sermon, 15 minutes or more could be allowed for questions or comments. This segment should be moderated by someone other than the speaker and should be interactive. The speaker should not feel a need to answer any questions unless the question or comment is directed specifically to a comment he made during the sermon. If anyone feels threatened by this, their paradigm regarding a "church family" is wrong.

4. Music should be a more inspiring part of services, both with the congregational singing and special music. Special music could be weekly using inspirational tapes and CDs in addition to local or regional talent. Imagine listening to the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah for example. Too often congregational songs are not sung with feeling. Many of the songs are part of the problem.

5. A leadership club should be a mainstay of every church. We are training to be leaders, are we not? Everyone interested in growing should attend. This club should focus on how to make messages more fully meet the needs of the congregation. Content, not delivery should be the emphasis. Each meeting should have a subject and be a workshop where all have been given a specific outline of the areas of discussion and the subject should be discussed in depth. There is no reason these clubs should not be co-ed. Women face the same circumstances in their daily lives as the men.

6. Seminars should be frequent. Topics could include relationships, communication, Godly psychology, leadership skills, family relationships, child rearing, thinking skills, how to give an answer for your faith, etc.

These seminars could be organized and led by various people in the congregation, both men and women. Those involved should be well prepared and solicit input from many, remembering that all of us have only a few aspects of any one gift. There should be interaction during and/or at the end of a seminar and this will also bring out the different gifts and areas of understanding.

Outside speakers could also be invited for some topics. There are many excellent books that deal in detail with Biblically based subjects. We have much to learn about Christian living. Even the clear Biblical instruction that the older women should teach the younger has been mostly ignored by the Church, unfortunately, due to the ministers' desire to want members to look to them for the "answers." This is easily implemented and does not need a minister involved.

7. Small group Bible studies could be encouraged. Groups interested in studying and discussing specifics, such as doctrine, history, prophecy, Christian living, etc. could exist concurrently.

8. Tapes and books are extremely valuable. When an excellent tape or book is discovered it should be circulated and/or announced to the Church. There are many books written by those outside the Church of God that are extremely helpful. Getting away from our "booklet/article mentality" would help greatly in our understanding that often life does not have simple answers. Personally, I have found a number of books written by several men in New Life Ministries to be excellent. I list several because they are so good. These books can be found in many Christian book stores or be obtained by calling 1-800-NEW LIFE (1-800-639-5433)

Changes That Heal by Henry Cloud
Boundaries by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

Don't Let Jerks Get the Best of You by Paul Meier

Every Man's Battle by Steven Arterburn and Fred Stoeker
Boundaries in Marriage by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

These books provide great outlines for use in a seminar, leadership club, Bible study, etc.

9. The use of websites is in its infancy and their potential is just beginning to be explored. It would be good to see one or two websites that are well thought out and organized that contain the “best” of any aspect of Christianity, with the most thorough and complete articles and “books”. A list of excellent books pertaining to the subject would also be very helpful. A few websites with an abundance of good information would go a long way in making messages and discussions extremely effective, if people would use them wisely. [Try www.biblestudy.org — NSE]

10. The Feast of Tabernacles is a spiritual high point. Frankly, too often the sermons do not add much to this “high”. Well-developed messages about the meaning of the Feast should be included every year. Topics, such as Training to be a leader, Understanding of how to apply God’s law as a ruler of a city, Specifics on marital and family principles, as well as relational and communication skills, should be given. Speculative and imaginative messages on details of our daily lives during the millennium could be wonderfully motivating.

The Root of the Division — Our Relationships

Truly, government is at the core of Christian living, and the only “government of God” on earth today is God’s written word, the Bible.

This statement about “government” at the beginning of our discussion of relationships points to the core of all relationships—our concept of authority and control. Our traditional understanding in the Church is fundamentally flawed. Too many do not understand how “government”, serving, and the proper use of authority interrelate. This goes to the core of our problems. The result of our improper understanding is division among our congregations. No one likes to think about its fruits. They are hideous. Here is a list of just a few:

1. Division within families, immediate as well as extended families. Church services and activities have become a dividing factor to some families, rather than a unifying one. There is more marital and family discord: parents and children, brothers and sisters don’t speak.

2. Division among long time friends. In many cases extremely close friends.

3. Division affects the Church’s ability to provide a healthy environment for the young people.

4. Young/unmarried people have had their decision about marriage made much more complex.

5. The “Work” of preaching the gospel has suffered enormously.

The Underlying Problem

God created us with the desire to be in control of our lives. He also created us to be free. He told us the truth would set us free. We must actively participate in the resolution of whatever relational problems we have, even if it is not our fault. Our relationships should be deeply rooted in freedom.

There has been much discussion in recent years about servant-leadership. This concept does get at the core of what true conversion is. Godliness seeks to esteem others better than self, to exalt others. A true servant treats others with great respect, deferring to others’ needs and desires. Our Church tradition has been very much like the world. Many kiss-up to the ministry or treat ministers with more respect than others. This worldly “respecting of persons” is sinful according to James. Recently I saw a greeting crew assignment list. At the end of the list it had the pastors’ signature next to “approved by”. Appalling! This illustrates the underlying problem; the over controlling nature or habits of the ministry. Even God does not want to control us, He gives us freedom. Leadership is not domination. Healthy relationships are based in equality with everyone fulfilling their different roles.

These principles apply to our Church experience in several different areas. Many have gone “independent” when they finally concluded that the ministry would not treat them as equal siblings. Many ministers started their own group when they concluded the group they were in was compromising or wrong about certain things. Our “boundaries” had been violated. Keep in mind boundaries are about controlling ourselves not others. Boundaries are spoken of in the Bible as self-control.

So, at a certain level, this division in the Church is evidence of some health-

iness developing. Many have started to recognize their boundaries. We have come to stand up for who we are and what we believe, and will not have anyone abusing us or treating us as inferior. That’s good!

But, we have taken the easy way out. We set our boundaries, but we refused to confront and work out our differences. Boundaries are only established in the context of relationships. In reality, when we divide, our relationships are severed.

Many believe working out the differences is impossible. This might be true in some cases. There are groups and individuals that will not budge. They have no desire to yield to others or work out some Godly compromises.

I’m not advocating violating one’s conscience or compromising with truth. We all compromise in certain areas of life, for the good of all. It is so hard to yield to others, esteem others better than ourselves.

Each group should own their responsibility for the division, for no group is blameless. We must be zealous in the process of removing the log out of our own eye. We all have logs in our vision, and if we don’t believe that, the log is so large it has blinded us.

The following points offer some options that would help resolve our unhealthy paradigms in this area.

Poor Thinking

We have been humanly short on clear, precise, mature, deep thinking. This is part of the human condition. This hampers our judgments, decisions, and opinions. If only we could truly understand this one point.

Some believe the problem stems from wrong attitudes. Of course, poor attitudes toward each other do exist. The dynamics between attitude and thinking may be beyond human comprehension but, in most cases, the attitude is not the problem, it is a symptom. What is judged to be a wrong attitude or ill will toward someone is a result of poor thinking. We develop an opinion—even judge an issue or person—on very limited information. When that opinion is formed it becomes a part of us—not easily re-examined.

Poor thinking affects doctrinal opin-

ions as well as other issues. Many have opinions etched in granite, where facts and truth bounce off quite nicely. We all have a strong proclivity to believe what we want to believe.

We all say or believe things, at times, that we really don't know much about. It sounds good, it makes us feel important in some way, and so we say or believe it. God wants us to learn to think things through. How often we don't! Let's always remember there are related points we have probably not considered, and so we must always keep an open mind, realizing how limited we are. True humility is rare!

Poor Communication and Applying Matthew 18 and 5

Thousands of relationships are strained or severed because we fail to pinpoint our differences and even when we do, we fail to face them and communicate them unemotionally to each other. Often, what appears to be a disagreement is simply one or both sides not clearly communicating what they're trying to say. Clear communication takes a lot of thought and effort.

All too often ministers have not promoted adherence to Matthew 18:15-17. Many have very narrow parameters for when Matthew 18 should be applied. We must require ourselves and each other to take the first and second steps of Matthew 18. Far too often the first two steps are bypassed and "take it to the church" (read it as "take it to the minister") is done. This is a clear violation of Scripture. Also, the implementation and application of the second step is not understood well by many in the Church.

Apparently a minister has stated, paraphrasing, "the Bible does not say you can't go to a minister first." Not true. Also, for a minister to think that Matthew 18 does not apply to him personally, because he is a minister, shows an attitude of incredible arrogance. Violation of the process the Bible outlines is rebellion against the government of God.

Matthew 5:23-24 is often treated as if it is not in the Bible:

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar,

and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Obviously there should be balance and a proper understanding in implementing this principle. Because we disagree with someone, for example, does not necessarily mean we need to go to him. If we have offended him, we do need to go.

Forgiveness

Another vital issue in relationships is forgiveness. With true forgiveness there is **significant** effort to reconcile. It takes a great deal of humility and courage. All cases of hurt must be carefully handled if there is to be reconciliation. One suggestion would be the writing of a letter, a phone call and possibly a follow up with a face-to-face meeting. At least a letter and all parties should make every effort to recognize their part in the problem. Many get forgiveness and reconciliation confused. Forgiveness is possible even if the other party does not repent. For reconciliation to occur it takes "both sides" working at a resolution.

James 5:16: Confess Our Faults to One Another

We have not understood the **critical importance** of this principle: "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed." I have heard a Church of God minister say, from the pulpit, that this essentially refers to confessing to a minister. Really?! Let us strive to be authentic with each other. We all sin, more often than we care to admit, even to ourselves. Let us learn to confess to each other, using proper discretion, and solicit each other's prayers. This will bring us together and unite us. As we practice confession we will come out of denial.

At this point, we have difficulty even acknowledging that many members have problems with sex addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, etc. The few programs attempted through the years to address these problems have died due to our collective denial.

The Division Between Members and Ministers

There is division between members and ministers. Deny it all you want, it

is clearly there. A core tendency with humans is our proclivity toward being "respecters of persons". This division is, curiously, encouraged by members and ministers. Most members like the idea of saying, "I was just doing, believing what I was told," and humans love to have "idols", heroes, whatever you want to call them. Division is encouraged by ministers because they like being looked up to, being special, being number one. Christ and God are the only heroes. The rest of us are mud!

We all need to treat each other as equals. There are no "offices" among siblings. There are jobs to do and all should be free to do the jobs for which we are fitted. Ministers encouraging, and in most cases, subtly requesting that members call them "Mister" is, often, a violation of the principle Christ spoke of about men loving to be called "rabbi, rabbi". If someone feels comfortable calling another by his first name it should be encouraged.

Administration

When most refer to government, they are speaking of administration or structure. Some say we must learn to work within the form of government that Christ will establish at his second coming. If we learn to practice God's way of life, a way of service, we will learn to work within God's government. Practicing humility and esteeming others better than self are traits we must develop as future leaders. Violating scripture and its principles is rebellion against God's government. All have sufficient challenge here.

The core of Godly administration is based on the gifts and abilities of those God places in his Church.

Clearly, the first century Church understood this concept much better than we do. Stephen, a "deacon", was preaching the gospel to the world, boldly. There were prophets, prophetesses and people speaking in tongues. These things would not be allowed in most Church of God organizations. Why? An unbiblical paradigm.

One lesson seems abundantly clear in our short church history. A single strong leader with a clear vision makes the vision of the Church more focused.

The challenge for a healthy church is to have a clear vision even when

many are contributing and sharing in the decision making process. That way, again, is to understand that Godly administration should be based on the gifts and abilities of those God places in his Church. For example, the decisions concerning how the gospel should be preached worldwide should be in the hands of just a small group, those gifted in the needed areas.

Gifts and Abilities

God has given valuable gifts and abilities to all members. We will be judged on how well we each use them (Luke 12:48).

Thoughtful discussion of the gifts and abilities within each congregation and in the Church worldwide is vital toward this end. Each should think about his or her own gifts and talents and those of others. Our thoughts can be written down over a period months. A church and/or board meeting can discuss the findings and implementation over several sessions and input from other churches could be solicited, as some churches are more effective in such complex programs.

When considering gifts and abilities, it is important to understand that within each gift or talent there are many parts. Take the gift of teaching for instance. (I use teaching here in its broadest sense, not simply in the context of lecture.) There are some who are gifted in teaching doctrine, some in teaching principles, and some teachers are gifted in motivating people. Some are gifted in teaching wisdom or understanding or love. Some teachers are extremely effective in teaching the how of something, some in teaching concepts, some can teach how to raise kids, some in having a great marriage. Some teachers are very thorough, some very organized. Some are good at making their points through stories. Some teachers are excellent on teaching people how to think, ad infinitum.

For every gift or ability there are often hundreds or more aspects to that gift. Generally speaking, one person only has a few aspects of any one gift. Our traditional perspective has tremendously hampered the equipping of the saints. There is much to be understood, and applied, if we will grow toward the stature of Christ. This will take true humility and an understanding of what

true Godly service means. This demands a **huge** paradigm shift for members and ministers alike. Implementation is very complex and takes much work.

I know of a couple of men that I consider gifted to be pastors. Neither is gifted in speaking and they are humble enough to realize that and arrange the speaking schedule accordingly. Not that they are not "apt to teach"; they are—simply not gifted in speaking.

Following is a list of gifts and abilities. Some of these are gifts of craftsmanship, spoken of in the Old Covenant:

1. counseling
2. listening
3. teaching
4. preaching
5. writing
6. wisdom
7. discerning of spirits
8. hospitality
9. encouraging
10. giving
11. love
12. mercy
13. compassion
14. study—doctrinal or other
15. knowledge
16. intellect
17. memory
18. thinking
19. administration
20. organization
21. music
22. art
23. faith
24. healing
25. miracles
26. different kinds of tongues
27. interpretation of tongues
28. prophecy
29. working with children or any age group
30. mechanical or handy-man skills
31. athletic skill
32. skill in any specific field
33. raising children
34. humor
35. personality
36. logic

Role of the Pastor

The pastor should be an overseer, a facilitator. No one or two men in any congregation, or church worldwide for that matter, should have the prevailing influence, even if these men are ex-

Pastors and "Ordination"

The Bible teaching on Pastors and "ordination" is much different than the traditional church practices.

The Bible says there should be elders—plural—in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). It says nothing about a "pastor" in every church—indeed, no pastor's name appears in the Bible. The word "Pastor" occurs only once in most New Testaments (Eph 4:11). When Paul wanted to leave instruction for a church, he sent for the elders—more than one! (Acts 20:17).

The traditional Christian concept of "ordination" is not from the Bible. There are 26 Hebrew and Greek words that were changed to say "ordain" in a few places in the King James Bible, but all of those words have another meaning and are most often translated another way. Some major Bible translations, such as the New English Bible, do not contain the word "ordain" at all.

For a detailed study of this Bible teaching, please ask for our free article: *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?*

— NSE

tremely effective ministers. An effective pastor is always thinking of how he can help fulfill the needs of people. They consider how others can have the opportunity to develop and train to be leaders. It is amazing, the Church of God understands we are to be training to be kings and priests, and yet gives their members **fewer opportunities for this training than most churches.**

Ministers should spend significant time studying God's word and Christian living. Instead of busying themselves with administrative issues, paper work, planning socials, etc., a minister should be an important part of training members to be leaders, teaching all how to be Christians. Their understanding of **causes** of why people are sinning and **how** we can overcome should grow. They should teach in depth how Christians should live, think, and mature. There is great room for growth in this area.

People should be encouraged and taught how to think for themselves. Putting on the mind of Christ means much more than agreeing with all the right doctrines. It means learning to

think as Christ does, training ourselves to process thoughts the way he does, coming to conclusions as he would. It means being mature in our thoughts and then, because our thought process is more mature, our actions are more Christ-like for the right reasons.

Decision Making and Voting

In making decisions it is important to think through what the goal is and then base decisions on what will accomplish that goal. Before you fill a job, a thorough and detailed job description should be decided upon and then the appropriate people should go about the business of finding the right person for the job. Often, the cart comes before the horse. Often, we don't understand the Biblical purpose of a job, allowing the ideas of men to interfere.

When God says he appoints men to be ministers, etc. it does not necessarily mean He agrees with decisions made by man. It is our job to recognize what God has done and base our decisions on the criteria God outlines for making such decisions. As in any area of life our judgments are not always wise or godly.

A fundamental flaw in our history is how ministers were chosen. Young men of college age were ordained. Obviously, this does not adhere to Biblical instruction.

If an ordination is to take place, who is most knowledgeable about the people in a local congregation? Obviously the people in the congregation. Not to say a vote should be taken, but the people should be consulted in an intelligent way. People tend to be "respecters of persons" and this often gets in the way of wise and godly decisions.

It is amusing that some think taking a vote/opinion from a number of people is wrong; but taking a vote/opinion from one person is biblical. There are problems with voting as with any procedure for decision making. To vote, when many don't really care or know much about the issues is obviously not intelligent. A vote is a good idea when a local congregation is deciding on social activities for the year. The family is deciding. Same is true when deciding on the time for services, to take two examples. Before taking a vote, relevant points and options should be thoroughly discussed so

everyone has an opportunity to vote intelligently.

With more critical and complex decisions, smaller groups of people with the needed gifts should be deciding. Any healthy church will have a local board where these decisions can be made and along with the board members others can be brought into a discussion as needed and appropriate.

Proper Perspective on Doctrine

Doctrine is very important. It seems, however, that we have a hard time seeing doctrine in its proper perspective. The approach of many is simply an overreaction to the apostasy. In everything, we must strive for balance. We use scriptures such as "...that we all speak the same thing... can two walk together except they are agreed..." etc. as if we have to agree on all doctrine. This is not what the Bible teaches at all. There are many scriptures that have not been made clear by God.

There is truth in the saying, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials tolerance, and in all charity." In order for unity to happen we must determine what the essential doctrines of Christianity are. I suppose many look at the "18 Truths" or the fundamental doctrines of an organization as such. The "18 Truths" were never intended as a list of the essential doctrines, although a few are, and the fundamental doctrines of most groups come close with several doctrines in most lists that are clearly not essential to believe for salvation.

The idea that one must agree with all the doctrines of one's own organization is not Biblical or realistic. Agree with the essentials, yes. One is not compromising his beliefs if they belong to an organization where some of the secondary doctrines are considered "watered-down" or wrong by the individual. One can simply disagree. Consider the possibility that both organization and individual could be wrong. **The idea of having doctrinal purity is a wonderful aim, but will never be accomplished by humans.** Uniformity of doctrine in an organization, outside of essentials, is in truth an attempt at preventing people from doing their own thinking, "group-think", if you will. To understand that there are disagreements about certain

doctrines and learning how to disagree in a godly way does wonders in overcoming human arrogance. The ability to handle differences and disagreements is a sign of maturity.

If handled in a godly fashion, discussing differences of opinion is part of what makes life interesting and exciting.

Essential doctrine must be abundantly clear in Scripture, to a converted mind, and must be essential to believe for salvation. The definition is a bit slippery, but it's the best I could do. The point being, our approach to doctrine has been extremely divisive.

God has placed those in His Church who have a gift of doctrinal study and these people should be used in establishing doctrine. All should consider their studies with an open mind. Most are not gifted in this area.

With our present structure and perspective, regarding doctrine, many ministers are fearful of studying a doctrine from a fresh perspective for fear of coming to a conclusion contrary to corporate belief. The present process that United has on changing fundamental doctrine points to an interesting possibility. As I understand it, they need 75% of the General Conference of Elders to vote for a change. It would be possible for 74% of the elders to believe a doctrine should be changed but no change would occur. *[A UCG member told me he thought that about 25% of the General Conference members do not believe in voting on doctrine, so it is totally unlikely that any change can occur.]* At the same time, the elders in that organization must state they are in agreement with the fundamental doctrines. What if 2% disagree with the corporate doctrine? Clearly, there is a problem with the process. I'm not picking on United. Most groups are not even open about their process.

There is, in a real sense, little need for discussion of essential doctrines, at the core level, once they are established. A critical question in determining an essential doctrine is to ask, and answer, "Why is this essential to believe?"

Secondary doctrines are important and should be studied and taught. If you think agreement on doctrines such

as the place of safety, the destiny of man, church eras, jury duty, etc. is needed and disagreement is a valid reason for division please give it some thought. Incidentally, aren't lawyers very much involved in the process of judging legal matters? What's the difference? Lawyers make a lot of money so that's okay? Being a lawyer or participating in jury duty is an individual's choice.

Error in secondary doctrines or aspects of essential doctrines can be dangerous. The point being, we need to strive to have the proper and balanced perspective and approach to doctrine. Some sectors in the first century church believed the resurrection had already passed (2Tim 2:8). This obviously is a major heresy. That it was a reality, even for a time, shows the church was much more open to differences than we are. Rev. 2 and 3 and the cryptic descriptions of the seven churches illustrate the same point. The first century church clearly tolerated some being slave owners. Perhaps the church then erred on the side of being too tolerant. Today, we clearly err on the side of being extremely intolerant and far too judgmental in an ungodly way.

Some will take the admission that error on secondary doctrines can be dangerous as proof we should divide over differences. Notice I said **can** be dangerous, not **is** dangerous. Please give this some long thought. The critical concept is this: One must be **thorough and complete** in establishing the essentials. For example, the Church must teach clearly that there are many conditions to be met for salvation. A gift yes, but conditions. If all the essential doctrines are established completely and thoroughly then any error in doctrine is of secondary importance and will not disqualify one from salvation. Please give this some long, hard thought.

Compromising one's own personal beliefs on any doctrine is another issue. Let's try to be honest. There is much in the Bible that is unclear to a converted mind. To use them to divide or feel spiritually superior shows a lack of humility or poor thinking. What if there is really not disagreement? What if one firmly believes the doctrine and the other believes it but is not fully

convinced and believes he could be wrong? Or what if there is agreement on a doctrine but a slight disagreement on an aspect of the same doctrine? I get picky here to illustrate how petty we can get over doctrine. Doctrines and concepts can be very slippery. Humility and honesty about our limitations go a long way toward true Godly unity.

If the right approach to doctrine and unity is holding fast to what Mr. Armstrong taught then why are there **more than a dozen separate groups** doing this, yet not working together? I'm convinced Mr. Armstrong believed the approach he took toward doctrine was needed to keep the Church together. It did keep most of us together. Although, clearly I don't agree with every aspect of his approach, he did see the small-mindedness of men better than most.

Is it more important to believe all the right doctrines or be more concerned about overcoming and developing godly characteristics? Put another way, could one believe all the right doctrines, yet not be a first fruit due to looking at a fellow Christian as inferior because he might be "off" on a few doctrines?

Circa 1939 Mr. Armstrong wrote an article entitled "Doctrine Divides" which describes his perspective on doctrine. I will conclude this section on administration with an excerpt from *In Transition*. I believe the point of the following story relates to doctrine as well as governance, and is significant, if we are intellectually honest.

John Robinson, "History of Government in the WCG", *In Transition*, December 16, 1996:

The Worldwide Church of God did not always embrace the stringent pyramid form of church government it practices today. I know from firsthand experience.

I was only 5 when I attended my first service with the Radio Church of God, as it was known until 1968.

Off and on for decades I've been an amateur WCG historian. I have a considerable church-literature library, and I have been fortunate enough to talk to dozens of former

Ambassador College students of the 1950s about the early days.

I have also been able to process that information against the backdrop of 45 years of WCG attendance, including 16 years of full-time WCG employment.

What is the ideal form of church government? The debate has raged for millennia. For those who still defend the WCG format on the strength of Mr. Armstrong's later writings, I offer you a final story in closing. The story will mean different things to different people, but I think it's an interesting piece of history. I tell it without commentary.

In the Jan. 22, 1996, issue of this newspaper, in an essay titled 'Let's Stop the Rancor Over Ministerial Rank,' the author, Larry Walker, a part-time UCG elder who lives in Bend, Ore., wrote: 'Mr. Armstrong confessed to a younger minister in 1975 that, in retrospect, he felt that the concept of church government he wrote about in 1939 would have worked, but he had been afraid he would lose control. That's quite an admission. Perhaps he would have lost control; we'll never know.'

Mr. Walker did not name the minister, but I subsequently contacted him and he told me the man he quoted was Marc Courtenay, formerly Marc Segall.

Mr. Courtenay, who now lives in Santa Barbara, Calif., graduated from Ambassador College in 1973. He was ordained in October 1975 and served as a full-time WCG elder for 20 years.

I contacted him and asked him if Mr. Walker's characterization of the conversation with Mr. Armstrong was accurate. He said it was.

He said he was seated next to Mr. Armstrong during a meal when the conversation took place. Mr. Courtenay said he

had at the time recently read Mr. Armstrong's 1939 article on government.

'I asked Mr. Armstrong about the article,' Mr. Courtenay recounted. 'At first he gave me the standard explanation that he hadn't fully understood government at the time.' Mr. Courtenay said he then gently pressed Mr. Armstrong on the issue and asked him again about the article.

He said Mr. Armstrong became reflective and then gave him a more thoughtful, candid response.

He said the New Testament reflected a collegial approach to church government and that what he wrote in 1939 was the ideal. Mr. Courtenay said Mr. Armstrong added that if he had had more faith he would have continued that practice, but he 'was afraid of losing control.'

I asked Mr. Courtenay if anyone else heard the conversation. He said his wife, Lisa, had. I talked with her at length on the phone Jan. 28. She said the conversation was as her husband remembered.

'It was on the day Marc was ordained,' she recalled. 'In fact, Mr. Armstrong ordained Marc. After the ordination we were at a restaurant eating with Mr. Armstrong and some other ministers.'

She said she remembers the conversation clearly. She said there were times when Mr. Armstrong would speak candidly, and that was one of them.

Preaching the Gospel

As we know, the Father must call a person before their mind is open to the truth. God's word is clear however, He does solicit our involvement in the calling, and how hard and effectively we do our part does make a difference.

A healthy church is preaching the gospel strongly and effectively, and clearly pointing out the errors of "mainstream Christianity". Publicly, we should state clearly, and often, this is not the only day of salvation and

Christ is coming back to take over the governments of this world. Some sectors of the Church have clearly backed-off from preaching the gospel with clarity, apparently in fear of offending.

The true gospel is different from the mainstream "Christian" message. **Really different!** Church of God broadcasts ought to sound and look significantly different from other "Christian" broadcasts.

We must remember virtually all the apostles were martyred. John the Baptist had his head cut off, Christ was crucified. Paul, who was "all things to all men" was stoned once, whipped and imprisoned several times. Similar things could be said of the prophets. John 15:18-20 reminds us we will be persecuted if we follow Christ. Isaiah 58:1 is not a formula for popularity. All scriptures about preaching the gospel should be weighed, not just the principles that appeal to our own personality. The gospel is a message of reason, but also a strong warning.

Could this be a big part of why the Church today is not seeing a lot of miracles and the gifts of apostolic times? Are we just too sophisticated to preach the gospel the way they did? Do we think those in the first century were unwise in the way they preached the gospel? Do we have the courage to obey God rather than men? Are we afraid of disobeying a man-made law that prevents us from obeying God? By the way, this entire article points to what I believe are additional reasons why we are not seeing these miracles and gifts.

It is clear that personality has a huge impact on the effectiveness of drawing people. Some respond to a dogmatic personality, others are drawn to a more educational style of presentation. Still others respond to more emotional speakers. Personality is a factor. **We need not limit ourselves to one type of speaker.**

In addition to the traditional program, the use of documentaries is good. A low budget movie about the gospel, or aspects of prophecy could be a reality, if we could work together. It could be so much more interesting than the recent movie, *Left Behind*. Well thought out interviews with care-

fully selected individuals could also be effective.

There are many ideas for getting the gospel out on a local basis. These ideas should be encouraged if the local congregation considers them wise and it does not significantly divert needed funds to the more effective method, in this day and age, of using the media.

The reason for 50% (probably higher now) of the members coming into the Church through personal contact, as opposed to a media effort is simply due to the Church having many "second, third, fourth generation Christians." I am simply stating a fact, nothing more. Neither am I minimizing "personal evangelism". Promoting understanding of what personal evangelism means and how it can be used effectively should be a part of any healthy church.

Local communities always need volunteer help and a church should make this involvement a little easier for those who desire to help. Occasional church projects in the community would also help in being a light. In proper balance, this is also part of preaching the gospel.

Note to the Ministries

Most ministers are fed up with all the criticism of the ministry in "independent" publications. However, the ministers handling of the apostasy in Worldwide showed there is a real need for a publication like *The Journal* and *Servants' News*. The lack of openness in many subsequent church splits further illustrates this need. A healthy family is open. It encourages communication, questions, allows for differences, promotes accountability of all members, does not have any class distinctions.

Perhaps the best question for the ministry in the Church of God is, "Are you teachable?" The question is a good one for all of us. Many people in God's Church know there is really nothing special about any of you. You do not have any unusual insight into doctrine, prophecy, people, or anything else. You are normal people that God has called, not a special class. You have been trained to pastor a church in a certain way. Can you admit it may not be the most effective way to training people to grow and

become leaders? **If you are not mature enough to resolve problems among yourselves, how can you teach others to do so?**

Many pastors are handling from two to six churches, getting around to some churches maybe six to eight times a year. One can't be an effective pastor spread this thin.

The corporate churches of God are dying of old age. Are you teachable enough to make the needed changes? *One definition of insanity is continuing to do something the same way and expecting a different result.* It is time for the Church of God to make needed changes. Because we have always done things a certain way does not make it God's way or the best way.

These splits are not from God. They come from your carnality. Division within God's Church is from Satan. If you believe that most of the members in your organization are "the ones holding fast", "the Philadelphians", etc. you have not thought it through. If you only consider the timing of when most came to your group it should tell you a lot. What first hand knowledge do you have of the bulk of members in another group?

The Church is still shocked that you will not humbly come together and prayerfully and humbly work out your differences as the Bible instructs. We have heard your reasons and excuses. "They have wrong doctrines", "they don't teach the full counsel of God", "they do not preach the gospel properly", "they have the wrong form of government", etc. This is nonsense! There

are many differences in thinking within **each** organization among ministers as well as members.

Some of you have influenced many of your members to become extremely self-righteous, thinking the majority of Philadelphians are in their group and treating members in other groups poorly.

The decisions made by a number of **ministers** to start separate organizations has affected the lives of thousands. This division has caused and does cause much heartache. It might be nice for you, in a number of ways, but for most of God's people it is clearly not. Some ministers have actually counseled in favor of division among mates, as mentioned earlier, all in the name of "obeying God rather than man." In the context of this organizational division, **this is contemptible**, especially in the light of the value God places on marriage.

When you put loyalty to the organization over loyalty to God, this is a violation of the first and second commandments. You are serving something before the true God. **Many ministers still don't understand why they have lost credibility.** When a critical test came, most showed a lack of courage to obey God rather than man. I'm sure most ministers don't see it that way. A few demonstrated great courage. At least one that "bought into" the heresies, including it was fine to work on the Sabbath, has recently been hired by one of the organizations. I would think there has been proper repentance, but one has to question the judgment involved here. It is good you

We Have Unity

We can have unity now with every other believer who is willing to put organizations aside and work with anyone else who considers themselves a believer and strives to live by the Bible.

When all believers do that, we will have complete unity under God. Hoping for or trusting in an organization to create man-made unity is a mistake that almost always causes division.

stood for truth. Did most show leadership in this trial? Nope!

Because people are followers, God is watching the leaders in his Church very carefully. If some of you want to take the needed steps to unite the Church be sure to include a cross section of the family in the process. With a little thought, this can be done effectively. In the mean time, most of us will not hold our breath.

Conclusion

True humility would unite us. People have come to different conclusions regarding the division. Our opinions are mostly etched in stone. Only God can change the heart and mind of a person, and even He will not without our cooperation. I hope this article encouraged some to think about the purpose of the Church and how a healthy family operates.

Many believe unity is impossible. Perhaps a forthcoming article will outline how it could occur. It would not be easy, but it is easier than perhaps we think and would greatly benefit all of us. ☞

"News from Local Congregations" from page 7

This Sabbath conference will address the restoration of a biblical liturgical calendar to the Church. It is believed the implementation of such a calendar would bring more forcibly to the attention of God's people the truths associated with the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Great truths that have lain unheeded and unseen since the day of Pentecost, are to shine from God's word in their native purity. It is with great hope that the study of these

truths will bring great blessings upon the Church that will effect a great reformatory movement among God's people.

"In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired." Ellen G. White, *Prophecy and Kings*, page 678.

Details will follow.
www.andrews.edu/services/sabbathconference/2002/program.php3

—Dr. Sidney Davis, Jr.
 Conference Organizer

[Most CoG members would proba-

bly like to see the Sabbath and Holy Days restored to Christianity. Even though he is speaking at Andrews, a Seventh Day Adventist University, Sidney Davis is clearly departing from the standard SDA teaching which does not include the Holy Days. I am glad to see Christians everywhere ask: "What does God say?" rather than: "What does my group teach?" Why then, Does Mr. Davis feel the need to quote Ellen G. White, the deceased SDA founder? We might ask, "Why do most Church of God groups still feel the need to quote their deceased leaders?" — NSE.] ☞

Possible Correction to David J. Smith Letter—You Decide

In an answer to a letter (Nov/Dec 2000 *Servants' News*, page 23), I stated "David J. Smith teaches he is 'the one group' that is doing God's work."

I have since received a few letters and e-mails challenging this statement. Indeed Mr. Smith has produced tapes and doctrinal statements indicating that the members of his organization are just one of many groups that make up the spiritual church of God. This is a good and positive thing. I believe it is better than other organizations that clearly claim that they are the only or main group that God is using.

My comments were based upon my reading of Mr. Smith's own letters. During the mid 1990's, he was claiming that the great tribulation was soon to begin and that Texas would be the place of safety. He encouraged people to move to Texas for protection. I know a number of people did move there—and then later moved back.

I concluded that he thought his was 'the one group' from the **boldface** parts of his own letter, at right. He said that Satan was opposing God's work and that his headquarters was the center of such opposition. He further clearly said that God called for an ingathering of saints "under my [Mr. Smith's] leadership".

When times are uncertain, some people want to hear a man who seems to know what is going to happen, who is doing the work of God and who is going to be protected. But when we read the **old** letters of these prophetic ministries, it is easy to see that they are not quite as knowledgeable of the future as their letters implied.

As David J. Smith teaches truth from the Bible and encourages people to look to God, he is doing a good work. When he reports **facts** not commonly reported by the news media, he is doing a good work. When he expounds doctrines, prophecy, dreams or conspiracy theories that are **false**, he is doing a bad work. The more the bad work is mixed in with the good work, the less the value of the good work. Some of his past teachings turned out to be wrong and I believe some of his present teachings are wrong also—but I do not have the time to study and write about them in detail.

God will judge everyone's work. Trust God. Don't follow a man.

— NSE

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Newswatch Magazine
Editor David J. Smith
7/31/98

Boldface
and underscoring added by
Servants' News

Dear Brethren:

Since the Bible is spiritually discerned by those who have God's Holy Spirit, conversations can sometimes be thought of as weird by an unconverted mind (1 Cor. 2:7-16). We know that Satan and his cohorts called demons have been around a long time. Before Lucifer's fall because of the sin of pride, he was dedicated to God's service. He and the 1/3rd of the angels that rebelled were taught much of the technology that God uses to uphold the universe, travel in space from planetary system to planetary system, etc. They know their stuff.

It should be NO surprise to us when we read that Satan is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan can select certain people to whom he can give secrets. Some of these secrets fall into the hands of Illuminati agents or people who work for them unknowingly. As a result, many inventions are used for evil and not good. Weather control is one of those items.

I started reporting on weather control and modification years ago—sometime in the 1980s. Tesla had around 900 Patents concerning electricity and weather modification. He made Thomas Edison look like a kindergartner. Starting in the winter of 1976-77, extremes in cold and warmer weather began. There have always been drought cycles. That's not what I'm referring to in this case. I mean OBVIOUS radical extremes like the summer of 1980. That was recorded as the hottest summer on record. Weather bureaus were frustrated because of high weather patterns that were stopped dead still over Texas and the Midwest with NO logical explanation.

Extremely low frequency magnetic wave generators were working by the Soviet Union and the United States. Now listen very carefully to TV weather people. They don't know **WHY rain is everywhere except in a circle of about 100 miles with Dallas/Waxahachie, Texas as the central focus of this intense heat.** If people only knew the spiritual battles going on invisibly, then it would make sense.

God created man in His image to be conformed to the image of His Son. God is working through His church to reproduce sons, We are to inherit ALL THINGS [the universe] as co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 21:7). Satan hates the very thought that he has been defeated and will eventually be destroyed. Jesus Christ and the saints will replace him as ruler over the vast creation.

In the Bible it is recorded that demons said to some unconverted Jews who were trying to cast them out "Jesus we know, Paul we know, but who are you?" [paraphrased]. **In other words Satan knows God is working in the earth through certain human beings and will stop at nothing to thwart their plans and activities. God has called for "an ingathering of saints from a Western state" under my leadership.** NO MAGGIE, THERE IS NO CHAPTER AND VERSE PROPHECYING THIS, ONLY GOD'S VISION AND DIRECT THOUGHTS PUT INTO MY MIND AND THOUSANDS OF OTHER PEOPLE WHO HEARD IT STATED ON WORLDWIDE SHORTWAVE RADIO TEN DAYS BEFORE GOD EVER STIRRED ME UP TO GO TO WHERE THE INGATHERING WOULD BE!! THEN HE SENT SIX DREAMS AND VISIONS TO OTHER CHURCH MEMBERS UNKNOWN TO EACH OTHER TO CONFIRM I THAT I WAS NOT MAKING UP SOMETHING OR HAD SOME BAD PIZZA!

Satan wants to discourage any who are planning on coming with this unusual heat. He wants to cause discomfort to those who have come so as to discourage them. Too bad Satan, we KNOW Who we serve and WHY we came. You are defeated by the death and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus the Christ.

Since stepping out in faith and responding to the call, God has increased the ministry 770% in the radio/TV/shortwave outreach. People who are here are happy as a whole. Satan certainly knew Job and asked permission to afflict him. He knew Peter because Jesus said Satan wanted to sift him. Satan always had a demon follow Paul as a thorn in the flesh. **Do we think Satan does not know US whom God has chosen to witness and warn this nation of the coming disasters if the nation does not repent?** He knows, and he will take your crown if you let him. He will persecute the woman if God permits. Satan hates!

In Christ's love
David J. Smith

A Personal Goodbye

By Horst Obermeit

One of the certainties of our lives on earth is death. Each of us face that certainty at some time. With death comes the need for a funeral of some kind. About 16 years ago while we were still members of WCG my sister Linda died of cancer when she was only 19 and it fell on me to make her funeral arrangements.

It was a most difficult task. The support of all those who came to the funeral made quite an impression on me and was comforting and encouraging. Since my sister had lived in Kansas and only came to North Carolina to stay with us during the last six weeks of her illness and life, most of those who came to the funeral did not know her personally but came to comfort and support my family and me. It made me realize how important and meaningful it is for friends and acquaintances to simply be there for the family during such a time of mourning and loss even if we didn't always know what to say or do. The realization that our presence at a funeral or visitation is helpful and comforting encouraged me to make a greater personal effort to attend funerals not just of close friends as I had done before but also of coworkers and other acquaintances and to be there for them when they were mourning.

At that time one part was rather simple, that was how the funeral itself would be conducted. Our church and minister took care of that for us. Since we and many others left WCG and have become members of various splits or gone in different directions in our views of what is the church, it has become a bit more difficult to know what to do. As I have attended various funerals over the last few years since leaving WCG I have witnessed a variety of approaches in how to deal with this intensely sorrowful and difficult time. Although my basic doctrinal views on such matters as the Sabbath, holy days and the resurrection are still similar to what is taught in many of the splits, I am not a member of any of the splits and don't know of any ministers locally who know me or my family

This article is one man's story about dealing with funeral arrangements in the fragmented Church of God groups.

The writer was a member of the Worldwide Church of God from the early 1960s until 1995. He is an alumnus of Ambassador College who worked in the printing departments on the California and Texas campuses. He continues to observe the Sabbath and feast days and worships with a Church of God, Seventh Day group in Farmville, NC.

Horst Obermeit and his wife, the former Sue Lashua, have lived in North Carolina for 18 years.

personally who impress me as the kind of servant that would respect my desires for a funeral service and conduct it as I would prefer. As I have pondered what to do about funeral arrangements if the need was there, I have not come up with a totally satisfactory answer.

When my father-in-law died about 12 years ago, his widow wanted a simple private ceremony in her home since she was no longer a member of WCG at that time and did not belong to any other church. Since her son and daughter were still members of WCG she agreed to have a small and private service for her immediate family only conducted by the local WCG pastor.

Since my parents were in their mid-seventies and my mother-in-law was 87 years old, we were aware that we faced the strong possibility of a funeral in the near future. When my mother died January 24, 2001 we suddenly faced that reality sooner than we had hoped. We were faced with helping my dad with the funeral arrangements as well as sorting out how we wanted to say goodbye to my mother.

So I thought it might be helpful for me to write a few words about how we did that and what we did for my mom's funeral. This is a personal account and is meant only to give one example of how it can be done and to help others deal with this difficult task. (I will relate some personal information in order to help others, but I would appreciate it if the reader would handle this matter with the respect it deserves.)

Our family consisting of Gary and Hilde Obermeit and their sons (and families), are quite scattered in where they live. I have a brother Tony who lives in Australia, a brother Eric (Zeke)

who lives in California, I live in North Carolina, and my dad Gary (Gerhard) and two of my brothers Klaus and Hans live in Florida. At one time we all belonged to WCG. Now we are as scattered church wise as we are geographically. My parents have been members of the Philadelphia Church of God for several years. Since Klaus lives near my dad, it fell on his shoulders to make most of the funeral arrangements for Mom's funeral. I tried to give him input via phone based on what I had previously learned. Dad wanted him to handle all of that for him, but he realized that he needed to provide what my dad wanted. I'll skip over the details on that to concentrate on the funeral itself.

Since I had been to a funeral performed by a minister of the Philadelphia Church of God for one of its members in our area less than a year before and I had personally found it to be totally unacceptable as far as what was said, how long the funeral sermon went, and how the funeral was conducted, (more on that later) I knew that I wanted to have some input about this ceremony for my mother. I very much respect my dad's desire to have his church and minister conduct the funeral and so my brother and I were faced with trying to say some encouraging and uplifting things during the funeral. I had been to some funerals where members of the family gave a short eulogy or a few words of goodbye. I wanted to do that at my mom's funeral and so did my brother Klaus. We knew it would be a difficult task, but we felt that we wanted to personalize this somber occasion and say some words that would not be offensive.

My Dad wanted a short service and

agreed that Klaus and I could speak briefly and that we could have someone sing three songs. He chose two from the WCG hymnal and I suggested my favorite from that hymnal, "How Great Thou Art". We would have a song to start, then Klaus was to speak briefly, then a song, then I would say a few words, then another song, and then after we were done the rest of the service would be turned over to Dad's minister for the sermon and closing prayer. Since we never got a call or any opportunity to talk to the minister who would be speaking, we were not sure if his message would be like what I had heard previously in a service for one of their members. I decided to place a positive emphasis on certain things in what I said and to include some personal stories about my family that would allow me to distance myself from anything offensive said by the minister.

Klaus said some words of thanks for the comfort and help we were given during this difficult time. He let us know that Mom enjoyed life and especially loved her family and her church. He also said some things about it being a time to mourn but also a time to remember the good times we had with Mom and the laughter we shared with her. Since my brother Tony could not come from Australia, he wanted a few personal words from him read at the funeral. Klaus ended his words by reading Tony's message of goodbye to Mom.

After a song I got up to read what I had written. I had decided beforehand that the only way I could do it was to type out what I wanted to say and then to read it verbatim. Trying to speak from a few notes would have been too difficult for me. Reading it allowed me to stop several times when I was overcome with emotion and then go on when I was a bit more gathered. Here are the words I read to those who were there. I will make some further comments afterward.

It's good to see so many familiar faces. I've known some of you for over 20 years. Thank you for coming during this difficult time in our lives. I'm Horst, the oldest of 5 sons and one daughter of Hilde and Gary Obermeit. My wife Sue and our three children live in North Carolina where we've

lived for 18 years since moving from this area. Eric is here from Pasadena, Klaus is the third son. Tony lives in Australia, and Hans lives here. Our sister Linda died nearly 16 years ago. If you're wondering why I'm wearing a red jacket at a funeral, it's because red is my favorite color and I wanted to honor Mom today. Since this a difficult day for me and standing up here is especially difficult, I thought wearing my favorite color might help me a little bit. Actually I know that I can get through this because the Bible tells me that I can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me. I hope what I wear or what I say won't offend anyone. If it does, please forgive me because that is not my intention. This is not a day to offend people. As we mourn, it is a day to comfort and encourage. I hope that you can take comfort in knowing what a wonderful mother my mom was to me. We have already shed tears but we have also laughed about the good times we had as a family with my mom.

All of you are here because you knew my mom or one of her sons. I appreciate your coming to support us during this time of sorrow. I especially want to thank several who have been extra helpful already. One is my sister-in-law Eva. She has been especially helpful in making her home available to us. Helen and Gerry Walworth have also been extremely kind and helpful to Sue and me and to our dad. Thank you to all. My main reason for talking to you today was to tell you a little about my mom and what a wonderful person she was to me and to our family. Most of you know how short she was. She received a good bit of kidding over that but she had a wonderful sense of humor that helped her point out that "good things come in small packages". She was a giant in my life in the love she showed to her children and to her husband, my dad. She was a great mom to all of our family. My wife thought of her as her second mom.

She was born in a part of Germany called Silesia that is now part of Poland. She had to flee with her parents as refugees during World War II. She married my dad shortly after the war in 1947. When I was born, she was told not to have any more children

because of her health. She not only had more children, but she used her good sense of humor and that special twinkle in her eyes as she used to tell people that the doctor didn't tell her **how** to not have more children.

In 1958 she and my dad Gary came to America with their 3 sons to start a new life. Two weeks later she gave birth to her fourth son. She delighted in telling people that Tony was born in America but that he was "made in Germany". Later, after 5 boys she gave birth to our sister Linda. When the doctor told her it was a girl she told him, "you'll have to show me before I believe that".

She found some things she didn't like when she came to America. When we were at the train station in New York she couldn't speak any English yet, but she saw a vending machine that dispensed beer and thought that surely this was the promised land. At least that's all she could read and understand. When she took a taste of the "root beer" that she had bought, she was slightly disillusioned with this great land.

Mom was the communicator in our family. Since Dad had to work extra jobs when we came to America as immigrants, Mom was the one who not only had to learn English, but she was the one who worked with us to do it. I remember going over and over conjugating English verbs trying to learn to speak a new language. Mom had a strong German accent, but the fact that most people don't hear any accent when I speak is credit to her efforts to teach us this new language.

Since she raised 5 boys before she had the daughter, she also had to be strong and know how to keep us in line. Although we often pushed her to the limit, I always knew when I had gone too far and if she really meant her ominous warning of "wait until Dad gets home". With 5 boys and a dad who was a master at teasing, Mom always seemed to know if Dad was teasing or serious. If you know me, you'll know that she also taught us that we had to fight fire with fire. So we became teasers just like my dad.

The other strength Mom had was her faith in God. She has been faithfully serving him over many years. So I know that I can say with confidence

that when that last trump blows and all in Christ shall be made alive, that I will see my mom rising into the air to meet Christ as he returns to earth. I hope to rise and meet her there at Jesus' feet. The church Mom & Dad have been members of for some time has a beautiful symbol. It is a trumpet. To me that represents the last trump that will blow at Christ's return. Then I will see her alive again. The last time I saw her was last year in August in what was a special family reunion when my brother Tony came from Australia and brought his new wife, Hilary. We spent a long weekend together with Mom & Dad. There were many special moments. One that stands out is another thing she was famous for in our family and that was her German torte. She baked one in honor of Tony's new bride.

Dad wanted me to keep this short, so I better quit soon since he wanted a short service. Especially because his minister is going to say a few words to us. Dad told me that Mr. Culpepper will only speak to us for about 15 minutes and speak to us about the hope of the resurrection. I teased my dad and told him that I hope it's not too much longer than that because I can't sit through the long sermons that your ministers are famous for. I told Dad that if he goes too long or I'm too bothered to listen that I'll just have to get up and leave.

So as we mourn my mother and comfort each other, I hope that we will all know that she loved us greatly, that we love her, and that we look forward to that last trump when we will see her again.

That concludes my remarks at Mom's funeral. Then we had a beautiful rendition of "How Great Thou Art" sung by Shirley Dietz. After that Mr. Culpepper spoke for about 20 minutes and concluded the service with a prayer. I had thought about including more thoughts about the resurrection and the hope of our eternal salvation, but since Dad's minister was going to speak I decided to keep my part short and let him touch on those scriptures.

Since our experience was with the Philadelphia Church of God and their minister I want to make a few comments about that aspect of the funeral. My only other experience with a funeral conducted by their ministry had

been an extremely difficult and offensive experience last year in North Carolina. That minister spoke for nearly an hour and offended most who were not part of PCG by various things he said including calling on us to repent and join their true church and their teachings. He said nothing to comfort the grieving family or friends. Apparently that offensive funeral also had an impact on PCG and how they now conduct funerals. After the funeral for my mom I talked with Mr. Culpepper. He told me that it was now their policy that a regional pastor has to conduct their funerals. After questioning him and relating my negative

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experience in North Carolina, he told me that the new policy was a direct result of the problems they encountered from that funeral. Later my father also told me the same thing. Mr. Culpepper is from Atlanta and hardly knew my family. My father also received personal condolence calls from first, Mrs. Flurry and later from Gerald Flurry (the head of the PCG) as well as a fruit basket from the Flurrys. While I very much appreciated those calls for the encouragement they gave my father, I also realized that it was after I had talked to Mr. Culpepper and after I related my deep concern about that offensive funeral last year.

Several of the brethren of Dad's church were very helpful and kind to us during this time. Gerry and Helen Walworth went out of their way to help us including allowing us to stay in their home and then having a dinner for the immediate family after the funeral. Other members contributed food for this meal and at other times during that long weekend for us. The efforts of the members of the Philadelphia Church of God were greatly appreciated. The local ministry in their church made no effort to offer condolences or even to

contact those of us in the family who were not members of their church.

The funeral message delivered by Mr. Culpepper was certainly not offensive. It was a great improvement over the other PCG funeral I mentioned earlier. However, I would consider what he gave as the type of message that does nothing for the family and is instead intended as a witness of the teachings of their church. Although he started out by saying that he was there to comfort the family he said nothing to do so. His first remarks were rather ironic in that he said that if my mom could tell us about her beliefs that she would say the following things. I found this ironic because she would never be allowed to tell her beliefs in any kind of church setting with his church, and even at this funeral a local minister who at least knew my mother personally would not even be allowed to speak by PCG since they are trying to avoid another fiasco at a funeral. He followed that up with a quick recitation of numerous scriptures touching on the resurrection. I suspect that his haste through those scriptures was because Dad had asked for a short message. In my message I also had made some remarks about leaving if he spoke too long. He then read a letter my mom had written a friend about distributing the *Trumpet* magazine and he used that as a means to say a few things about the Philadelphia Church of God. In all of that there was no attempt to encourage or console the family.

To me, a funeral should be a time to say goodbye to someone you love. It should be a time to remember and share some of the good memories of that person to help you make it through the pain of the loss. It should be a time to remember the awesome promise of the resurrection and the hope that we have in seeing that loved one again when Jesus Christ our Lord and savior returns and we are all raised to meet him in the air. But it should be personalized in a way that makes it part of the beginning of the healing experience that's needed rather than seeming like an advertisement for a particular church. If you must arrange a funeral for a family member you should con-

Continued on page 23

True Freedom

By Tommy Willis

What we often don't realize is that we have the key to unlocking the prison we are in. Jesus says:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Rev 3:20).

Keep in mind that God is talking to believers here in the above scriptures; these were messages to the churches. And they have been there for admonishment to believers for the last almost two thousand years; God made sure they were recorded for brethren to read in the last two thousand years.

All too often we in the Churches of God have centered on doctrine—to the point where we often praised the doctrine we preached above the living God. As we went about it this way, many of the important age old teaching of the Bible, such as the above admonishment, got put into the background.

God's people do not become free just by learning things *about* the Bible, because the written Word was meant to have us build a relationship with the Living Word. Many don't see that we are our own jailers. And to have the freedom necessary we need to not only learn of the facts involved, but learn to build up a relationship with the Living Liberator. It is then we will have true freedom. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Through your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, He will teach you to become free from the confines of public opinion. You won't cling to the sta-

tus quo, but will let God teach you to blaze your own trail under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He has to do the work, for without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5); but He will give you the freedom to function.

If we allow it, the peer pressure of the world can sap our identity; we can lose the unique individuals that we are. We need to stop and ask ourselves, "Is this the will of God? Is this what I want?" If we don't slow down to examine ourselves this way, then we may wind up living the life that others have decided for us. We will think it is our own decisions, but it will merely be an extension of a family member or some leader in the church organization that we are a part of.

We need not only to become grounded in who Christ is and what we are in Him, but also come to know ourselves. We are children of God; we have our identity in Royalty. We belong to the King of Kings. And we can approach the very throne of God to come before Him with our request as His own children (Heb 10:19; 4:16). This is why He tells us to come boldly before the throne.

The unexpected disappointments of life are sure to come, but these are some of the very things God uses to draw us to Him. It is during the hard rough times more than ever that God teaches us to look to Him. Learn to spend more time in that throne room; God says He will give us the help we need as we learn to go to Him in prayer as we should. The above scriptures promise us this.

God tells us that many Christians

will become offended and turn on one another (Matt 24:10-13). But God will teach us not to become offended and hurt—He will teach us not to take things in that personal hurt way the world does in getting their feelings hurt when things don't go their way. Read the above scripture; you will see that *many* (not a few) will become offended and hate one another. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (verse 13). Here we see the connection of not becoming offended and enduring to the end—no small accomplishment!

But if we learn to build up our personal contact with Jesus Christ and stay with Him, then He will be there to help us react with His mercy and compassion when others turn on us. We will learn not to become offended, but will react with His love in all matters. You will not be judged by what others do to you—but your reaction to them. If you will stay with God's mercy and forgiveness and don't judge them spiritually, then God will have you stay in focus. You won't be among those who become offended.

God will teach us the above freedom. The freedom He offers us is through the mind and attitudes of Christ that He will instill inside us. We will then be free from these attitudes that enslave us. We can handle all that comes our way **by His grace**, but He will not force us to build up that relationship with Him. We must seek Him diligently and get to know Him.

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). 

"A Personal Goodbye" from page 22

consider the type of message you want given at that service. The family can greatly influence what is said even if the minister is with a church that differs with your current beliefs.

I hope that my comments here will be helpful to others who face this difficult task. I tried to be careful not to

offend anyone during my comments at the funeral and I tried to also be careful in what I said here not to be offensive. I realize that some may consider my sharing these thoughts as offensive, and I am sorry they feel that way. It is certainly not my intention to offend anyone but rather to help others faced with difficult decisions at a time when a little comfort and encouragement can mean so much. I offer my

assistance to anyone who would like some help with arrangements they must personally make. If you want to contact me for such help, you may reach me at the following address.

— Horst Obermeit
2318 Memorial Church Road
Kenly, NC 27542
Tel: 919-242-6273
e-mail: horstw@juno.com





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.

Don't Use the Word "Cult"

LETTER:

August 6, 2001

Dear Servants' News,

Hey, hope you and yours are okay. Thank you for your reply to my previous letter, and give my best to the scattered brethren in your area. Your writings are full of sincere concern for the brethren, especially, it seems, those who are not wanting to join up with the so-called "organized" churches. You certainly do study God's word and provide a service to God's people.

However, let me say right away that your calling the Church of God Evangelistic "a cult-like organization" shocked and disappointed me greatly. Worldwide started berating the brethren as being a cult for obeying God's Seventh-day Sabbath, Holy Days, Ten Commandments, etc. Joe Tkach, Jr.'s new buddy, Hank (Bible Answer Man) Hanegraff calls all who obey these commands a cult.

The government agencies and politicians who were responsible for the murder of people and pets and the destruction of personal property at Ruby Ridge and Waco called these Christians "cults". All the people who attended the Waco church, as well as the Weavers, kept God's Seventh Day, the Holy Days, and Ten Commandments to the best of their abilities. Some of those who made it out alive were tried in a court of law and found "not guilty" of any crimes. A federal judge illegally overturned that verdict and sentenced them to 40 years in the pen. The Tribulation has started for these Christians in these United States, as it has started for Christians in the Sudan, China, and Rwanda, to name just a few places on planet earth. Language is being changed. "Home" becomes "compound". "Church" becomes "cult". Ten Tribes information becomes white separatist/supremacist.

Since Spring of 1997, I've listened to "News Watch" on Christian and secular radio, heard tapes, and attended Feasts of Tabernacles and heard messages given by the Church of God Evangelistic and I have yet to hear any dates being set by them. Those folks who moved to Texas and soon moved back should read the July/Aug 2000 *Servants' News* article "Unless the Lord Shall Build a

House..." Trying to merely save one's hide is not what God is looking for in His people.

I read all of Acts 5 trying to understand Acts 5:36 in context. Please state plainly why you used Acts 5:36. Theudas is #2333 and Gamaliel is #1059 in *Strong's Concordance*.

I never heard the Church of God Evangelistic say that they're "the one group". Mr. Smith very much has a gift in the direction of prophecy. "News Watch" is warning this country. You don't know the heart of David J. or any of the brethren (like me) that benefit from "News Watch". It's not right to call our brethren a "cult". We get enough of that from the world.

Mr. Edwards, I know you're one of the good guys, but wrong is wrong. Thanks and God Bless.

— Patricia Brummett, Texas

RESPONSE:

Thank you for the correction. I should have been more factual rather than just labeling David J. Smith's group a "cult-like organization". Please see the article and letter published on page 19 in this issue. Certainly Mr. Smith is claiming a bit much about himself. On the other hand, leaders of the WCG and other Church of God groups have made even more grandiose claims about themselves, and I have been more patient with them.

I appreciate Mr. Smith's efforts to cover the news of Ruby Ridge, Waco and similar stories. It is very clear to me that the U.S. government and related agencies were the primary cause of trouble in these cases. They took situations where no lives were threatened and turned them into blood-baths. I have also read about large numbers of Christians being killed and persecuted in the nations you mention.

I have considered covering some of these items in my publications, but I simply have been unable to resolve much of the conflicting information from the government, the mainstream press and the "independent" news sources. Far too many of the "independent" sources also twist or rewrite the news to fit their own conspiracy or prophetic theories. In my

view a "patriot" or "preacher" who invents stories to get people on his side or to sell his literature is no better than government or media people who lie. I do not have time to write Bible articles, help people find and start congregations, send out literature and sort out all of these things, too. Now, I do not know of any one alternate news source that I could recommend. I am not saying there is not one, but I have not found and thoroughly checked out one enough to recommend.

The reason I said I hoped Mr. Smith would not fulfill the roll of Theudas was because I hope he does not do what Theudas did. Theudas was a leader against the Roman government which, like ours, was corrupt. He gathered hundreds of people to himself, but it "came to nothing". Mr. Smith gathered people to himself due to his prophetic understanding and dreams. I do not know the hearts of David J. Smith or Theudas, but it appears that their gathering of people to themselves was not from God.

By contrast, Simon (Luke 6:15) was a zealot—a member of an anti-Roman group. He left his group to become one of Jesus apostles. At that time, God was not helping Jews rebel against Rome (as he apparently did in the time of the Maccabees), but was training men to preach and write a message about Jesus Christ. That event would have the greatest impact on the world for the next 2,000 years. During those 2,000 years, many other leaders have sought to gather people to them for protection against, or even to defeat corrupt governments. Religious freedom came about that way and our own nation was born that way. It seems that God helped some of these "rebels", but other's quests ended with no results.

It is good to report news that is true, even though it is critical of powerful people and difficult for some to believe. It is a mistake to support causes that God does not. May He show each of us how we can best serve Him now! — NSE

Local Servants Directory a Success

The *Local Servants Directory*, mailed with the March/April 2001 issue has proven helpful to many. I have received dozens of emails, phone calls and letters from people who, through this directory, found a group with which to fellowship, received visitors to their group, found a Feast site to attend, found lost friends, found someone who could help them, made friends, etc. I would guess many more used it and did not tell me.

I also received corrections and requests from new people who want to be listed in the next directory. I also received some complaints. Some people listed in the directory received one or more pieces of unsolicited mail:

- 1) Several pages of close-typed material with numerous scriptures.
- 2) Copies of old Herbert Armstrong co-worker letters.
- 3) Several pages about past Church of God problems claiming that I gave permission to use the directory as a mailing list.

I sent a letter similar to the one at right to those who copied part of the directory in a manner violating its copyright and two agreed to stop doing so. The third person probably has not had time to respond.

I think most of those listed in the *Local Servants Directory* were strong enough not to be upset by these mailings. Those who were upset might want to take their names out.

Someone, I cannot remember who, commented to me: "We teach our children the Bible stories about David and Goliath, Daniel and the Lions' Den, and the Apostles and their persecutions—then we get a couple of unwanted but harmless letters in our mailbox and we decide that serving God in this way is just too dangerous. And our children say, 'those stories don't have anything to do with real life, do they?'"

—NSE

Dear [person who used the *Local Servants Directory* as a mailing list],

Thank you for your continued interest in God, the Scriptures and His people.

This letter is in regard to the use of the *Local Servants Directory* © 2000 or © 2001 by Norman Edwards. I produced this publication to help people find others with which to fellowship. Several of the people who were listed in that publication received unsolicited letters that I believe were from you. The purpose of your letters was not to seek fellowship, but to mail literature expressing your particular point of view.

The letters that you apparently wrote contained no personal contact information, but [description of the literature the person mailed]. I have testimony from at least three people who were offended or upset by receiving this unwanted mailing. The first page of the *Local Servants Directory* clearly explains the purpose of this document and that it is not to be used as a mailing list. Every page contains the copyright notification. I have no record of you asking for my permission to use this information.

I consider this a serious offense and as the publisher of this list, I believe I have an obligation to defend those who gave me permission to publish their names and contact information.

I am coming to you alone, obeying the first step of Matthew 18:15–17. I hope we can resolve this issue together. I realize that you may not have read the first page or the copyright notes on every page. You may believe that God wanted you to do this in spite of what I requested. There is also a remote possibility that some mistake has been made or some fraud has been committed (someone falsely using your name or address). Please respond to me so that we can resolve this issue simply and inexpensively.

If you have used the *Local Servants Directory* as a mailing list, I will forgive the offense and will not hold you accountable for any damages if you will, within the next 30 days, write, and cause to be delivered to me, a letter for publication that includes the following: 1) an acknowledgement that you did use the *Local Servants Directory* as a mailing list to send your literature, 2) an apology to those who received it, 3) a statement that you understand it was a mistake and that you will not do it again. If you use the *Local Servants Directory* again as a mailing list, or if you take additional time and expense (more documents, certified mail, process servers, air travel, etc.), I will no longer consider the above remedy sufficient.

If you have not used the *Local Servants Directory* in this manner, please write and let me know and save both of us further expense and effort. If I do not hear from you, I will continue with the other steps in (Matt 18:15–17). If you will not hear "the Church", I will be forced to treat you as "a heathen and a tax collector", which would mean taking up the issue in civil or criminal court. I hope that we can settle this matter between ourselves, or at least within the Church. If I do need to take this matter to "the Church", please let me know what body of believers you would consider "the Church" to hear this circumstance.

Sincerely,

Norman S. Edwards

**"The Living and the Dead"
from page 1**

owned and operated tipped over due to incredibly soggy ground. He was in his 60's. Efficient at wrecking an old building or putting up a new one, he always seemed to have time for others. He talked to everyone like he had known them all his life. He was quite a Bible student, and an organizer of several Bible-centered conferences so desperately needed when the Church of God groups were splintering. I met and admired his family who were all involved in these activities—though largely grown up and on their own.

Harold Maybury of Preble, New York, was electrocuted by faulty wiring while working on a plumbing job underneath a house. He was also in his 60's. He had great skill in construction, mechanical, and other technical areas. He ran his own business for many years, but always seemed to have time to help out brethren who had something that needed fixing. We cannot tell **all** the stories of people he helped and encouraged in his life time. He raised a family of talented, interesting and kind children who mostly now have families of their own.

John Davis of Warsaw, Indiana died from a heart attack in his sleep. He was in his 40's and suffering from some health problems, but they did not keep him from his job of making prosthetics for handicapped people or from conversing with hundreds of friends—both face to face and on the Internet. John was wise and understanding—a great help to many people in times of difficulty. Yet he was also funny, interesting, even sarcastic—but always seeming to know which approach would be most helpful. He was so tactful, that even in all of his conversations, I never remember anyone being upset with him. (I certainly cannot say the same thing for myself!) John had just completed his house and was hoping to marry and start a family.

As the Scripture says,

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints" (Pslm 116:15).

These men did not know that they would die. Each was living his life and making plans for the future. And suddenly, without warning, it was over. Worrying would have done no good.

Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? (Matt 6:27, NIV.)

These quick deaths were in many ways a blessing to these men. They did not have one day of the incapability that so many older people experience. The trial was not upon these men, but was upon the many people who loved them and whom they served. No one will ever "replace" these men, but their families and friends will have to find other ways of doing what they used to do for so many.

We can learn three lessons from the experience of these men.

Lesson #1: Do Not Fear Death or the Future

We know that God loves us and that if we enjoy this life now, we will enjoy the future even more. If we cling to life because of what we have now, how much better will be the things of the future.

Now that does not mean that we can be careless with our lives or our property—we need to take very good care of these most valuable things that God has given us. But it means that we do not have to fear that someone or some odd occurrence will take away our property or life. If it is a person who does it, it is their sin. If it is some chance happening (as was the case of these men), it is probably the work of God. The book of Hebrews explains how we can be delivered of our fears:

But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet." ...Both the one who makes men holy [Jesus] and those who are made holy [us] are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers... Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—**and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death** (Heb 2:6–8, 11, 14–15, NIV).

If we knew that we were going to die tomorrow, what would we do? If we have families to raise, money to manage, important jobs to do or projects to complete, we know that we will not finish them in a day. The best we could hope to do is leave those

tasks to someone else to complete—or to realize that God is simply not going to make a way for them to be completed. In reality, we should have a will and other documents in place so that our families are taken care of and our resources can continue to be used effectively. (Extensive preparations where one tries to manage one's estate after death almost never work, but minimal preparation to transfer control without expensive court costs is much better than no preparation at all.)

But let us examine another aspect if we knew we were going to die tomorrow. Would there be people we would want to make amends with before dying? Would we want to change the way we treat some people? Would we try to stop some bad habits? The answer is probably "Yes" to many of those things. Could we accomplish all those things in one day? Probably not. That brings us to our second lesson.

Lesson #2: The Blessing of Dying Slowly

Most everyone knows someone who is old, has a major illness, and is expected to die in a few months or years. Actually, we may know a lot of people like that. The greatest number of new members came into the Church of God groups in the 50s, 60s and 70s. If most were age 20 through 40 when they came in, they are between 50 and 90 today—the ages when long-term illness is fairly common.

Some of those people are suffering terribly. Some cannot take care of themselves. How can it be a blessing? But step back and see what God has done. Even though illness and death have probably been made much worse by the sins of mankind, the basic order of life seems to have been set by God for both man and even most animals.

We are born nearly helpless, relying on the care of parents. We grow, gaining physical strength and dexterity, as well as knowledge and experience. We learn to take care of ourselves and then to produce offspring of our own and to take care of them. Most people live many years when they can take care of themselves and effectively serve others.

But as we age, strength and other physical abilities begin to wane. We eventually reach the point where we can no longer take care of others—only

ourselves. And then, that ability often leaves, and we need others to take care of us—just like when we were babies. This “second childhood” sometimes lasts many years, sometimes only days, or may never occur, as in the case of the three men earlier in this article.

God does all of this.

In the animal world, some kinds of animals actually help take care of their old and sick ones, while in other cases, they may drive them away or even kill them. God gives us these examples to see, but clearly commands each person to honor their parents (Ex 20:12). It is clearly a blessing to die surrounded and loved by one's extended family (Gen 50:22–24; Job 42:16, Pslm 128:6).

While it is not fun to have a long-term illness or to know that one is dying, there are often things that desperately need to be accomplished during these times.

People can see themselves as they are, and “prepare to meet their maker”. While that is just a saying, there is a lot of truth to it. David (1Kngs 2:1–10), Stephen (Acts 7:59–60), Paul (2Tim 4:6–8) and other leaders of God all used a time when they knew they would soon die to make peace with God and to close relationships with other people.

When one expects to die, trivial, earthly things no longer matter. Fame and fortune mean nothing. Expression of love to friends means a lot. Thanks for past help is important. Apologies for failings are important. Communication with old friends—even though it may not have existed for years—often re-emerges. These things are good.

Furthermore, when a person of great service spends some time in illness before death, the people he served have a period of time, rather than an instant to learn to get along without the person who is dying. Also, the dying person often has time to get a will and other important papers in order. Most people take a long time to get used to new ideas and new situations.

On occasion, when God sees how a person reacts to their impending death, he changes His mind and gives them more time (2Kngs 20).

But unless God specifically tells us, we do not always know whether a particular illness, no matter how threatening, will lead to death.

Sometimes, severe illnesses do not lead to death. Sometimes, they are the starting point of long-term life changes where people recover and then their lives are much better after making needed changes. While many people do not think of it this way, severe illnesses are very helpful in determining what place we are giving God in our life. When they first occur, do we simply seek a “medical professional” or do we think about confessing our sins—both physical and spiritual—and asking God for healing? (Jms 5:14–16). And if we do ask God for healing, and do not receive it right away, do we then look to a medical professional for deliverance?

There is a big difference between using the services of a medical professional and “looking to them for deliverance”. If we took a car to an auto repair shop, and it was clear to us that the mechanic did not really know how to figure out the cause of its problem, but was just going to “try some things” to see if the symptoms would go away, we would probably go to another repair shop. We might even try a couple of repair shops to see if they agreed on what the problem was. The human body is millions of times more complex than a car. Mechanics and medical professionals are people—they often act as if they know more than they do—both out of vanity, and to keep their business profitable. How much more diligent should we be to do research and get multiple opinions in taking care of our bodies than we are in taking care of our cars?

There is no foolproof formula in dealing with medical people. All medical doctors are not bad and all chiropractors are not good—nor vice versa. It is not that all herbalists and naturopaths are good and all the other guys are bad. Nearly all branches of healing arts and sciences have some truth and some error. There are honest and dishonest people in all of them. What a believer should hope to find are honest men and women. We hope to find ones who have realized that some of the things they learned in school may make money, but do not really help the patient much—and stop using them. We also hope to find ones who realize simple things that they were never taught in school sometimes do work.

I was pleased to hear a story of doctors who told an overweight man about all kinds of expensive procedures they could use to help treat his condition, but went on to say that eating better, exercising regularly and learning to be at peace with his stressful conditions (taking our trials to God in prayer) would be much better long-term solutions. The sick man's fellow believers should have told him that, but praise God that the doctors did! It does not always work out that well. I know of other people who had relatively minor problems, went to a doctor for treatment, and became much worse or died as a result of the treatment.

The point of this is that when a severe long-term illness occurs, believers need to muster all of the spiritual and physical resources that they can and not leave it in the hands of medical professionals who frequently act like they know a lot more than they do, but may be more interested in their fees than their results. We need to politely ask very specific questions. (Do you know what the problem is? Have you diagnosed it or treated it before? Do you know the chances of recovery? Is there someone more qualified who would probably do a better job of treating this?)

We need to get multiple opinions, read books on the subject, browse the Internet, ask other believers who have experience with similar problems. We—not a medical professional—need to ultimately decide what treatments we will accept. The professionals may not like that. They may ask, “Why do you, an untrained person, think you can make a better decision than me, a doctor of twenty years?”

The answer is that God has given us the responsibility for caring for our body, and we are not to let another man or group of men stand in the place of God.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

The purpose of a believer's serious illness is for the believer's benefit, not the medical professional's benefit.

Lesson #3: When it Seems that Our Church Group Might Be Dying

Church groups are not people, but their growth patterns of life and death are

often similar. Christ said:

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: 'I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...'" (Rev 3:1-2).

Does this apply only to certain "eras" of history or could it apply to us? Christ explained exactly who should listen to this warning:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 3:6).

New church groups are often started by a parent group or a strong leader who guides them through infancy. Some grow slowly, some grow very rapidly. Once established, these young church groups are able to take care of themselves as well as minister to the needs of others. They may help "plant churches" in other areas. They may serve their communities in many ways. They may grow so large that they split into several strong, smaller growing groups. This productive stage can last a few years, or sometimes it can last decades or even centuries with different people filling the necessary functions.

But at some point, middle age usually sets in. People begin to take for granted what they once worked diligently to achieve. There may be less ability to serve others, and more of the money, time and attention of the group may be focused on the group's own members and their problems. Debates over doctrines and internal policies and procedures begin to overshadow the basics of living by faith and preaching the Gospel. Outside evangelism may completely stop, and the group may plan to continue simply as members' children become members. (That method rarely works as some members' children usually do not become members, and there will be nobody to "replace" the current members that have no children attending.)

Old age is setting in when groups are concerned mostly about maintaining what they used to have. Old age has arrived when the most important topics of discussion are which programs and activities should be discontinued. Other signs of old age are:

1. many more older members than

younger ones;

2. more deaths than baptisms;
3. more members leaving for other groups than coming in from other groups;
4. more discussion about keeping those who currently attend than encouraging new people to attend;
5. more arguments about who will get the few "preferred" positions of responsibility in the group, rather than who is capable of fulfilling the many needs of the many service projects taken on by the group;
6. more discussion about ministers' salaries and benefits than getting as many people as possible involved in some aspect of ministry.

To this author, it seems fairly clear that many if not most Church of God groups are at the "old age" stage of life. They have most or all of these symptoms.

Groups, like people, can sometimes make massive changes in their living habits, and be revitalized and live on for many more productive years. But these major changes in direction do not come easily. They utterly will not come about by "doing what we have always done".

As another approach, people can leave a dead church group and go on to either join or form a "living" one. Are they disloyal or traitors for doing this? After all, shouldn't somebody help look after the people even if it is a "dead group"? Christ called a man who a felt similarly obliged to take care of the dead, and told him: "...Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59-60).

Like people, churches generally suffer a long period of obvious old age and illness before they die (cease to function). However, sudden death does sometimes happen. A leader can die, a new leader or slick teacher of false doctrine can take over and change almost everything. Sometimes, many members are struck with illness or move away all at the same time. Sometimes, a group simply loses its meeting place and is not able to establish another one.

If we find ourselves in a dying church, rather than feel sorry for ourselves because of our difficulty, we should look upon it as an opportunity

to change and recover before it is too late. **We need to act just like the person who has a life-threatening illness.** We should not just trust one "professional" who might claim to have the answer to our problems, but leave us sicker than before. (This is common; people go from one dead church to another.) We should take responsibility for our congregation's illness just as if we ourselves were seriously ill:

- 1) Ask God for healing and to specifically show you what you can and should do for the dying church group.

- 2) Talk to other believers who see the problem and want to make changes.

- 3) Visit other congregations that are successfully growing and teaching the Bible—even though they may have doctrines that you believe are wrong. Learn from what they are doing right!

- 4) Read *Starting a Local Congregation* (distributed with the previous issue) for principles and ideas to use to revitalize your existing congregation or to start a new one.

- 5) Think about things in your life that are less important than serving God that you could reduce or eliminate so you will have time to do what is necessary to better serve God.

In Summary

Life and death are not things from which to hide, but things to be recognized as part of our God's great plan. We have only so much time in this life, and we need to use it well. (Please ask for a free copy of *What Does the Bible Say about Eternal Judgment?* if you do not have one.) If we are healthy, we need to be thankful for it, but live our life for God, realizing that it could be over at any moment. If we (or others) are suffering from a serious, possibly fatal, illness, we need to use the time to reform our lives, preparing for death or for the renewed and better life that God may grant us.

Finally, we need to examine the congregation to which we belong. We will need to answer to Christ for what we are doing. Are we giving the master a good return on the talents with which he has entrusted us? (Matt 25:14-30).

— Norman Edwards 

"Truckers Study" from page 2

with the daily struggles of life.

[There are many examples in the Bible where things did not "go well" for God's people. Kings went to war and lost, prophets prophesied and were rejected, apostles preached and were run out of town. If God undid all the consequences of sin, we would not understand the gravity of it.]

One of the most difficult things for a believer to do is to continue following God when those around him are giving up or doing the wrong thing. This is the situation Lenny faced in the first study. Yet Christ had to do this very thing when all of His apostles deserted him when he was crucified. We must turn to God and His Word as Christ did. — NSEJ

August, 2001

We had an attendance of eleven today, but it was an unusually quiet crowd. Normally in a group that size at least one person is a talker. This crowd was more of the listening sort, so I was forced to talk more and in effect give a sermon with some questions and answers, which is not the preferred way to do it. But it worked out all right.

I discussed God's mercy and how he has a history of giving people second chances. Examples of Peter, the prodigal son, Jonah, Paul, etc., were discussed. It was difficult trying to get these people to talk, so I kept pursuing the logic of this and ended up in Revelation 20 and the first and second resurrections, touched on John 5:26–29 (where two resurrections are mentioned), and other such things. From there we went into the unpardonable sin discussed in Matthew 12, and how Jesus follows his warning to the Pharisees in that chapter by telling them that the people of Nineveh will rise with their generation and will condemn or judge them, and that Matthew 11 shows there will be a level of tolerance for people who just didn't know better.

I was amazed today that they seemed to accept the possibility of this hope without rejecting it outright. It is highly unusual in a crowd this size to not have someone object strenuously to this teaching.

While we were discussing

Revelation 20, our eleventh driver came in, and he was the talker, and a rather eloquent one at that. He pointed out that a statement in Malachi ("not by power nor by might, but by my spirit, saith the Lord") should tell us

that we can't do it on our own, but that we need God's Spirit to walk in His ways. We all sin but we don't have to, and we absolutely must go beyond John

3:16 and just accepting Jesus Christ. His little five minute talk was inspirational, scriptural, and a fitting end to the study.

Virtually all the drivers today took Bibles with them, and I was glad that I brought in a few extras with me.

Afterwards I was talking with the man who came in last, and it turns out he used to be a pastor, but one day not long ago felt the call to drive a truck and minister to truck drivers directly in a one-on-one way. He is in the process of moving to Kansas City, where he hopes to be home two weekends a month (and hopefully drop in on us). He made a few interesting comments, one being that as he entered the room, he could tell that everyone was listening intently to what I was saying, which I sort of noticed but wasn't sure of. I mentioned to him that it was not my intent originally to talk about what I ended up talking about, but I had to do something because I couldn't get them to open up. He then said something that I think is true.

He said that whatever it was I was saying, I was saying it because somebody there needed to hear it. When the word of God goes out it does not come back empty. That's a good lesson to remember all the time.

[We can tell from the millions of kinds of plants and animals that God made, that He enjoys great variety. Similarly, He has made people all different. Even the Bible is a large book showing the great diversity in what people do and in how God works with them.]

While booklets, correspondence courses, sermon tapes, speaking notes and other teaching tools all have a place, there is no perfect set of such things that will satisfy the spiritual needs of all people. This is

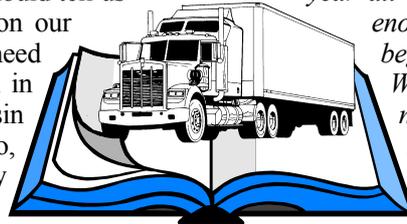
why Christ commanded His servants to give His people "meat in due season". When one thinks about all the different kinds of food that different people eat at different times of the year all over the world—the

enormity of the task can begin to be grasped.

We, individually, do not have to do it all.

But we ought to be flexible enough for

Christ to use us in a diversity of ways and we should have respect for the people whom Christ is using in ways that we may not fully understand. — NSEJ



August 19, 2001

Before the study today I was approached by a man who was obviously a drifter, and he asked me if he could ask something of me. He said he was having some problems. Immediately I suspected to be hit up for money. He asked me if I had an extra Bible I could give him. You bet I did!

He stayed for the Bible study, and it turns out he had quite a grasp on the Scriptures. His problem, which he admits, is alcoholism and even admitted to be recovering from a binge the night before. Now this is an area in which I am somewhat incompetent to help, but fortunately God provided. We had four other guests today, and three of them have recovered from alcohol and drug abuse. They were most helpful in pointing out that he was in bondage to sin and needed to exert some effort in resisting Satan. He could see the examples of three dedicated men who had been where he is and have found a way out. They credit this to the strength of God, but also admitted to setbacks.

So today's study could be construed as unremarkable, except that a forum was presented to help a "backslidden" but sincere believer to hear some things that he needed to hear. It was good not having to do much today, except for what he asked me to do—and what I will pass on to you—pray for Bobbie.

— Lenny Cacchio
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Partial Literature List

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

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 Featured This Issue:

Basic Literature

- All Who Die Shall Live Again!** by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Comfort for people who have lost loved ones.
- Barnabas Bookmark Bunch** by Alan Ruth. Three 2-sided bookmarks covering Bible Basics, Plan of Salvation & Words of Comfort, and World Wide Web resources.
- The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day?** (from the Bible Sabbath Association) 2 pages. Basic Sabbath tract.
- CEM Correspondence Course** by Ron Dart, 8 pages. First lesson of a 9-lesson free course.
- Christian Bible Study Guide** by F. Paul Haney, 4 pages. An overview of Bible study and 77 points to consider.
- The Declaration of Independence & Federal Constitution**, 10 pages. The Apostle Paul knew his rights under the law as he traveled and preached Christ (Acts 16:37-40; 22:25-30; 25:11,16). These documents help us know ours.
- Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat "Unclean" Meat in New Testament Times?** by Steven M Collins, 14 pages.
- God, I've Got a Problem** edited by Jerry Laws, 54 pages. Bible help for the depressed, tempted, guilty, worried, lonely, afraid, bored, disappointed, bitter, doubtful, proud and dying.
- Hebrew Holy Day Calendar**. (Business card size) Gives the traditional Hebrew dates for Biblical Feasts.
- How Not To Be Caught in Cults** by Charles Dorothy, 32 pages. Easy to read, illustrated booklet explaining the characteristics of controlling cults. Does not discuss doctrine.
- Learning from the Proverbs** by Duane Sholly, 12 pages. for those just reading Proverbs or making a thorough study.
- Learning from the Psalms** by Duane Sholly, 40 pages.

- Contains one large paragraph of commentary on every Psalm—a couple pages on Psalm 119 and 132. Large print.
- Living Room Church of God Directory, Seventh Edition** edited by Robert Bodkin, 22 pages. Find a congregation.
- The Mysterious 7-Day Cycle** by Ken Westby, 24 pages. Plants, Animals & man have biological 7-day cycles. The 7-day week is an organic function, not a man-made creation.
- A New Life** by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Basic message of repentance from sin, baptism and a new life in Christ.
- The Reason for the Season** by Pam Dewey, 14 pages. Historic and Biblical analysis of Christmas customs.
- The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact?** by Don Hudgel. 2 page tract for those skeptical of the resurrection.
- Scriptures About the Sabbath**, 2 page tract by Norman Edwards. Verses about the Sabbath with only 20 sentences of commentary. No Jewish or Christian bias.
- Statement of Beliefs?** by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Why we do not have a more extensive statement of beliefs.
- Think on These Things Sheet Music** by Barri Armitage, 33 pages. Inspirational scriptural music set to traditional English folk melodies: Danny Boy, Greensleeves, etc.
- Wake Up To God!** by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Scriptures to stir you to grow in grace and knowledge.
- What Is Christian Religion?** by Norman S. Edwards, 2 page tract. Introduction to the Bible—shows religion is living by the Bible and Holy Spirit, not joining an organization.
- Why Do You Observe Sunday?** edited by Tom Justus, originally by HWA. 16-page 9"x4" booklet.
- Young Child's Bible Story Coloring and Activity Book**, 24 pages. Coloring, questions & word searches for ages 2-12.

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

- Assembling on the Sabbath** by Norman Edwards, 16 pages. An exposition of the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.
- Biblical Calendar Basics** by Norman Edwards, 10 pages. Introduction to the Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)
- 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.

What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment? by Norman Edwards, 83 pages. What happens to people after they die? What about "bad" people? "Good" people? Unbelievers? Diligent believers? Lax believers? Read the many scriptures that answer these questions.

Study Resources and Information Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages.

Free sources of literature and tapes.

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 Literature List, 24 pages.

Servants' News Literature Subject Index, 51 pages. All articles & literature by subject.

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