

Servants' NEWS

Vol. 8, No. 4 A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be July/Aug 2002

Help Answer Bible Questions from New Believers

By Alan Ruth

The biblestudy.org website passed the one-million mark of pages viewed for the year, and is projected to increase about 31% from last year. This is far more than most of large corporate CoG sites.

Questions have always been accepted on the site since 1995, but until now it was not advertised or made easier to submit questions because of a lack of folks to answer questions. At most the site had maybe 3 or 4 people a few times willing to answer questions. With the news item asking for answerers in the May/June *Servants' News*, there are now nine "answerers".

After just five days on the website, there were 27 questions! Even with ten folks able to answer questions, that

is still a question for everyone, more than every other day! I didn't want to overload them so I took the question form off for a while so we could catch up! (At press time, over 172 questions had been received in 42 days.) Even with ten wonderful volunteers, it seemed even they would not be enough to quickly answer questions. Thankfully, I was able to ask Pam Dewey, Tarcila Fox and Mike Summers in such an "emergency" to take a question or two. God bless them all!

The other regular answerers are: Adriano Borean, Charlotte Grantham, Jack Lane, Bill Hillebrenner, Calvin Lashway, Art Mokarow, Eric Snow, Les Turvey, and Clay Willis. Thank God for all these folks! However, two

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Using Our Gift of Knowledge

By Norman Edwards

Most believers who have studied the New Testament church realize that it functioned through the use of the "spiritual gifts" that Christ gave the church. These gifts are listed top right on this page, and explained in more detail in our free paper *How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans?* Common questions among believers often include: "Which of my fellow believers have which gifts?" and "Which gifts do I have?"

The gifts that are in **boldface** type in the accompanying list are the most

common ones that I believe Church of God brethren have. The ones in plain type, I occasionally encounter among the CoG brethren, but other church groups appear to have them more commonly. Throughout the world, one can find Christian missions, sometimes run with very little money, when people have the faith, love, mercy and service to help alcoholics, drug addicts, prisoners and those steeped in false religion to come to God, overcome their sinful ways and to gain at least some knowledge of the Bible. Finally, the *italicized*

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Spiritual Gifts Listed in the Bible

administration
apostleship
discernment of spirits
exhortation
evangelism
faith
healing
giving
helping
hospitality
knowledge
love
mercy
ministering (service)
miracle working
leadership
pastoring
prophecy
teaching
tongue speaking / interpretation
wisdom

(from: Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:7-11; 1Cor 12:28-13:1; Eph 4:11-15; 1Pet 4:8-11)

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Truckers Bible Study

Oak Grove, Mo.
#103-105



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.

June 16, 2002

Our six or seven men today were very well versed in the Scriptures and their love for God and his Word was evident. They were eager to talk, eager to discuss, and eager to learn about ways to apply the word to their lives. When I first went into the room today (about a half hour early) two men were there watching television. I told them about the study and both stayed.

I went into the study with a short prepared presentation on a specific subject, but one of the men said he had been studying Job and was having a hard time with it. King James English is next to impossible in that book and I suggested a study guide I found on the book (J. Vernon McGee's commentary) that has been most helpful for me. I also suggested reading the book from a modern translation, which has also helped. We spent most of the morning discussing Job and the various lessons from it.

One thing that troubles many of these men is the difficulty in being totally accurate and legal in their log books. A slew of conflicting state, federal, and company rules make compliance almost impossible, and the desire to do things legally and trying to get the job done are not always compatible.

This led me to ask the question: "What is the purpose of man's law versus what is the purpose of God's law?" This leads inevitably to a discussion on the wisdom of the Ten Commandments, which then leads in the direction of why God commands a Sabbath rest. Bottom line is the law is a blessing. If we keep God's law, things will go well with us. We named several commandments that can be found in the first few chapters of Genesis, including the Sabbath command.

One of the men mentioned how his health suffers because he does not obey that command. All the men seemed to understand that there is divine wisdom in having a day of rest, and at least one man

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E-mail subscriptions also available

In addition to the printed edition which can be received in the post, you can also receive *Servants' News* by e-mail in Portable Document Format (PDF), which can be read using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader (www.adobe.com). The PDF looks the same as the printed copy.

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.

Please e-mail info@servantsnews.com to change your subscription option.

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The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of preaching, teaching, writing and music as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

The gospel should be given freely—you may copy this newsletter and give it to others. CBTM has nothing to sell, but is supported by free-will offerings of individuals. We do not have IRS 501(c)(3) status, but Churches are tax exempt without this status (see IRS Publ. 557, Nov 1999 ed., p. 15). Please make offerings to *Church Bible Teaching Ministry* or send via PayPal to info@cbtn.info.

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

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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.

Dallas Calendar Conference?

A second calendar conference in the Dallas area is being considered. (See *Servants' News*, Jan/Feb and Mar/Apr 1997 for information on the first conference.) It will probably take place in early 2003. Please respond if you would be interested in attending and/or speaking to:

— Michael Turner, 780 Hart Road,
Fairview, Texas 75069
972-569-9175 or 214-395-3096
e-mail: mykeltturner@airmail.net

Help Wanted for New Testament Bible Story Project

Many of you will remember the 6 volume set of the Bible Story that was produced by the WCG in the 1980s. Those volumes only covered the Old Testament. Currently I am co-ordinating a project on behalf of Giving and Sharing to produce two more volumes that will cover the story of the New Testament in a similar children-friendly style that Basil Wolverton used.

Currently Keith Hunt is doing a great job with the writing side of the project and is deep into writing the first volume. What we lack at the moment is an artist who might be able to illustrate these new volumes. If there is anyone who might be able to help or know someone who can help out with this very worthwhile project please contact me either by e-mail (rwaite@optusnet.com.au) or by post.

— Roger Waite, 17 Laconia St,
Woodridge, Qld, Australia, 4114

[The New Testament Bible Story sounds like a good idea. Many Church of God children know very lit-

tle about Mary and Joseph, the Love of Jesus or Christ's promises to live His life in the believer. I hope you will find an illustrator that is even better than Basil Wolverton. Friends and I often found his drawings grotesque and a poor representation of God. With the WCG hierarchy, little could be done. Now, we may choose. May you find a good illustrator! — NSE]

Bible Study Course CD Offered

This Bible Study Course CD has the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course*, the *United Church of God Bible Study Course* as well as the *Young Adults Bible Study Course* which is the fruit of six months labour on my part. It is nearly 300 pages in length and includes a lot of material not covered in previous Bible Study courses. It is illustrated with a large number of colour pictures and includes very handy short summaries of key points at the end of each lesson for easy reference.

What makes this CD different is that all the verses quoted in each lesson of the three courses are hyperlinked to the KJV Bible to make studying the course very easy. As you open up each lesson, the course lesson opens up in the left hand side of the screen and the Bible opens up in the right hand side of the screen. As you click on an underlined verse in the lesson the Bible will open up to that verse in the right side of the screen allowing you to see the verse and read it in its context.

Not only does this CD contain these three Bible Study Courses, it also contains all the church booklets that have been produced so far by the United Church of God in both HTML and PDF formats, many old WCG booklets

as well as all the sermons in the *Fundamentals of Belief* tape series produced by the United Church of God in MP3 format. Details of the contents of the CD and the Young Adults Bible Study Course can be found at

<http://members.optusnet.com.au/~rwaite/CD.html>

This CD is being made freely available to all who request it with a suggested donation of US\$2.50 to help cover the costs of postage. If you live in the USA or Canada please forward your request to Stephen Featherston either by email (mrpifloyd.nd@alltel.net) or by post (1934 E 31st Street #2, Ashtabula, Ohio, 44004) and he will forward you a copy of the CD. Payment can also be made via PayPal to chrsnstv@alltel.net. If you live outside of the USA or Canada then you can order a copy by forwarding your request to myself by e-mail at rwaite@optusnet.com.au or write to me:

— Roger Waite, 17 Laconia St,
Woodridge, Qld, Australia, 4114

Help Line and Assistance Line available to Church of God members

Help Line was begun in 1999 as a service to bring those in need of help for personal or family problems or just someone who is lonely or depressed to find a compassionate ear. We have seen requests on health questions, addictions, marital problems, and from many prisoners with varying requests. These services are provided at no charge and may be obtained by writing the address below.

Now, with the addition of **Assistance Line**, we will try to provide for short or long term physical or financial assistance to those in need

(housing, medical, food, clothing).

What makes this program unique is that we will maintain a register of persons who wish to assist others directly and will match them to persons or families in need. Ideally, they should be close enough so that the person giving can visit the person in need and verify that the needs are genuine. We believe this is the preferred approach.

However, for those wanting to give anonymously, a reserve will be held in a local bank account to provide distribution of funds.

Since many of us are no longer affiliated with large organized churches, we may no longer be involved in helping the poor at all. Nevertheless, scripture mandates us to care for the poor and needy. The gentiles recognized a need in Acts 6 and seven men were selected to manage the problem.

The story of the sheep and the goats is also pertinent in this regard. Note that both sheep and goats are clean animals but there is a deficiency in the goats; so much so that they were cast into everlasting fire. You can read it for yourself in Matthew 25:31-46. The goats are "called" and "converted" like sheep, but they are distinguished as goats because, as goats are, they are stubborn and refuse to accept the responsibility of caring and helping the needy.

A system of checks and balances are written to minimize problems and avoid abuses. A panel serves in an advisory capacity, consisting of:

Steven Kieler, sskieler@juno.com
Norman Edwards, info@cbtn.info
Danny Foreman,
djforeman_1990@yahoo.com

The procedures are as follows:

1. Priority aid will be given to the Fatherless and the Widow (over 60 years old) and the "Household of Faith" (Sabbath keepers) Gal 6:7-10.
2. Assistance will be encouraged to be given on a direct, person to person basis, where possible. A registry will be established to match assistors with the appropriate person(s) in need. Information will be provided and feedback requested to see that the party's needs are being met. All donors and recipients will remain anonymous, except to panel members who will receive a detailed financial report periodically. A limited report will be sent to donors upon request.

3. Assistance will be limited to the Continental U.S. and Canada for the present and will be limited to individuals and families (excluded: churches and businesses).
4. Care will be taken to avoid conflicts with government programs.
5. Suggestions will be taken for revision, deletion or addition to these guidelines.
6. The staff will not be paid. All offerings given will be distributed or used for necessary supplies (stamps, envelopes, etc).

It is our sincere hope that this program, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will help us to satisfy a requirement that God has set upon us and be able to provide for those in need.

Offerings, requests to join the registry, and questions may be directed to: Steven & Suzanne Kieler, Coordinators
2193 Sheker Drive
Fort Dodge, IA 50501-8707
515-576-5743
E-mail: sskieler@juno.com

or:

Giving and Sharing, Richard Nickels
3316 Alberta Drive
Gillette, WY 82718
888-687-5191
Email: giveshare@vcn.com

HWA DVD Video Collection

It has taken over four months to finally complete the conversion of our entire HWA-era Church of God Video collection from frail VHS video tapes to the more durable DVD Video format! DVDs have an estimated shelf life of over 100 years compared to video tapes which generally break down and become useless after 25 years or so even if they are not ever used.

The following listing contains 46 episodes of The World Tomorrow with Mr. Armstrong, and seven special DVDs of various Feast of Tabernacles and other programs. Together, the 23 disks of the HWA DVD Video Collection total over 30 hours of video materials!

These disks will play in most DVD players available today, including DVD players in Windows and Macintosh computers. However, in our testing, the quality of the video images seemed best when played on a DVD player

connected to a television set. We did test each disk on both Macintosh and Windows PCs, and experienced some problems, so we strongly recommend that you use these disks on a DVD player connected to your television set. If you do not already own a DVD player for your television set, we used the APEX brand of DVD players available at Wal-mart and found that they handled each DVD perfectly! The current price of the entry-level model of APEX brand DVD player at Wal-mart is approximately US\$68.

We experienced the most difficulties with trying to play these disks on Windows PCs, but have determined that the DVDs are indeed Windows compatible, but only with certain DVD drives. So if you plan to use your Windows PC to play these DVDs, then you are advised that you may experience difficulties, and that the DVDs are not faulty.

Each DVD has been saved in NTSC Television format. This is the format used primarily in North America, South America and the Caribbean. The European television format, PAL, is not compatible with the NTSC television format, but there are many ways to convert the NTSC format to PAL. If you are in a PAL television area, please ask your local electronics store if they have a dual-mode DVD player, one that can play both NTSC and PAL DVD videos. We are currently exploring the possibility of offering a PAL version of these DVDs, but if you can find a dual-mode DVD player, then you will not need to wait until a PAL version, if any, is available.

As explained more fully in the DVD listing below, we cannot afford at this time to provide these DVDs to you free of charge. Blank DVDs are very costly, and it takes over 1.5 hours to copy each DVD. So we have made special arrangements with a local electronics store for them to copy each DVD for US\$20 a piece. This covers the cost of the blank DVD as well as the labor and equipment costs of the vendor providing this service. This is a very good price because the next lowest price we were quoted was \$35 each, and most of the quotes were in the \$45-\$50 range per disk. But since it would take over 34 hours for us to make a single set of the entire HWA

DVD Video Collection, we simply have no alternative but to send these out to be duplicated.

In addition, we request a \$5 donation per disk to the HWA Library, for a total cost to you of \$25 per DVD, to help offset the expenses of creating the master set of these DVDs, as well as to cover postage and shipping expenses, and other operational expenses of the HWA Library. We were very blessed to have received a major donation that allowed us to purchase the DVD mastering equipment, but there were several thousand dollars of other development expenses to create the master DVDs that were not covered by this very generous donation.

As always, I expect to be criticized by offering these DVDs in this way, but the economics of the situation do not permit, at least at this time, any other way. It would cost approximately \$125,000 to have a minimum order of a thousand sets of these disks made and to be able to give them out free of charge. We simply do not have this level of resources at this time. If we could receive 1000 pre-paid orders for these DVDs, then we could offer them at approximately \$125 per set (about \$5.50 per disk). But until then, it is better that they are at least available in some manner instead of being out of circulation totally. I realize that an entire set may be beyond the financial reach of most households today, but within the reach of several families together or small congregations.

For those needing a little reminder, the WCG did not offer any audio or video materials of the Church free of charge. The only exception I am aware of being cassette tapes for the blind. They charged a modest price for the Bible Hymnal cassette tapes, the Festival Music cassette tapes, and they charged a modest price for the Feast Video tapes. In addition, the Church did charge for other items like the Envoy and for you to have a personal copy of the Bible Hymnal. So I do not feel that there is any obligation upon the HWA Library to provide these videos free of charge or not at all. I would dearly love to provide them free of charge, and am willing to do so, if the resources become available in the future.

Also as a reminder, the Church permitted the use of excess second tithe to

purchase the audio and video tapes available at the Feast. And if you plan to use the World Tomorrow telecasts in your weekly Sabbath services, you might consider using first tithe for those DVDs. But that will be your personal decision.

But there is a way that you can receive the HWA DVDs for free! If you have any HWA-era video tapes of The World Tomorrow or other Church tape, and it is not already in our listing, we will send you free of charge one DVD for every World Tomorrow broadcast we do not have or for every Church tape we do not have that we can use to convert to future DVDs. We understand that there might have been a few other Festival tapes offered by the Church that we do not have, so please look through your video tapes and see if you have some we do not have. One caution, though, is that the DVD mastering process is very, very sensitive to the quality of the recording being used, so we must have the highest quality tape possible to convert to DVD. Unfortunately, most of the video tapes we used were copies of copies of copies, and about a dozen episodes of the World Tomorrow we had could not be converted to DVD because the copies were just too weak.

In addition, if you cannot afford these DVDs, and if you do not have any video tapes to exchange for the DVDs, I will start a waiting list for those who cannot afford the DVDs, and if others will send in more than \$5.00 per disk, I will send out DVDs free to anyone on this waiting list, as funds are available. I expect a huge demand for the DVDs, so please send in your request either via e-mail or via postal mail to be added to the waiting list and be patient. The mailing address is: HWA Library, PO Box 6025, Woodridge, IL 60517.

As you review the HWA DVD Video Collection list, please remember you can order any single DVD, or any combination of DVDs. You do not have to order them all at once. The only exception is for the 2-disk DVD set of the Behind the Work 1985 Feast tape. Please order both disks at the same time, not one or the other.

If you have any questions, please contact us via email at the HWA Library. Also, as we receive more

tapes to convert to DVD, we will post an updated listing, so check back frequently.

— Don Tiger

Herbert W. Armstrong & Church of God Video, Audio, CD Library and Archives, PO Box 173, Botany, NSW 1455, Australia
e-mail: info@hwalibrary.org
web: www.hwalibrary.org

[I believe Don Tiger is doing a good service—God may well be using him—in accurately preserving the written and electronic messages of Herbert Armstrong. It is much more dangerous for people to have an idealized, “edited” view of HWA that makes him appear much better than he actually was. An honest, unbiased comparison of HWA’s work with the work of many other religious “cult” leaders and the church “work” described in the Bible should cause people to choose the biblical way. I hope that someday, Don Tiger and others will make that fair comparison.]

This library also speaks about the groups that claim to be the continuation of Herbert Armstrong’s work. (The Living Church of God, the Philadelphia Church of God, etc.) Are these groups interested in helping Don Tiger or purchasing a copy of his materials for each of their members? No, they ignore Don Tiger or even tell their members to avoid him. Why? Because they are more interested in continuing their own works, than they are in continuing Herbert Armstrong’s work. Most do not want to acknowledge that people in other groups are being used of God in some way. Furthermore, they all try to convince their members that their group’s doctrines and methods are like HWA’s and they would rather not answer the questions that arise if their members have multiple sources of information.]

— NSEJ

E-mail Craig White, Again

Several people responded to the news item about Craig White’s book, *Lost Races of the Ancient World*, which he soon hopes to publish (*Servants’ News*, Mar/Apr 2002). Due to computer problems, the e-mails were lost, so please e-mail send them again to originofnations@tpg.com.au.

— Craig White ☐

An Aging Ministry – A Major Problem Developing in the Churches of God

While this article uses most of its examples from the UCG-IA, the situation is important for nearly all Church of God groups, including the numerous independent congregations.

The Sep/Oct 2002 edition the *United News* (the newspaper of the United Church of God, an International Association) reported: “By far the most pressing issue is the fact that our ministry is aging”. Other CoG organizations have to be facing the same aging issue.

Some figures were given (*Emphasis added for clarity/emphasis*): in 1995 the UCG-IA began with 123 employed pastors. After a “large attrition rate... that number is currently 96... Four men have resigned from the full time ministry in the last two years; two have died. Five have been retired in the last year.” It was also reported five more retirements are scheduled by June 30, 2003.

The article continued, “Within ten years, 39 of our 91 pastors (in the United States) will be at least age 65; 25 of them will be at least 70. That requires hiring at least four new pastors every year for the next ten years just to “hold our own”.

More figures were discussed at the Council of Elders meeting March, 2002, “the average age of a salaried

elder in the United Church of God is now 56, and increasing, since there is no organized program to bring younger men into the field. By the end of this year, fully one-third of the employed ministry in the United States will be over the age of 60. Clearly something must be done, and soon.”

It was pointed out the aging ministry issue is compounded by financial considerations. The news article went on to explain. “But replacing an active pastor usually means retiring another man, which also bears a cost. In general terms, between hiring and equipping a new pastor to serve, and retiring his predecessor, the Church can be facing an annual cost of \$100,000 for each replacement (total costs involved for both men)...” What about financing health care for retirees? Or for the widows of pastors?

There is another side to the aging ministry coin. It is the aging members. As brought out in the Council of Elders meeting March 1, 2002: “A survey of Feast of Tabernacles attendees in 1999 found that 70% of those attending the festival that year were (then) over the age of 45. Nearly three years later, that same percentage is now [over the age of] 47 or 48. Within the next 20 years, most of that group will retire, living on less income.

What will be the results in financial support for the work of the Church?”

An Analysis of the Problems

So at the same time retirements and replacements are *increasing* salary expenses, deaths and retirements mean *decreasing* revenue from more and more of the members. It is important to consider that the CoGs have long held that tithing is not required on social security or other previously paid into retirement benefits. (While Church Bible Teaching Ministry does not promote tithing, it is the main way that many Church of God groups are supported, ask for *How Do We Give to the Eternal?* for more information.)

The *United News* reported on still another aspect of the problems by saying, “How can we continue to help our youth see the value of following God’s way as they grow into maturity?” Good question! This writer often wonders what young people must think when they look around at the Churches of God and see relatively few young people, but rather see aging pastors and mostly elderly members.

[Norman Edwards has asked a number of young people what they think: they find nice people in the CoGs, but lots of division over obscure doctrine and not much teaching or doing good to the outside world as

Changing from a “One True Church” Work to a “Service” Work

When the WCG had its large media efforts, it made sense for people to drive whatever distance was required to get to a WCG congregation for Sabbath services—because that was the “one true church” in most members’ minds. Renting buildings was sensible for several reasons: 1) With fast growth, the location of services and ministerial circuits frequently changed—finding a new building to rent was much easier than buying or selling one. 2) The WCG had little interest in local evangelism or service, so the “community presence” of a local building was not needed. 3) Most members lived so far away that it would be difficult for them to help maintain or to make use of an “owned” building during the week. 4) Occasionally, ministers would leave the WCG with their congregations; if the WCG headquarters owned their church building, they would be stuck with it.

But today, none of the CoG groups has a massive amount of growth from their central headquarters media efforts. Television and big religion in general are much less trusted than they were thirty years ago. A local presence is more valuable. Owning a building, and making it available for scout meetings, a used clothing exchange, a teen drop-in or other community events tends to bring people to hear one’s message. It also provides a place for Bible studies (not services) designed for new people. A variable sign outside with weekly Bible study topics is an ongoing witness to the community: “What Does the Bible Say about Hell?”, “Easter or Passover?”, “Keep God’s Feast Day”, “Why celebrate Satan?”, “God’s Love in His Law”, “The Real Story of Jesus’ Birth” etc. Adding “Your questions are always welcome” as a permanent part of the sign would be a great idea.

— NSE

Jesus and His Apostles did. The young people often find that there is little for them to do. Some wonder if the CoGs, as we know them, will survive.]

The scenario pictured here of ministry expenses *increasing*, while the income from an aging membership will *decrease*, is obviously *not a sustainable one. What to do?*

One possibility is being tried by UCG-IA. However, as the *United News* put it, "The Ministerial Candidate program is a good start, but it is just a start."

A Bleak Picture

The picture as painted by the above figures is a bleak one. Instead of lively, vibrant, growing churches, the figures show more of ones *dying*. We can probably draw this conclusion: New, younger members have to be developed in large numbers or the present system will collapse from its own financial weight and burden.

A Thought "Outside the Box"

Some points follow which are offered as possible helpful suggestions.

Suppose we think "outside the box"? Could new, younger members be developed if 1) local congregations had their own buildings and 2) instead of the present "shotgun" approach, evangelism monies were spent in those areas with their own local buildings? Could new growth then expand *outward* from those greatly strengthened bases?

There are many larger CoG congregations (75 or more members) who have met in *rented* facilities for 30 to 40 years! Does this seem somewhat incongruous and wasteful to you?

One large CoG organization even publishes a booklet *advising others*, entitled, "Managing Your Finances". What is your opinion, do you think paying rent for 30 or 40 years, and *still* paying rent, is managing finances well?

Consider that *thousands* of Protestant groups of smaller numbers than 75, in just a few years after starting their small group manage to acquire their own building. To their shame, some CoG members, have in years past looked down on other

groups. But could their zeal to have their own building, and to make a visible presence in their community, possibly be a lesson we might *learn from*? Hmmmmmm?

The financial outlay can be close to what many congregations have been paying in rent. One small CoG congregation (about 40 members) bought a store-front building and re-modeled it themselves for a cost of about

**Suppose we think "outside the box"?
Could new, younger members be developed if 1) local congregations had their own buildings and 2) instead of the present "shotgun" approach, evangelism monies were spent in those areas with their own local buildings?**

\$100,000. Their finished product is very attractive! Another CoG group in 1992 bought a small (capacity 110) Baptist church building, one half-mile off the Interstate, for \$25,000. An exceptional buy to be sure, but bargains are around. How about looking?

Even in worldly settings don't we see secular shepherds, out of love, concern, and responsibility, seeking and providing for the sheep in their charge the best grass, water, and yes, even shelter, housing?

Is There Any Growth?

Unfortunately there seems to be pitifully few new outside members being added to the Churches of God.

One prominent CoG elder is very much concerned because as he points out the Head of the church has told us to go and "*make disciples*". In all of the Churches of God groups, how many disciples have been made in, say, the last five years? On a scale of 1 to 10, how do *you* rate the job being done in carrying out this vital part of the commission?

Even more importantly, on a scale of 1 to 10, how do you think the Head of the Church rates the job that is being done of *making disciples*?

Do changes, maybe even radical changes, have to be made? What do *you* think?

One large CoG organization had

154 baptisms last year. At first glance, that might look like some growth. But on further reflection we realize there should have been that many, or more, baptisms just from the member's own children who have reached adulthood.

[If the number of member deaths are subtracted from the number of member baptisms, the growth is small indeed. Church of God members may change groups fairly often, but the real new growth of a group is the number of people it baptizes, minus the number of members who die from the group. —NSE]

One group claims a few dozen baptisms of outsiders, but one analysis showed they were done at a cost of about \$100,000 per baptism. We have to wonder, could such a large sum of money be spent more productively?

For example, that same \$100,000 if spent for a church building, besides providing better shelter for the sheep, might it help bring about a single baptism? *[Or hundreds of baptisms over the years.]*

Consider that a former top WCG evangelist has stated that at the same time they were spending millions and millions of dollars on advertising and media, that *half or more* of WCG's growth came from members influencing their friends and relatives. And this was in an atmosphere, remember, when the "laity" were not even supposed to be doing any such efforts on their own.

We have to wonder, what would happen if today's members were turned loose, actually encouraged to influence, even evangelize, and were able to do so from a base of having their own local building?

There Is Growth

There is, however, *some* real growth taking place.

Unfortunately, that growth seems to be in buildings at the headquarters of several of the Churches of God. Unfortunately, this does not alleviate the aging member/ministry problem, but instead financially *adds* to it. (It makes sense for a *modest* headquarters to be owned and not rented. At the same time, just as army commanders

are not to sit down to eat until they have provided food for their troops, shouldn't headquarters first provide as many buildings as possible for their sheep before providing one for themselves?)

More Thinking "Outside the Box"

Since this article is engaging in some thinking "outside the box" let's pose one more question.

Pekka Vuorio, a Swedish CoG researcher operating a large website, asks: "Why are large headquarters needed anyway?"

Is this a silly question? Let's consider. As he points out, many CoG members "would *volunteer* to do home office work. To *share* the load, to be equally *yoked*, to work *together*, to cooperate with like-minded, so *all* do the work of love. *All* should take part. Locally done work in their own city..." What a radical concept! (And to empire builders, a *frightening* concept.)

Based on this writer's 38 years' experience with CoG people, the volunteer response would be overwhelming!

What if one congregation volunteered to handle, say, the mailing of the organization's church newspaper? Another of the church magazine? One congregation could prepare the envelopes

for booklets, which could then perhaps be mailed direct from the printer. Maybe a group nearby to the printer could stuff the booklet envelopes? How about, say, much of the Human Resource work being done by an early retiree from that field? One such immediately comes to mind. Another congregation, that might have some knowledgeable accountant people, could handle the organization's donations, which would be mailed to their local post office box. And on and on—you can think of your own projects.

Do these tasks seem too complicated to "farm out"?

Consider donations, which you might think of as one of the difficult tasks. As the head of a Mortgage Banking firm, even before today's more advanced computers, I can tell you handling checks was fairly easy. We received and processed 5,000 mortgage payments a month. That would be today about five million dollars a month. Furthermore, as Mortgage Bankers, my company had to do *written, extremely detailed, mathematically perfect* reports on each and every one of those 5,000 checks, reports that will never be required from a CoG group. And yes, all of that can be done today from anywhere, from a local church, even from someone's home.

One CoG retiree was once the head of a large European hospital. He speaks four languages. A man of talent, experience, and ability? Apparently. Yet as far as I know the only use being made of him is to warm a church seat once a week.

More Numbers

The *United News* reported UCG-IA has a total of 359 elders in the US, of which 92 are full time. That leaves 267 men already selected as unpaid elders. Could some of them (just a few are needed each year we were told) be retired, but still quite capable? If so, might they be available to be hired at *nominal* pay since they already have an income and would be serving out of love and concern? And their service does not have to be full-time to be helpful and effective. Has any survey even been undertaken to determine how many might be in that situation?

What about "common members"? There has to be a multitude of men who spent three, four, or more years going through various Spokesman Clubs. Figuring each meeting for two hours, 40 meetings per year; hundreds, maybe thousands, of CoG members have 240, 320, 400 or more hours of this valuable training and

Church Headquarters Growth

The Church or God groups appear to be placing a priority on buying large "headquarters" grounds and buildings. Within the last two years:

The **Philadelphia Church of God** purchased 160 acres in Edmond, Oklahoma in the year 2000 to begin *Imperial College* and eventually to include the church headquarters. They completed their "field house" in June of 2001, a building similar to the Ambassador College, Big Sandy, "field house" that is used for nearly every function of college life. (Source: www.icedmond.org).

The **Intercontinental Church of God** (Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association) dedicated their new headquarters building in Flint Texas, June 29, 2002. It is on an 8½-acre site. 164 attended the dedication. (Source: *The Journal*, July 30, 2002).

The **Living Church of God** (Rod Meredith), is buying a 38,000-square-foot building in Charlotte, NC. This is 0.87 acre, a 475% increase from the approximately 8,000 square feet they are using now. (Source: *The Journal*, Aug 30, 2002.)

The **United Church of God, an International Association**, on May 4, 2002 dedicated their new 26,000-square-foot (0.6 acre) building on its 5-acre site. They previously rented 6,000 square feet, so this is headquarters growth of 433%. (Source: *The Journal*, May 31, 2002, and March 1998 board meeting report from Clyde Kilough.)

The reason these church organizations sought out new office space was probably because they were crowded where they were. But as an example, how does the UCG-IA's increase in space compare to their membership growth?

The May, 2000 edition of the *United News* reported the first day of UB attendance at 12,111. It reported the last day attendance at 11,703. We can strike an average of 11,907. The June, 2002 *United News* reports Pentecost attendance of 11,758. It seems that there has been no significant increase in members in the last two years.

Owning a church headquarters building can be a long-term money-saver. So can owning a local church building. But it all seems concentrated at the headquarters. Why are these church organizations purchasing four times as much building as they are currently using when their growth is relatively flat and their ministry and membership is aging? Is each hoping that the other organizations will collapse, leaving the members of all four groups to them?

We hope they will quickly realize that the reason for lack of church growth is not lack of a headquarters' space, but a lack of doing what Christ wants to be done. May He show all of His people, including independent local groups, more clearly what we should be doing!

education. A plus for tapping this resource is that they now have the added benefit of years of experience gained in the real world holding real jobs. Add to all of that some nominal additional training, and you might have some formidable and very capable potential elders. Has any survey been taken to determine how many such men are available to be utilized by the Churches of God?

More Possibilities

How about using the *Internet* to train new elders and helpers? Others are using it effectively, why aren't we? It is certainly a cheap way one gifted person can impart their experience and knowledge to thousands of others.

By chance (or was it?) the very day I am composing this article the local paper wrote about Indiana University, ranked as one of the top business schools in the country. As many know, an MBA is one of the hardest degrees to achieve. Yet of the 535 students enrolled in their MBA degree program, as the article put it, "4 out of 10 of those students will never set foot inside a classroom"! Instead they will receive their Indiana University schooling *entirely* over the Internet.

How about more use of *videos*? One large Protestant church organization, *growing* at a rapid rate by the way, has their most gifted speakers do *videos*. These videos are then viewed by prospective members, as well as others. By using videos from their top talent, Church messages and training are given in the best possible and most effective way. Why are not the Churches of God using more video training?

After all, both the Internet and videos are not *speculative* resources, they are *proven* successful (and very inexpensive) ones.

To Sum Up

In summary, we might all thank UCG-IA for 1) identifying so well, and 2) then openly acknowledging the problems caused by an aging ministry and an aging membership, thus giving all of us what should be a loud **wake up call**.

Indeed the problems of aging elders, aging members, little or no

Simple Points for the Future

The survival of our local congregations must be addressed in the next few years while there is still time. We have had about 10 years since the breakup of the WCG, and it is clear that there is no group that is growing rapidly from new baptisms. There is still enough ability, energy and money in many of the groups to change their method of operation now. There needs to be time for planning—time to make mistakes and recover from them. If nothing is done now, in another 10 years there probably will not be enough ability, energy and money to make significant changes.

It is true that God must call people, but Christ gave His disciples the job of going and delivering the message. Historically, the Apostles healed people, and the grateful people wanted to hear their message. Today, we have financial and teaching resources that they never had, so we can help people, and then teach them in ways that the Apostles never could.

If headquarters evangelism efforts are not bringing people to our fellowships, then it would be best to learn to teach others locally. TV or radio is possible, but live studies seem to work better. Most of the lessons we need can be learned from the Truckers Bible Study (*Servants' News* March 1998 to present—available if you ask). Arlo and Lenny (who conduct the study) are reaching a difficult audience—people whose jobs take them all over the country, who can almost never attend regularly. The same techniques applied to a church should work even better. The important lessons as this writer sees them:

- 1) Tell God you want to serve Him and ask Him to show you how.
- 2) Start with people who are committed to work hard for several years with a

specific plan to teach others. Arlo and Lenny patiently waited through a number of weeks during the first year of their study when nobody came to listen.

3) Have a definite location and time. Most new guests come by reference from a friend (there is a lot of suspicion of advertisements for religious groups). The location can be your own building, a long-term rented building or a facility available free.

4) Have a topic planned for each presentation, but be willing to answer questions, even if they occupy the entire study.

5) Let visitors with sound Bible knowledge share it with the others.

6) Do not look down upon, but be willing to teach and help "sinners" (drug users, prostitutes, criminals, etc.) Reject them only when they pose a real danger to others attending the study.

7) Be ready for confrontation or questions that one cannot answer, realizing that teachers will get better with time.

8) Do a modest amount of inviting and advertising to the study. Do not try to portray it as something "big and important" but as humble people getting together to answer questions from the Bible.

9) Have Bibles and literature available for those who are interested. You can use literature from many groups. (Media-based church organizations are usually fearful to send out another group's literature lest they lose prospective members to that group. But, a local group with live, interactive studies is not likely to lose a prospective member to a distant organization by giving out some of their literature.)

10) Don't give up. Only stop one program when you are replacing it with another one that is clearly better.

— NSE


growth, and congregations with relatively few new, young members, should greatly concern *each* one of us in the various CoG groups; Christ's own spiritual body.

The questions we face are really *two* very simple ones:

1. Do we again want lively, vibrant, growing churches—ones making disciples?

2. Are we willing to make the drastic changes that seem to be needed to bring it about?

It can't be stated better than the largest organization coming out of the WCG stated it, "*Clearly something must be done, and soon.*"

Our complacency and failures to act are heading the CoGs for what could be disaster. Can we arouse from complacency? Can we straighten out our priorities? Can articles like this one, which open up some suggestions, be catalysts for discussion, catalysts for bringing about some real changes? 

— One-third Century in CoGs

God Apparently Speaks Through Drew Carey—Why?

I have watched parts of the Drew Carey Show and found it using the typical sitcom themes of greed and illicit sex. I would not expect Drew Carey to speak for God. But the things he said to our nation's leaders on May 4th at the 88th White House Correspondents' Annual Association dinner were nothing short of astounding. The event at the Washington Hilton International Ballroom was attended by President George Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld and many other military and cabinet officials. It also included famous Hollywood stars such as Walter Cronkite, Sally Field, Harrison Ford, Ozzy Osbourne and many others—all told 2,700 guests plus those who watched it live on C-SPAN.

This writer spent hours attempting to find a complete transcript or audio/video of Drew Carey's "entertainment" monologue, but found only two partial transcripts covering his words about the Bible, plus numerous short articles which quoted a particular story from the speech. His website www.livedrew.com contained numerous of his other past recordings, but the file for this one was strangely missing. Assembling the information available, nearly everything Drew said was true, though possibly exaggerated. Of course, he used his comedian's talent of making it sound funny. (Transcripts of comedians are generally not near as funny as the live delivery—presentation means a lot.) Also, this being a big party with important people, there was a great tendency to laugh when the "important people" laughed, and a tendency for the "important people" to laugh at the jokes, funny or true, because they want to "fit in" to modern "American culture"—especially when they are being watched by the press.

Near the beginning Drew said he and Dick Cheney both had heart surgery; the procedures were identical except for one small thing: "The doctors had left my heart in!" After this

reference to Cheney's heartlessness, he continued to look at the Vice President and say, "Boy, I'm glad you're laughing, because I've got a family!"

Drew also made some jokes directed toward the military leaders in attendance—something about that we are not like other armies that want to kill everybody, we just come in to a nation and take over the oil, gas and other important economic resources.

Carey also made fun of new-age-like "holidays" such as Earth Day. He said he took the muffler off his car as part of his own personal celebration. He also spoke about polluting the air with his oversized, gas-guzzling S.U.V., but, "It's O.K. because I got more American flags on it than the Presidential limousine". This appears to be a reference to a lot of the bad decisions that are being made in government now that are simply being smoothed over with patriotic fervor.

During his routine, Drew made eight references to Ozzy Osbourne—a musician/TV-personality known for drug use, a foul mouth and occult weirdness. Ozzy once bit the head off of a live bat as part of a performance. So Drew compared Ozzy to President Bush: "First of all, they both love their families. They both partied a little too hard when they were younger. Half the time you can't understand a word either one of them is saying. And neither one of them can make a move without their wife's approval." George Bush is a member of the Skull & Bones, a life-time Yale fraternity that is filled with occult weirdness.

Later in his speech, he began to talk about the Bible. It appears that he has recently begun reading it, and that he has also stopped attending traditional church—two good things. Here is what he said:

Carey Preaches Bible Truth

...I don't like to watch the news. I mean I do, but I get so depressed watching the news. You know what I do when I watch the news though? I turn the news off, I get out my

Bible, I turn to the Book of Revelation, and I start checking stuff off. (laughter) You know. Got it. Got it. Need it. (laughter) Got it. Got it. Need it. (more laughs) Red dragon. Seven horns. Ten crowns. Ozzy Osbourne, America's favorite TV dad. (Big laughs) Oh man. 20 million dollars, huh? (looking at Osbourne, referring to his TV contract) You know that is barely gonna pay for your kids' therapy. I don't know why—that money's gonna be down the drain.

Yea, you know, I read the Bible a lot. You know it's crazy. We celebrate holidays here in the United States... and what I found out recently was that we celebrate holidays that have nothing to do with the Bible at all. Real famous holidays, like Christmas. Christmas is not in the Bible. The birth of Jesus is in the Bible, but not Christmas. The tree's not in the Bible, the gifts are in there, but nowhere in there does it say, "Celebrate my birthday says Jesus." It's a Pagan holiday that the Romans invented that we just do. (quiet)

But, everywhere you go. I've seen this so many times. You see a big Nativity scene and there's baby Jesus, the manger, sheep, shepherd, wise men, Mary, Joseph... and Santa Claus right in the middle! Like, who's that, Mary's Lamaze coach? (laughter)

Santa Claus has nothing to do with anything. Neither does the Easter Bunny. Easter's another Pagan holiday that's not in the Bible. Every Easter you don't hear anything about Jesus on the cross (Drew spreads his arms like Jesus nailed to a tree). All you hear about is the Easter Bunny. Easter Bunny this and Easter Bunny that. (quiet) Why is it the Christian religion is the only one in the World that needs a mascot to sell its stuff? (laughter) You don't see Jewish people off celebrating with the Passover kangaroo. (big laughs) There's no Ramadan rooster. (huge laughter)

Halloween's another big holiday—Satanic holiday. Nobody's bothered by that for some reason. You know, "fun for the kiddies". (laughter) I mean, when I was going to "church" they always told me Satan's the most evil one, the one you have to watch out for. "Watch out for Satan!" Then, once a year, the whole country goes, "Hey, let's party with this guy." (big laughs) It's ridiculous. (laughter)

There's a Catholic church down my street that used to have Halloween parties every year. Of course, they don't have them anymore 'cause they don't want the "priests" handing out candies to the kids. (moans and groans from audience, some laughter) Don't boo! Don't boo! I have to, uh, I'm going to hand out a word of support to the Catholic church... (pause) "There's no such thing as bad publicity". (crowd roars)

The Press Responds (a little)

The depth of what Drew Carey had to say was not covered by the press very much. One writer said Carey's harshest joke of the evening was his comparison of Bush's speaking style to a high-wire act. While Mr. Bush expends more effort balancing to "keep everyone happy" than he does telling the truth, many of Carey's other "jokes" hit on far more serious problems. Some of the "Christian" articles about that evening were very critical of Bush for welcoming the irreverent Ozzy Osbourne, and also critical for letting Carey "make a mockery of the Bible". The Christian press was right on the first point, wrong on the second. Carey's Bible teaching was more accurate than some "Christian" sermons.

One last point that several writers noted: Near the end, Drew spoke as if he were admonishing children: "Don't treat celebrities like they're heroes." And this was to a room full of people, many of whom regard themselves, and each other, as heroes! What a wonderful thing to have the truth spoken!

Was He "Speaking for God?"

It is not easy to know what motivated Drew Carey to give this kind of comic routine. Was this message his idea or did God somehow give it to him? Maybe through someone else? Did he learn these things about the Bible by reading the Bible, or by reading someone's writing about the Bible? Will Drew change his life in the future, or will he continue with his more typical dirty-joke routines?

We must remember that God made Jonah speak to a people to whom he did not want to speak. God spoke through Baalam, a man who would have gladly cursed God's chosen people if God would let him. God even spoke through Baalam's donkey. In the New Testament, God made the corrupt

High Priest speak the very words he wanted said, even though he condemned Jesus to die (John 11:49–51). Similarly, the Roman governor Pilate had Christ crucified to please the Jewish leaders, but then placed the accurate sign "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" over Him in spite of those same leader's objections (John 19:19–22). God can accomplish His work through whomever He wills.

The plan is to e-mail this article to Drew Carey and see if he will explain why he said what he said. But even if he never replies, it is important that what he said was said.

It is only fair to ask the question, "How many people took Carey's message to heart, and how many just dismissed it as a series of jokes?" We can ask a similar question about all of the messages delivered by Church of God groups: "How many people actually took our messages to heart, and how many people dismissed them as another preacher looking for members and money?" Of course, we always realized that most people who listened would not heed our message, but we felt they were being "warned", nevertheless. We also realize that the Spirit of God works with a few people and they hear and change their life. Is Carey's message any different? Most will not think about it deeply, but will there be some who will say, "He's right; our country is corrupt and our churches teach a lot of things that are not in the Bible." And will God work with them and cause them to do something about it?

It would be a mistake for any of us to claim to know exactly how God is working with each and every person on earth. That is complex beyond our understanding. But it does not stop us from thinking about the difference between these two different means of communication. Carey is just one of thousands of famous people whom God could use to deliver a message. In short, he is a famous person, with access to leaders, with a true message, but no extensive religious background. We will refer to this type of messenger as a "famous person", below.

Famous Person & CoG Witness

How does the "famous person" witness compare with a typical Church of God witness. The "famous person" ob-

viously has better access to leaders. Most leaders would not be embarrassed to be seen listening to another famous person. Also, if the famous person is not a religious figure, it may be fairly easy to ignore the message or pretend that it is not of significance. If someone does listen to a famous person's message, they are then confronted with a dilemma: What do they do about it? Drew Carey, or most other famous people, do not have a "church to join". If God has simply given them something to say, they may not have much of any additional Bible knowledge or advice to give. The convicted listener can go to God and the Bible, and learn that way, and that is wonderful. But if the listener finds the New Testament example of believers working together in **local assemblies** ("churches"), he or she may attempt to find the church—maybe in their local yellow pages. They will probably be woefully disappointed at all the groups calling themselves "churches"—seeing how different they are from the Bible description of a church.

That is where the Church of God groups should come in. We should be patterning our church services on the Bible as much as possible, rather than our tradition. We should be ready to deal with people from a different background—be patient with them if they do not understand about unclean meats, the trinity and other doctrines that they may not have had time to study. We should be willing to answer the questions that they have, not try to send them through the doctrines that we think are most important. We should have good literature available for them to read if they want it, but not force it upon them.

Church of God groups would need a lot of money or miraculous intervention to get the attention of national or world leaders. God may well do this in the future, and such a witness will be clearly serious—not to be laughed off as a joke. But if God uses the "famous person" to deliver His message, we should be ready to receive and help those who might hear, even though they begin seeking God from some other source. We should be ready to fit into whatever God does—never having the audacious idea that He "has to use us" for His work. —NSE ☐

An Open Letter to All God's Christians

Lately I've been thinking about the subject of the Gospel going to the whole world. My personal thoughts are that God has yet reserved for Himself a people to deliver this gospel message. Some true believers have already been prepared and some are being prepared now, but I believe this is a small number, just as God chose Gideon's small army to destroy the enemy. These are the loyal and faithful servants of God Most High and are living examples of the Gospel message of obedience that the Father gave to Christ. This message reveals there is a plan of salvation for mankind and how one enters God's spiritual kingdom.

We all know that Christ was put to death because He preached the gospel message about the salvation of mankind. I also believe the Apostles were killed for the same reason. Satan attempted to annihilate all true believers because he thought the gospel message would go out to the whole world during that time in history, and then the end (and also Satan's end) would come. Although the apostles preached the true gospel message, it was not allowed to go to the whole world because it was not God's timing and the end had not yet come. During the following 2,000 years, there were groups that preached a message about end-time prophecies, a physical kingdom ruled by Christ for 1,000 years, or even a message of grace without obedience. But, Brethren, these messages were not the gospel, and God's timing had not arrived to deliver the true gospel. God would not have allowed the true gospel message to be preached to the entire world as a witness at any other time but the end time, because it is *only for the end time*. The true gospel is how one is born into the spiritual kingdom of God. This true gospel message is clearly explained in my article, "Understanding the Keys to the Kingdom of God".

Soon there will be a great movement to send the gospel around the world, followed by a great persecution of those who take this message. Christ promised in Matt 24:14, "And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world

as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." We know the Bible says that God's word will not return void. This will be the type of thing that will turn the world upside down as it did in Paul's days. The spotlight will be on this gospel message about salvation, which will cause everyone to be curious about it. Satan knows that if he can stop this gospel message, then the end will not come. Satan will surely again be stirred to action to stamp out this message (and the messengers) from going to all ends of the earth. Make no mistake, Satan knows that when the true gospel goes out to the whole world, his time is almost up and that he will soon be destroyed in the Lake of Fire. For more information about Satan's death, read my article, "The Truth About Heaven and Hell".

We can all take comfort in Rev 3:8, where God states that He will open a door for the Church. I believe this door allows us to preach this gospel message about the salvation of mankind to all the world. God says *no one* will be able to close this door. And, God's Word says that many of the saints will be protected and spared from the coming times of trouble (Rev 3:10).

Brethren, I believe that we must do the work God has entrusted to us. Of course, this is done through the power and strength of Christ, His Son. Let's look for any doors being opened by Christ. We need to take this calling seriously and personally seek opportunities to be involved with proclaiming the gospel. I am calling on all Christians everywhere to put their differences aside and with one accord to financially support those individuals who are incurring cost in order to proclaim the true gospel message. I am also contributing financially in this way. We also need to diligently seek God's help and strength so we will live a righteous life and be worthy to take the gospel message to the world because *it is a righteous message*. Brethren, we look forward to that day when we hear those profound words of the Father and Son, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Your brother in Christ,

— John Eastman

Norm Edwards Comments:

I agree with John Eastman's concluding thought: Many of us are too worried about our day to day problems and not enough concerned if Christ will say "well done" to us in the end. As sure as His creation stands before us each day, the Creator is watching to see what we do each day.

Do we live for Him as we go through our daily tasks? Is God in our long-term planning? Are we searching for opportunities to teach and serve others in the name of Christ? Or are we primarily interested in gaining knowledge for ourselves? I know some of us brethren work very hard serving God; may He bless and strengthen you. Those who are looking for a way to serve should keep praying and be patient—God will show them. I think we need spirit-filled brethren more than we need money, but I am also amazed that many believers make little attempt to help pay for the literature that regularly spiritually feeds them.

I do not have scriptural proof or a revelation saying, "God must do a major gospel-preaching work with us in the next few years." I believe the gospel was preached in the first century as Mark 16:20 says: "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen." The Gospel has certainly been preached at other times to varying degrees, and almost certainly will be preached again in the future. I do not know the exact timing of God's plans.

John the Baptist was the greatest man yet he did not understand the timing of Christ's ministry and spent his last days in prison and was later executed (Matt 11:3, 11; 14:3–12). The individual examples of faith in Hebrews 11 sometimes accomplished great things in the sight of God and the world, but at other times were impoverished and ignored. We must realize that God does not have to use us (see next article), but ask Him to use us anyway. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing" (Matt 24:45–46). ☐

Continuing Rebuttal to Hierarchical Leader Letter

Please do not look at this article and say, "Oh no, just more squabbling", but realize that much of the division in the CoG groups is caused by each group assuming itself to be right and then not communicating, in love, these issues to others. We must clear up the misunderstandings and bad feelings before making real progress toward unity in Christ (as opposed to unity under man).

LETTER:

August 3, 2002

Dear Norman Edwards:

Please be more careful about what you print and the editorial comments you make. According to the *Servants' News* index, you posted a letter exchange between me and Darwin & Laura Lee beginning on page 12 of the Jan/Feb issue, which arrived at my house last night (August 2, 2002). There are many problems regarding this, as well as your comments at the end of the exchange.

First of all, page 12 is erroneously page 12 from the Mar/Apr 2002 and not the Jan/Feb 2002 issue (though it was correct in the on-line version), and thus you left off my original comments which made the rest of the exchange out-of-context and instead accidentally published something else that it does not appear you had the original author's permission to publish.

Secondly, this letter exchange was a private exchange between me and the Lees and you did not have my permission to publish this. It is not that I would have necessarily minded, but when you and I spoke some months ago, you asked me if you could publish articles I had written at my website—I said you could as long as you told me what you wished to publish. You agreed to those terms, but seemed to have violated the spirit of our agreement in this case.

Furthermore, this publishing gave a false impression of what really happened. The Lees did not send me an e-mail asking about my letter published in *Servants' News*. Instead, it was my opinion that I was being spammed. They, like the porn-spammers, called their spam "invitations", but to me it was unsolicited spam. I consider that spam is a violation of Jesus' admonition to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you". It was only in their third or fourth e-mails to me (which were after I told them to take me off their e-mail list) that they directly mentioned my letter published in *Servants' News*.

I have never spammed and find it

improper and distasteful. I frequently receive anti-COG spam, prophetic speculation, doctrinal views, etc. from individuals who feel they can send out mass e-mails to people who are not interested. This is how I viewed the Lees' first two e-mails.

If the Lees would have asked me any legitimate questions, I would have answered them (as you admitted to me, I was the only one to respond to your hierarchical letter, who actually attempted to answer all the questions and subquestions you posed). Instead, they wish to hold me, a lay member, responsible for the fact they admittedly ignored requests from their local LCG minister (and there are differences in administrations, 1Cor 12:5).

To add insult to injury, you put comments at the end (page 14) regarding my refusal to continue to communicate with them "because they will not accept this questionable prophetic interpretation is clearly unbiblical". The Lees originally were spamming me. They seemed to be trying to insult me. They stated they did not agree with what I wrote. They did not ask me any direct questions (and I even attempted to address the negative question on page 13). Thus, I concluded again that it would be best for them to stop contacting me. But then they contacted me again (the letter on pp.13–14). Plus have sent me at least one more unsolicited e-mail since then.

You seem to prefer to take the side of those who once attended LCG over those who still do. Instead, to be accurate, you should have commented that it was not right for the Lees to send unsolicited e-mails to LCG members, especially after they have politely asked to not receive them.

Furthermore, the Lees' letter to me on pp.13–14 states, "You have a responsibility to proclaim the good news of God's soon-coming kingdom here on earth". The hint is that I do not. However, according to a compilation published in *Ambassador*

Watch, the *COGwriter* website (<http://members.aol.com/cogwriter/home.htm>) is the most visited website of its type in the world, and the second most visited which is produced by an individual (as opposed to an organization) with a COG background. My articles on COG doctrinal issues address the proclamation of the good news. And my most recent article (which you should consider publishing) is on how the COGs and Protestants have a different view on the hope of salvation.

The Lees also commented that they hadn't seen membership growth in LCG—this comment seems odd, since LCG has grown in membership each year since it began.

Finally, regarding the belief in Church eras, yes, I am "guilty" of believing that the Bible supports the teaching that the New Testament Church would have seven somewhat successive eras through its history. As you are aware, the concept of a "Philadelphia era" is not unique to Herbert Armstrong though you implied that in your comments on page 10. Many theologians throughout history have believed in Church eras (even A. Dugger did). What was unique about Herbert Armstrong is that he felt God used him to raise up that era. Herbert Armstrong reached more people with the truth of God than any other minister I am aware of. I agree with him, that the open door in Revelation 3:8, has to do preaching the Gospel (which is consistent with other New Testament scriptures, i.e. Acts 14:27, 1Cor 16:9, 2Cor 2:12). But I also agree with him that radio and television were some of the modern doors that allowed the Gospel to reach a wider audience. And that is probably why God chose to begin the Philadelphia era when He did.

In his sermon titled "Mission of the Philadelphia Church Era" on 12/17/83, Herbert Armstrong stated that the top priority of that era was to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world as a

witness, and that God restored truths to that era that the Ephesus (apostolic) era had. I believe that these two criteria are consistent with the criteria of Jesus in Revelation 3:7–12. Since even the non-Philadelphians keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17; Revelation 3:10), it is clear to me that when Jesus told the Philadelphians “you have kept My command to persevere” and to “hold fast what you have”, that this is not referring to the most basic of doctrines. I believe that these admonitions mean that the remnant of the Philadelphia era would persevere by holding fast to the truths that were restored to that era. These are now commonly referred to as the 18 truths.

You, the Lees, and others are free to not agree and that is your right. But when you choose to publish information, I feel you should have permission, you need to be accurate, and should not provide comments which are inaccurate. I understand that you strive for accuracy, but in how this matter was handled, it appears that you did not succeed.

Best regards,

— Bob Thiel

RESPONSE: Thank you for writing, I am printing your letter as one piece this time as you have previously requested. I will use subheads to address the various issues in my writing—it is all short enough that it should be easy for readers to follow.

I am sorry for the problems I caused by printing a page from the wrong issue. I was working on the next issue while printing the previous, and somehow, the new page 12 ended up in the printer. I am sending out the corrected page and encouraging everyone to read your complete message.

Spam (Unwanted E-mail)

It appears that you are objecting to both the e-mail that Laura Lee sent you and the e-mail of the “invitations for fellowship” that she sent to LCG members in her area. You compared it to “porn spam” which is a crime in many places. However, I don’t think any jury would agree with you. Please think about this some more and note the following points:

1. The Lees were sending information to people whom they personally knew. In your case, they sent

e-mail to you about your article to your address printed in *Servants' News*, which you knowingly placed there.

2. Their material is not obscene or objectionable by any legal standard, but likely to be of interest to some former WCG members—some responded asking for it to continue. Some who received it were upset, probably because it reminded them that there are others who seek God, keep the Sabbath, Feast Days and other truths, but who do not attend their congregation. I had the same kind of trouble when I was a WCG member and met “disfellowshipped” people who seemed diligent to obey God.
3. Spam is frequently sent from hidden e-mail addresses. I receive lots of it hawking business deals, medications, loans, porn and other junk. I just delete it; asking to be removed from those mailings is frequently pointless because the “sender” changes every few days anyway. These “no-return-address” junk mailers should be tracked down and prosecuted. I also receive lots of unsolicited e-mail from CoG groups. Nearly all readily identify themselves and their e-mail “return address”. I actually read some of it and learn from it. With others, I ask to be removed from their list, and they almost always do it. I think they should be allowed to try to communicate what they believe is an important message.
4. The Lees send out a “Prayer List” regularly to their entire e-mail address book. They do not have a sophisticated e-mail system and this is the easiest way to do it. Rarely, this e-mailing contains a paragraph or so of commentary on some particular subject. I believe these are the e-mails that you said did not have any specific questions. The vast majority of people like to receive this e-mailing. **Everything they send contains an easy way to be removed from their list.** The Lees believe their first communication with you was an e-mail about your article printed in *Servants' News*, and that the “Prayer List” e-mails followed after. If you acci-

dentally were deleted then re-added to their Prayer List e-mail list and received an unwanted e-mail, the Lees are sorry. They removed you as quickly as possible afterward. If you feel this is an inaccurate representation, they would be willing to search their e-mail archives where they should have a copy stored of everything that they have ever sent you.

5. Let us consider both sides of the golden rule. When I worked for the Global Church of God, if a member gave us names and addresses of people whom they thought “might want” GCG literature, we sent it to them. Sometimes those people were happy with it, sometimes they responded by saying “never send us anything again”—and we stopped. Rod Meredith approved of that policy—he even gave us names and addresses to send to in the early months. When Mr. Meredith left the GCG, he mailed to its members to tell them about the LCG. Do you consider the unsolicited GCG/LCG mailing acceptable because it is “truth”, and the Lees’ mailings “bad” because they are “sin”? If so, who should decide which mailing is good and which is bad? You? The LCG? The government? Or the people who receive the mailings?

The WCG taught that members were preparing to rule with Christ, but I have often wondered what would have happened if they had the power of the state behind them today. What would they have done to people who sent out literature that disagreed with their teaching or exposed their sin? Jailed them? Restrict them from using mail/e-mail? Command everyone not to hire them or sell to them? Execute them? Let us back up a moment and ask this question: How would Rod Meredith have been able to start the GCG if the WCG had the power of the state behind it? Would not they have been able to change doctrines however they wanted, and then eliminate Mr. Meredith and all of the other men who tried to continue Herbert Armstrong’s work? Our present government has many big faults,

but I think it is still better than what we would have if the leaders of the average CoG hierarchy had complete control. I appreciate the freedom to write to others, even if the church or government thinks I am wrong.

Printing Without Permission

As far as printing your letters were concerned, it never occurred to me to ask permission. You voluntarily sent them to the Lees. Every e-mail they send has a "trailer" that indicates they have a newsletter. They sent a "CC" to me on most of the e-mails to you—you would have seen this in your e-mail. They could have printed it in their newsletter, but they sent it on to me since I ran the original articles. None of your letters asked for confidentiality. I agreed to ask you about publishing things from your website, but did not relate that statement to these letters.

I do understand why publishing these letters could be difficult for you. My original *Hierarchical Leader Letter* essentially asked, "If people in other groups are indeed brethren, then why don't you treat them like brethren?" Your answer was essentially: "we do treat them like brethren, they are welcome to visit us and we are allowed to visit them." **The Lees were showing you that in practice, that does not always happen.** The Lees and I are not trying to hold you responsible for what the LCG headquarters or its ministry do, but want you to avoid defending them when they are wrong. Also, we realize that the LCG leaders are aging and that someday leadership of such organizations may pass to younger, highly talented and dedicated men such as yourself. If that happens, we hope you will fully understand the issues and do the right thing.

Proclaiming the Good News

I do not think that the Lees meant to say that you were not proclaiming the Good News, they were just saying that we all have a responsibility to do that, whether we think of ourself as *clergymen* or *laymembers*. (The Lees and I both realize that these words do not occur in the KJV or NKJV Bible, nor do the concepts that they represent.) With your website, you are doing far more to proclaim the Good News than most

individuals and many organizations. While there are a number of things on your site that I believe I can disprove from the Bible, you have obviously thought through some issues in much greater detail than the LCG leaders. I think it would be good if you split your site in two and put basic articles on one site, and Church-of-God related articles on another site. But, I need to finish moving my basic stuff to the *Shelter in the Word* site—it just takes time.

You suggested that I print your article on the difference between the Protestant and CoG's belief on the hope of Salvation. I could not find this article, but I did find an older one on the difference between these groups' views of "born again". I think the basic concept here is flawed because it treats "the Protestants" like enemies. Yes, while many Protestant church organizations hold beliefs similar to what you describe, the vast majority of the "Protestant" people do not. Why? Most people who consider themselves protestants view their religion as something they do on Sunday morning and they do not know what their church teaches. At the other end of the spectrum are diligent Christians who live their lives for God on a day by day basis and believe that God teaches each believer through His Spirit (John 16:13). Most of these people are not believers in hierarchy and they will follow the Bible and their understanding from God before they will go along with a "church doctrine". I have found people in this category who have learned what the Bible says about Heaven/Hell, the resurrections, salvation, the law, the Feast days, clean meats, the Sabbath and many other truths with no CoG teaching.

It is this latter group of people though, who are most likely to go to the Internet and look for others who believe the same thing. It would be good if they found your website—they could learn a lot. It would be bad if they found an article telling them that they did not understand salvation because they were Protestants. It is better to simply state the biblical truth on a subject and then cover common false teachings without using general labels. Another approach, is to refute the official teaching of a specific group

(e.g. Lutheran—Missouri Synod, or if necessary, the Worldwide Church of God). With this latter method, people outside the group will not feel attacked, and people inside the group cannot equivocate—either they disprove your article, or they must believe that the group they attend is teaching error.

Church Eras

I am certainly aware that many others teach "Church eras" besides Herbert Armstrong. They place the Philadelphia era at many different times: 1540 to 1900, 1700 to 1900, one even claims it started in 1776 when the U.S.A. government was founded with freedom of religion and its capitol in Philadelphia! A few other cult-like groups claim their church is the "Philadelphia era". But many other Bible students reject the idea from the obvious reading of the Scripture that tells everyone to listen to the messages of the churches (plural). I am glad that you agree that the Bible does not mention eras, but that you are relying on HWA's prophetic interpretation. After examining many of his prophetic interpretations, some have decided to trust him, others decide not to.

Unlikely to Convince You Now

I do not expect you to suddenly become an independent believer based upon this letter or even several articles. You have spent a long time in the Scriptures looking for support for all the LCG's doctrines and you believe that you have found it. What I do hope to do is let you know that there are many other believers who really want to obey God, who will deal honestly and righteously with you, but who do not follow a hierarchical church organization. At some time in the future, you will probably see firsthand, leaders within your group, maybe even yourself, having to make a major decision between **1)** doing what is biblically right, or **2)** doing what is expedient for "the church" or its leadership at the time. I had similar choices to make, and that is why I stopped working for the WCG and the GCG. I know many others who had similar decisions to make—some followed God, some did what was expedient. May God help you to make the right choice!

— Norman Edwards ☞

Does Psalm 81:3 Mention a "Full Moon"?

By Tim Henry and Norman Edwards

If you are not interested in determining the Biblical calendar, we still encourage you to keep the Feast Days with other believers. But if you are one trying to find out exactly what the Bible says about calendars, please consider this information.

Psalm 81:3 is a scripture frequently quoted by those striving to keep the Biblical calendar. The Hebrew word "chodesh" (Strong's #2320) is used for the month or "new month" in the Bible. Almost every calendar researcher agrees with that. Most would say a "new month" is the same as a "new moon" and use moon observation or calculation to determine the start of a month. Unfortunately, there is no scripture that clearly says: "you will know when a new month begins because you will see... or because you will calculate..." Psalm 81:3 does appear to describe events related to a new moon, but it is not clear how they are related or even what is related.

Who wants an article that explains why things are unclear? People who want the truth should want this article. Major portions of calendar systems have been based around this scripture alone. If those system's assumptions about this verse are wrong, then the whole system is wrong.

To help understand the problem, we will quote this verse from Green's Interlinear. We will give the meaning of each Hebrew word in the order that it appears, followed by its Strong's number in parentheses:

Blow (8678) in the new moon (2320) the ram's horn (7782) at the full moon (3677) on day (3177) our feast (2282).

Some believe that the "new moon" here is the dark moon or first crescent which would be the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) and that the ram's horn was also blown on the full moon, which would be the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Num 10:10). However, Numbers 10:10 specifies silver trumpets, and this verse says "ram's horn", though different trumpets may not be an issue. Others claim that Psalm 81:3 proves that the first day of the month is the same thing as the full moon. This is the most likely meaning

	Psalm 81:3	Proverbs 7:20
KJV	Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed , on our solemn feast day.	He hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed .
NKJV	Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon , on our solemn feast day.	He has taken a bag of money with him, And will come home on the appointed day .
NIV	Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full , on the day of our Feast;	He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon .

of this verse as there is no "and" connector between the words specifying that they are different events—but Hebrew grammar apparently allows separate, unconnected events (the ancient Israelites knew when months began, so they understood this verse).

Unfortunately, the Hebrew word translated "full moon", *kehseh* (Strong's #3677) is of uncertain meaning. It is completely different than *yereach* (Strong's #3394), the normal Hebrew word for "moon". It only appears twice in the Bible: Psalm 81:3 (81:4 in Hebrew Bibles) and in Proverbs 7:20, where it is actually spelled slightly differently. The usage in Proverbs is of little help in figuring

out what the word means. Above, it seems the NIV translators think *kehseh* means "full moon", the KJV think it means "time appointed" and the NKJV translators are split half and half. The *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (ISBN 0801037360, \$22.99 from Christian Book Distributors) excerpted below, says the root word means "to cover" and should have the sense of "being hid", but never "covered with light". This would fit in much better with dark moon, or even first crescent moon calendar research. The translation would be:

Blow the trumpet on the new moon, at the hidden moon on our solemn feast day. 

כִּפֹּף Prov. 7:20, and כִּפֹּף Psalm 81:4, *the full moon*; Syr. ^{ܟܫܗ} according to Isa Bar Ali (concerning whom see Pref. to smaller Hebr. Germ. Lex. p. xviii) is the first day of the full moon, also the whole time of the full moon, and so it is often used by Barhebraeus and Ephraim Syrus. The etymology is not clear to me, for it is not satisfactory to say that it is so called from the whole moon being then covered with light (from the root כִּפֹּף, כִּפֹּף). Verbs of covering are often applied in the sense of hiding and covering over, but never, as far as I know, to that of giving light.

3677



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.

Looking for a Church & a Wife

LETTER: August 15, 2002

Norm,

I've been reading your magazine via the web. I am glad to see there are so many choices to "choose" from in the Sabbath independent movement.

However, I have to wonder how welcome someone like myself would be at some of these groups.

RESPONSE: You would be welcome at our group and many others that I know about.

LETTER: Let me explain. In my current status as a believer, I no longer tolerate negative talk, especially about those not present to defend themselves; against dead people or against the fairer sex.

RESPONSE: I'll refer back to this statement, down below.

LETTER: I find it appalling the degree of racism, sexism, and ego-maniacs run amuck in our midst. Last church service I attended, the men were wearing dirty t-shirts or very casual attire; and I can't describe the things the women were wearing. They sort of resembled sweat pants but with a finer material—but they were not dressy at all. I would expect these people to be attending a campout activity, not a worship of the almighty God.

RESPONSE: "For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in **filthy clothes**, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: **has God not chosen the poor** of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into

the courts?" (Jms 2:2–6).

I agree that there are some people who seem to dress worse for services than they do for other occasions, and I think that is a mistake. Nevertheless, James says we should not judge them for this. On the other hand, I remember poor people in the WCG struggling to buy a suit for church—when they desperately needed to spend the money on work clothes or other essential items. I see no biblical reason for someone to buy clothes more expensive than they normally wear just to attend a service.

Are there racists, sexists and ego-maniacs in our midst? Yes. Those of us who are "spiritual", should be reading Galatians 6:1–2 and helping to restore them to Christ-like love.

LETTER: Being from a conservative and somewhat highly-educated background, I am continually mortified and mystified at the degree of ignorance among Sabbath keepers from scriptural doctrine to history to general academic knowledge in general. You appear to be a man of logic and reason, especially when I see those killer replies you write in your publication to those idiots that write in about church government.

RESPONSE: Please remember your paragraph about avoiding "negative talk". Many of the people who teach hierarchical government are not "idiots" or even evil-intentioned. They may be just so convinced that God has worked through their church and that hierarchical government is in the Bible, that they will accept any explanation they can find that holds it to be true. It took me **years** to realize that God can work with individual lives and through a church organization in spite of major doctrinal errors. But I do agree that many hierarchical ideas are self-contradictory, if one stops long enough to think about them.

LETTER: Why does God call such ignorant souls?

RESPONSE: "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to

shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1Cor 1:27).

LETTER: Is there any place in the church for the well-educated and successful individual?

RESPONSE: Of course there is. "...For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). Those who have a gift of knowledge have a responsibility to teach what they know to others. What if they do not want to listen? What if they seem to be stuck in their ignorant ways? Then those with knowledge must use their knowledge to figure out the best way to reach those people. God sent all different kinds of messages and messengers to His people in the Bible, and he reached some. Jesus healed and did good to others, and they listened to His teaching. You or I probably cannot heal as Jesus did, but if we first do good in whatever way we can to others, then they will often listen to what we have to say.

LETTER: Why does the church in general harbor such a negative lowly opinion about what life is to be like in the flesh?

RESPONSE: The Bible makes it clear that Christians would suffer trials in this life (Matt 5:10–12; Luke 6:22–23; John 16:22; Acts 5:41; Rom 8:17–18, 35–37; Phil 1:9; Heb 10:34; Jms 1:2; 1Pet 1:6; 4:13–16 and many other examples). However, I would guess that you are seeing what I frequently see—Christians who think they are suffering because they are Christians, but who are simply suffering from their own sins—or maybe the sins of others. When people blame problems that they are causing on something else (even Christianity), then solutions are slow in coming. Local congregations should be a place for brethren to share their problems and help each other see solutions. Many of the

above Bible verses speak of having joy for suffering for Christ. This is possible because we know it has eternal value. But it is hard to be joyful, and indeed we should not be, when we suffer for our own mistakes.

LETTER: Where oh where have the beautiful maidens gone?

RESPONSE: Women, like men, all get older, and their beauty must be seen in a different way. Girls grow into young women, but they seem immature to older men, probably because they are.

LETTER: Every church area I visit, (note: I travel extensively for my work), I hear ongoing messages about how God is torturing us to prepare us to be His worms in the kingdom; how important it is to suffer with faith; to believe and accept one's suffering lot; to keep oneself humble and not full of the pride of the world (i.e. don't be too ambitious); don't seek worldly pleasures, a.k.a. don't be financially successful and finally, don't be too happy... our lot is to suffer, suffer, suffer.

RESPONSE: This a common theme not just in Church of God groups, but in many older church groups that are no longer actively growing or working. It is mostly a means of trying to assure members that God is happy with their miserable suffering lot in life and that there is nothing better available. Many are suffering from their own problems and using religion as an excuse for not doing anything about them. These believers need to understand the Bible message of joy. God's ways do produce a happy abundant life. Sometimes, when we are able to live in relative peace, not heavily impacted by the sins of others, we can have a very joyful life. And if we do actually suffer for following Christ, we can still learn to have joy in Him.

LETTER: I am being somewhat sarcastic here, but I simply don't understand why there is so much negativity, hopelessness, and overall major dead works wherever I have had the misfortune to visit?

RESPONSE: Please do not consider your visits a misfortune. These groups needs people with the joy of Christ to visit them. A lot can be done by speaking just a few encouraging words to individuals who listen.

LETTER: I avoid church gatherings as much as I can because I leave depressed. I leave in a worse attitude than that in which I came.

RESPONSE: This is where you can grow in faith and strength. The four

Gospels show where Christ was not only able to go through great personal suffering and sacrifice during the last days of His life, but also strengthen His apostles who were more of a liability than a help to Him at that time.

LETTER: My life outside of church is very happy and productive.

RESPONSE: Good. Share it with those who need it.

LETTER: Years ago, I had hopes of finding an incredible, God-worshipping and honoring woman, to share my life with. Instead, I find women who still live at home with their parents; divorced women searching for a provider for their offspring; single women who latch on to every decent single man in view, only to have nothing to give to him in return. The best women I've met are ten years my senior and I'm not interested in marrying my mother. This seems to cause offense. Why?

What ever happened to all the women who were good conversationists and who actually looked "good" in a dress? Seems like most women in our church are really "well fed" to the point they are obese.

Why aren't there more women in the faith? Why aren't there singles groups like there used to be?

RESPONSE: There are singles groups—we frequently cover them in *Servants' News* (see page 4 of the March/April 2002 issue for the latest article).

It is interesting that I also receive letters from Christian women asking, "Where are the men of faith?" "Where are men who obey God, take care of themselves, earn a good living, treat women nicely, etc.?" "Why do so many men seem mostly interested in sex—in 'getting' a wife and then treating her miserably?" "Why are the only 'mature' men old enough to be my father?"

God has placed us in a world where we never find the perfect mate, and where we never are the perfect mate. The success of our marriage, and our eternal judgment depends far more upon "being a good mate" than it does upon "finding a good mate". Pray for God's guidance and wisdom, and realize that He may not give you everything you want, but wants to see what you will do to help your wife.

Realize that overweight and other undesirable conditions are often caused by a negative environment which is not always permanent. I know of cases where women from a negative past were overweight—worrying if they would ever have a normal married life. When

they married, they lost the excess weight and kept it off for many years. By contrast, I know of other women who kept themselves in marvelous shape looking for the "right man". After they "got him", they let themselves rapidly deteriorate. Sometimes, God packs diamonds in the rough and one has to have the wisdom to discover them.

LETTER: I date outside of the church. I have found incredible conversationists; women who take care of their bodies; and who have some resemblance to what used to be called "female". I miss the spiritual dimension, but I've not seen this in a COG female in over a decade.

However, I won't marry outside of the faith. But alas, I won't marry an obese woman who just wants to suck my bank account dry either. I want a woman who has her own career and who is educated and has many interests. Am I asking for the sun, moon, and stars??

RESPONSE: You are asking for a lot, and have said little about what you are doing to make yourself the person that this wonderful woman would want to marry. Of interest, I can think of one woman whom I knew over 20 years ago who was absolutely beautiful as well as all of the things that you describe. She had numerous men in the church trying to date and marry her, but found problems with all of them. So she, too, decided to "date outside the church", even though she would not marry outside the church. The owner of the business where she worked took a liking to her. He was a handsome, strong, prosperous man who treated her wonderfully. After a year or so, he was baptized by a WCG minister and not long after that, they were married. I don't know of anyone who was against the marriage. A couple more years and a couple of babies later, it was clear that he was treating her badly and they finally divorced. He stopped attending Sabbatarian services, though she continued. Apparently, his main purpose for doing so was to "get her to marry him". Yes, even this kind, Godly woman and the ministry which counseled her were fooled. She would have been much better to marry one of the stable, less fantastic church guys.

I could relate numerous other stories of exciting, attractive, wealthy, interesting people who married, only to quickly divorce or to live out a miserable marriage. On the other hand, I can tell of

apparently bland people with few outstanding qualities who had happy marriages for years.

LETTER: Well Norm, I finally had time to do the impossible: write an e-mail.

Thank you. I think a lot of people are dealing with these same issues in their lives.

Keep up the good work and spread the word, there is an athletic, handsome, non-sexist, intelligent and incurable romantic looking for a modern day Eve crossed with a Deborah! Where art thou my Juliet!??

Regards,

— Charlie

charliemcgillicuddy@yahoo.co.uk

RESPONSE: I hope that some people will respond to you and that you will treat each with respect and Christian encouragement. Let me also add that I have known quite a few life-long bachelors who could always describe in great detail exactly what the wife of their dreams should be like. Most are still bachelors because “she” never showed up. A few realized how old they were, panicked, and married the first woman who would say, “yes”. That did not always work well. When an older person realizes that he or she has been too fussy and wants to be married, it seems that the best results come when they do these things:

1) Try to develop a genuine sense of caring for all other believers of the opposite sex, not just those who might be potential mates.

2) Shorten one’s “list” of “required” qualities down to only what is essential.

3) Diligently try to meet and date a wide variety of people, even some who do not satisfy all of the points of the list.

4) Ask God for wisdom.

5) Be willing to marry someone who seems to be the best choice of those available. Avoid trying to marry the “perfect person” or “just any person”.

Our free article, *How You Can Meet Other Singles* should be helpful.

— NSE

Jews Persecuted by Chrysostom

LETTER: May 2, 2002
Hello Norman, my name is Sr. Pastor Michael Goodrich. I had the opportunity to read your manuscript titled: *Where Does Judaism Fit Into New Testament Teachings?* [Jan 1998.] I noticed on page 1, a statement: “Why Have Christians Persecuted Jews?” I personally found that your statements were correct, yet

I thought you might have somehow overlooked the first real persecutor in his hatred for the Jewish race, and that was none other than the Fourth Century Church Father Saint John Chrysostom who laid the foundations for all succeeding generations of the teachings of contempt. His writings state: “Are (Jews) not inveterate murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil; debauchery and drunkenness have given them the manners of the pig and lusty goat. They know only one thing, to satisfy their gullets, get drunk, and maim one another. Indeed they have suppressed the veracity of the wild beast for they murder their offspring and immolate them to the devil. The synagogue? A house of prostitution, a caravan of brigands, a repair of wild beasts, the domicile of the devil, an assembly of criminals.” Yes this has been the anti-semitic forefather of all anti-semitism. I used several of these statements in my book titled: *What You Always Wanted To Know About The Roman Catholic Church, But Were Afraid To Ask?* This rich material comes from the book titled: *The Jesus Connection to Triumph Over Anti-Semitism* by Leonard C. Yaseen (ISBN 0-8245-0718-5, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017).

Norman I look forward to more of your writings, in Yeshua Messiah.

—Sr. Pastor of The 7th Day Church Of Yeshua Messiah and The Fiery Sword Of Truth Ministry.

RESPONSE: There is no doubt that people within the Catholic church, especially the top leaders, have killed and persecuted a great many people, many of them simply because they were not Catholics. This is all sin and evil for which they will be punished in the Judgment. On the other hand, I have a friend who was wounded during World War II and was treated in a Catholic hospital. The Germans warned the nuns that they could be shot for treating anyone who may have been from an opposing army, but they did anyway. We can find other such examples of Christ-like behavior among Catholics. God will reward them in the Judgment. There is a big difference between the Catholic man or woman who knew the evil of his group and supported it anyway, and the one who honestly thought such “awful stories” were impossible and never looked into them.

Christ will judge each and every one’s heart, not group them together because they were part of an organization that they actually knew very little about:

“And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked” (Isa 11:3–4).

Thank you for mentioning the book. I have not read it, but the quotation you gave does not surprise me. John Chrysostom is also considered the founder of the “great Christian oratory”—the inventor of the “powerful, inspirational sermon”. I think church congregations were a lot better off when many of the members contributed, speaking in normal voices, rather than having the “powerful, inspirational sermon” which differs little from “well-staged theatrics”. But we cannot lay everything at his feet. The Romans and false teachers like “Simon the sorcerer” persecuted Jews and true believers well before John Chrysostom.

— NSE

Studying Old Testament Laws

LETTER: August 4, 2002
Greetings,

I go to a local Sabbath-keeping congregation in Knoxville, TN (www.seventhdaychristian.org). A member brought a copy of Jan-Jun 2002 issue of *Shelter in the Word* to Church yesterday (8/3) and I happened to see it.

Please send me a personal subscription. It looks like the kind of stuff I’ve been looking for for quite some time. Feel free to send it electronically to avoid any postage fees. Also, will you be updating www.shelterintheword.com anytime soon? It’s got stuff from 1998 out there currently.

By the way, do you have any back issues that delve into the separation of OT law between civil/statutes and ceremonial? I have never seen a categorical description of this but have heard vague references to it in various Church of God pulpits over the years.

Thanks in advance for your assistance.

— Glen Leslie

glen_leslie@pobox.com

RESPONSE: You can download issues of both *Servants’ News* and *Shelter in the Word* in PDF format here:

www.servantsnews.com/PDF/

Continued on page 21

**“Using Our Gift of Knowledge”
from page 1**

gifts seem to occur only very rarely in the CoG groups. Yet, there are church groups that do claim to have healing, miracles, prophets, tongue speaking & interpretation—and some of them probably have the real thing! It is not the purpose of this article to evaluate which groups have real gifts and which pretend to have them.

The purpose of this article is to encourage us to realize that different church groups tend to have different gifts, and that the CoG groups tend to be gifted with knowledge more than most other groups. I do not want to minimize the gift of financial giving from CoG brethren. Such giving has made ministries, such as this one, possible that would otherwise require a much larger group of people. Also, I have personally experienced much **help** and **hospitality** from CoG brethren—and many other brethren have agreed with me. All of these gifts are good, and should continue to be used. But this article will focus on using the **gift of knowledge**.

The gift of knowledge does seem to take on three aspects. One is receiving knowledge **directly from God** as did Peter (Matt 16:17) and Paul (Gal 1:11–16). Others, such as Apollos (Acts 18:24–28) learned from other people, and finally, some have learned from the Scriptures (2Tim 3:15). There are no borders between these three aspects, most with the gift of knowledge learn all three ways—sometimes all at once. This writer can recall working on an article, praying about a certain part, then finding the right scripture totally by accident—or having someone call with the needed information right while the article was in progress.

Part of the gift of knowledge is **knowing how to learn**: How does one check all of the scriptures on a subject? What other sources of good information might be available? Does one deal honestly if there are some scriptures or history that seem to contradict one's own understanding? Or do we ignore them in our teaching? How does one separate a human “good feeling” from genuine “inspiration from God”? Are we able to say that we “don't know”

when we really don't know? What is important to study, and what will probably be a waste of time?

Many brethren learned a lot of good knowledge while in the WCG, along with some error. When they left the WCG because it reversed many doctrines, they learned a lot about how to learn—how to distinguish truth from error. *These are valuable life lessons that would not be learned so thoroughly any other way.* Those with the gift of knowledge and a good sense of *how to learn*, can far exceed the value of someone who simply repeats good information. They can continually add to the fund of knowledge available to the world.

It is important to see the *difference* between the gifts of **knowledge**, **teaching** and **wisdom**. Knowledge is knowing the truth, whereas teaching is the ability to convey it to others. Some people have both gifts, but some have only one. Those who have only the gift of knowledge should neither remain silent nor fault people for struggling with their poor teaching attempts. They should be willing to ask someone to help them write or to expound their information. Those who have the gift of teaching need not plagiarize the works of those with knowledge and pretend they are their own. They should be willing to give credit to the “knowledge writer”, but use their gift to teach it effectively. The Church of God groups need to find more believers with the gift of teaching and to let those who have it develop it.

Wisdom is the ability to use knowledge to make the right decision in specific cases. Wisdom is needed to help people in difficult circumstances, and to make sound judgments when believers are in disagreement with each other. Unfortunately, people can sometimes have lots of knowledge and little wisdom. Wisdom can be helpful in knowing what knowledge to teach, to whom, and when. All that is needed is for a knowledgeable person to find some believers with the gift of wisdom and ask them for help from time to time.

Knowledge Endures

The gift of knowledge is different from most other gifts in that it can outlast the lives of the people with the gift. Help, hospitality and most giving are

short term—once they have been done, they have been done, and brethren must continually have and use these gifts for their benefit to continue. But **knowledge** can be written down and used for many years afterward. A good amount of the Bible knowledge we have today is based upon the writings of others who have gone before us.

Benjamin Franklin, in May of 1738 wrote:

“If you would not be forgotten,
As soon as you are dead and rotten,
Either write things worthy of reading,
Or do things worthy of writing.”

This is good advice and applies well to the Church of God groups. Franklin is saying that if one does not write worthwhile things, then one ought to do things so worthwhile that others will want to write about them. With the WCG's history, that latter is not likely to happen. While there were many doctrinal truths taught there, they are greatly overshadowed by the WCG's problems with its leaders' profligate lifestyles, its cult-like atmosphere discouraging its members from reading outside literature, its insistence that it was the “one true church”, etc.

If the truths of the Church of God groups are to survive, we must write them ourselves. This has been partly done with many articles, booklets and books that have been published and posted on the Internet. It is also being done, in another way, with *The Holy Scriptures* Bible translation. But in these venues, we have a tendency to write what we think is important—which may or may not be important to other believers. When we answer the actual questions of people who are searching for God, we are feeding them what they need, now.

Sometimes, while the Church of God groups are doing an ever-better job of teaching the Sabbath, Feast Days, clean meats, etc., we find their members leaving—not over these issues, but leaving because they are no longer sure that God exists, because they are consulting “other spirits”, because their congregation seems totally irrelevant to their personal struggle in life, etc. Answering questions from people of other backgrounds forces us to use our knowledge for what is relevant to them. Christ and His Apostles

answered the questions of their day when they walked the earth. Either knowledge or wisdom teaches us that we should do the same

We also need to use wisdom in the way that we share our knowledge. Church of God groups have written articles hoping to convert Sunday-keepers to Sabbatharians; but in those same articles have said, "God is not working with Sunday-keepers"; yet in those same articles have quoted from Bible translations and Bible helps that were produced by Sunday-keepers. The Sunday-keepers will rightly ask, "If God is not working with us, then why do they use our Bibles and reference works?" If we had wisdom, we would see that from Christ talking to the Samaritan woman (John 4:17-18) to Paul at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-23) to John's letters to the Churches (Rev 2 & 3), that God's servants acknowledged and commended people for the things that they had right and then went on to teach them where they were wrong. We need to do the same.

How You Can Get Involved

Many scriptures show that all believers will be judged based upon what they have accomplished in this life (1Cor 3:9-16). Many who read this are using their gifts and accomplishing a lot. But others are not. Some feel that there is nothing they can do at this time—just know the truth and do it.

"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35).

But in your hearts set apart Christ as

Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1Pet 3:15).

There are people who have seen the nature of www.biblestudy.org and they still want to ask questions. They know it is not a traditional Christian website. The questions are coming in at the rate of several a day—and are likely to increase greatly in the future as people are satisfied and ask additional questions, and as others find out about it by word of mouth. These people want to hear what you long-time believers know—and what you can find out. Does answering questions sound too hard for you? You do believe God! Remember:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13).


The above scripture does not rule out working together with others to share complementary gifts. One person may have knowledge. Another may be good at writing. Another may be good at typing. Another may have access to a computer. Together, they can work to answer questions. Some people may have knowledge only in certain areas. That is fine—Alan Ruth will gladly accept brethren who want to accept questions in certain clearly-defined areas. So rather than saying, "I can't do that, I don't have a computer", say, "I'm going to look for a person—maybe a young person who has a computer that I can work with."

Answering written questions in this manner is one of the easiest ways for a person to learn to use his gift of knowledge. There is little time pressure. You

can use a concordance or other aids to research your answer. You can take time to write it, and rewrite it if necessary. You can have others read it and give suggestions. And if you really are unhappy with the results, you can always ask someone else to do it instead of you.

The purpose of this article is not to have everyone stop their current Christian service and answer questions. But it is to highly encourage those who can help, to help in the way that they can. There may soon be a need for someone simply to manage all of the questions that come in, assign them, and collect the answers for the website. Those with the gift of giving can always help. Alan often does not receive enough offerings to cover the expenses of running his site. He would be able to do more if he did not need to work a full-time job in addition to this work.

I have prayed that many will read this article, and that those with a gift of knowledge will get involved, either here or somewhere else, and begin to convey the truth of God that they know. I hope that these kinds of projects will develop the teaching skills of many so that they will someday be skilled at answering questions in person, and that they will be able to teach many. It is a wonderful thing to think about hundreds, even thousands of believers across the country turning others to the Bible and to God, not to a church group or organization.

If you would like to help, please contact Alan Ruth, PO Box 3393 Farmington Hills, MI 48333; 248-737-4037, e-mail: aruth88521@aol.com. 

"Letters and Responses" from page 19

Versions of *Servants' News* easy to read with any Web browser (HTML format) are available here:

www.servantsnews.com/snprev.htm

I am sorry that the *Shelter in the Word* website is not up to date. I hope to work on that in the next few months.

I will send you a list and index of all of our literature and you can either print it from the web site or ask us to send it—we do not have everything on the website yet.

I would very much like to do a study of all the Old Testament Laws and come

up with a Biblical basis for determining which an individual Christian should follow, which an Israelite in the Land of Israel should follow, which are sound principles for all governments, and which only apply when there is a functioning priesthood. There may be other categories as well.

I wrote a series on Bible law that was helpful to myself and many others. It can be found in the June 95, July 95, Nov 95, Feb 96 and July 96 *Servants' News* issues. You can read them on the above website, or I will be glad to send them to you. Nearly all groups, including Sabbatharians, have Bible laws that they

do not follow. In the New Testament, they were attempting to determine exactly what Gentiles should do, while the Jewish apostles seemed to never live in conflict with the Old Testament rules taught in their day (though in conflict with some of the added tradition).

Anger, New Bible Translations

LETTER:

August 19, 2002

Brother Norm:

Just an observation. In the most recent 3-issue mailing of *Servants' News*, I sensed a

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"Truckers Study" from page 2

mentioned that man changed the day from the seventh day to the first.

I find that the Sabbath can be used as a club. We can beat people over the head with arguments about which day is which, but I also find that it is more effective to present the day as a wonderful gift from God, a blessing conferred upon free people from his love and concern. People can see this. Once that is on the table, God can work with them in determining which is His day. They will ask if God so moves them.

[See article in box on right —NSE]

June 16, 2002

Opportunity lost today, but not a major deal. This was, how should we say it, one of the livelier Bible Studies. We had some men today who are deeply committed to their faith, and not only that, knew the Scriptures as well as anybody. We also had a woman there who was without question heavily distressed, whether she realized it or not. She was loud, interrupted continually, and took offense if her interruptions were not acknowledged. At one point early on, as I was having an interesting exchange with one of the men, she got up and left complaining that we were ignoring her because she's white. "What do you do with someone like that?" I voiced. A few minutes later she returned and people accepted her back.

One of the men in the course of the conversation gently alluded to demons that were bothering her, something that had crossed my mind as well.

We covered a lot of different topics, but of interest to me were some of the interactions. One of the men was intent on arguing with the lady, while most of the others were more intent on answering her questions and helping her. One man, though intense and direct, was forceful yet understanding when describing how he became a Christian (previously an atheist) and how it turned his life around. I for one have a hard time denying that his experience was a real one.

Afterwards, I was speaking with one of the men, and he told me that he at one time looked into the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) and almost became a part of them. Of the people there today, he was probably the most

Biblically literate, and I feel it was a missed opportunity not to take an hour and ask him questions I have about Islam and why he walked away from it. He did ask an interesting "trick" question: Was Jesus a Christian? The answer, of course, is no—He was Jewish. And his point is the same one that you and I would make—that we

must understand the cultural context of the Scriptures.

Today was a great encouragement.

[One of the major criticisms of interactive studies is that "anybody can say anything and it frequently turns into an argument; whereas with one speaker, there are no arguments." But it is through these sometimes dif-

We Need Good Laws

(Commentary on the Truckers Bible Study)

Most truckers are required to log the location, date and time of every place they stop. Government rules prevent them from driving too many hours in a day or without a break (plus a lot of other things). Yet, a trucking company may decrease the driver's pay if the truck is "late". Following government rules and meeting the company schedule may be possible in perfect conditions, but a simple traffic jam, road repair or storm could delay a driver so much that he would have to choose between driving longer than allowed, arriving late or making up for lost time by speeding. Indeed, a driver may be penalized for speeding if his logs show that he covered a long distance in too short of a time. Also, a well-rested alert driver may be punished for driving 9 hours in a day, but a driver who stayed up all night gambling can drive 8 hours, dead-tired, and not be in violation of any rules.

One reason that these rules came to be was because some truck drivers tried to drive too many hours at once and their tiredness caused accidents. Also, the trucking companies set tight driving schedules knowing that if they give their drivers extra time, that some will use it for entertainment or other unneeded things. The rules do not particularly help the majority of drivers trying to do a good job.

Adding rules rarely changes the attitude of those that want to cheat. Even with rules and lots of checking, a few truck drivers still sometimes drive over 24 hours without a rest—often by using drugs. Unrighteous people remain unrighteous, their dishonesty just becomes more sophisticated. Dishonest drivers can still take time for entertainment, get a phony receipt showing that they had "repairs", then drive too long or too fast to make up for the lost time.

With contradictory demands placed upon the truckers by government and industry, otherwise righteous people are often forced into becoming "law-breakers"—they must decide which of the numerous rules they will break. I can recall my high school driving instructor saying, "Nobody can drive perfectly legally, because there are so many traffic laws that almost nobody knows them all and nobody could keep them all in mind and do them all at once." I remember thinking at the time, "If the laws are unlearnable, why pass them at all?" "Why not pass a small body of primary laws that everyone is responsible for knowing, and then create a separate body of secondary laws for guidance in resolving court cases, but for which neither citizen nor policeman would be responsible directly?"

It took me many years to realize that we were dealing with a corrupt system of laws that has been used to repress honest people for thousands of years. That may sound like a rash statement, but it is true. Even in the time of the Pharisees, they had a complex system of laws that the average person who was really working for a living could not understand. "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him [Jesus]? But **this crowd that does not know the law** is accused" (John 7:48–49). The Pharisees were not talking about the words of the Bible, because Jesus never disagreed with those—the Pharisees rejected Jesus because He often disagreed with their complex body of man-made laws. Those were the laws that the "crowd" did not know and for which they looked down upon them.

The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with their law—Jesus healed a man and told him to carry his bed on the Sabbath, but they said, "no" (John 5:9–11). Jesus let

difficult circumstances that we all learn—we learn to do what is necessary to really help a person, not just to sound like we are right or to make the other person sound wrong. Jesus and the Apostles certainly answered many questions and confronted many people, both happy and hostile, throughout their ministry. It is this

that produces growth (Heb 5:7–9, 1Pet 2:1–3) — NSEJ.

July 14, 2002

Just a few comments and impressions about today. We had three drivers who had fire in their bellies.



“Good Laws” from page 22

His disciples pick grain on the Sabbath, they said, “no” (Luke 6:2–4). The Pharisees said one could dedicate one’s property to the temple and not have to use it to help one’s parents; but Jesus said “no” (Mark 7:10–13). Jesus did not pay the temple tax with His own money, but miraculously supplied money simply in order not to offend the people (Matt 17:24–27).

The few people who understood those complex laws of the Pharisees were mainly the people who spent their lives studying them. The working people did not have such time to study. The Roman and European systems of law were also complex—so complex that the average person had to be represented by a “lawyer” in court—a man who may or may not have had his “client’s” best interest in mind. It was not until the founding of the USA that most men and women had a right to defend themselves, and had laws simple enough that most working people could understand them. By today, those rights have been greatly eroded.

There are now vast code sections (like trucking regulations) that are nearly impossible for an average person to know, but for which they could still be accused and punished. Indeed, if a person in government gets angry at a citizen, it is often fairly easy to find some law that the citizen is unknowingly breaking and to have him punished for it. This is **not** the kind of justice the Bible proclaims, but more like the monarchies or fascist governments of history—which we thought we had escaped.

By biblical law, crimes had to have a victim—somebody to be compensated for the crime, and two or more witnesses who could attest to the crime. (The main exception to this were crimes against God, which still required witnesses.) Today we have many bureaucratic

crimes—nobody is hurt, but when a procedure is not followed, somebody is pun-

ished. Honest, righteous people can be made into criminals because someone decides to prosecute them for a violation of a code section that was not known to them and that is violated by many other people every day.

It was nonsense like this that caused the framers of our constitution to include the phrase in the fifth amendment stating: “no person... shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.” Everyone could be punished if citizens could be compelled to answer question after question until they admit to breaking laws that they did not know existed.

The fifth amendment should apply to many of the government-regulated areas, such as the trucking industry, that require people to keep records that are frequently used as testimony against themselves. But I do not know how long it would take to bring such a “test case” to trial, or whether any court would ever agree with this concept. A person who needs to drive a truck to put bread on the table would certainly starve to death before their case was resolved.

While I do not openly encourage believers to write and sign false trucking logs, I certainly have talked to those who have done it. A husband and wife team told me that when she was sick, she would drive only 4 hours per day and he would drive 12, but their log book said each drove 8 in order to comply with regulations. Their only other choice was to quit, but they badly needed the money at the time. When others have had to sign documents where there is no “honest way” to do them, they sometimes write “under duress” or “U.D.T.C.” (under

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One of the men in particular had an interesting story. He is married to a woman in Russia for whom he is trying to get an entrance visa. Her family is Baptist of Russian heritage but living in Tashkent, a Muslim area. When the Soviet Union broke up, they were forced out of Tashkent and into Moscow. However, because they had not lived in Russia for five years they could not get work visas and had to essentially apply for citizenship.

Even now in Russia those who are Bible-believing Christians are looked down upon. The Russian Orthodox Church dominates religious life and is closely tied with the government. There is also some concern about the Russians moving back to a Communist system and becoming more xenophobic.

His efforts to get his wife into this country have been slowed considerably due to bureaucratic snafus and more careful work by the INS since 9/11. He requests prayers to get her into this country.

We talked about the young rich man and the dilemma he faced in Christ’s challenge to him and the statement by Jesus that “if you are to enter into life, keep the commandments”. So what does this mean if salvation is by grace alone?

— Lenny Cacchio.
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Lee’s Summit, Missouri 64086


[Even after the resurrection of Christ, John wrote “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1Jn 2:3–5). One can know that he or she belongs to Christ because they will be keeping the commandments. But how?

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now

live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Gal 2:20–21). If we were independently able to keep the commandments perfectly, we would not need Christ. But I cannot do that, nor have I met anyone who has done that. We are not perfect of our selves, but can live a life of perfection as we let Christ do it in us:

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, **with the mind** I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom 7:24–8:1). "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12); **it is our inability to**

do it that it is the problem.

When we sin, we are not letting Christ live his life in us. That is why we need to "put to death" our own deeds (Rom 8:13). When we let Christ live in us, then He does His deeds. Only by rejecting Christ and his sacrifice can we become unrighteous in God's sight (Heb 10:26–27). "...He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Heb 13:5). God always wants us; all we have to do is always want him! —NSEJ 

"Good Laws" from page 23

duress, threat or coercion) afterward. Employers often accept documents signed like this, but I do not know the effect that such a signature would have if the document were used as evidence in court. (If one of our readers has reliable information on this, I would be interested in publishing it.)

I can tell my own story about working as a computer programmer for the Worldwide Church of God. It was often more efficient to do a large project as quickly as possible. I would sometimes work 60 to 80 hours in one week, then take a few days off for a trip to the mountains, beach, etc. Eventually, the WCG began to try to comply with the myriad of California employee regulations, and began asking programmers to submit signed time-cards containing our daily work hours. The state required them to pay 150% overtime for each hour over 8 worked in one day and 200% overtime if more than 12 hours were worked in a day. These rules would have destroyed our work arrangements which were beneficial to both the WCG and its programmers. So for many years, I and many of the other programmers, dutifully signed timecards that said 8 hours per day, and kept separate records of how many hours we actually worked so we would average out to 40 hours per week. I did not consider, then, that both programmers and management could have been prosecuted for that practice.

Many people will be quick to say that those state regulations were designed to protect workers, and that is partly true. But at times, they hurt both owners and workers. The bottom line is that the rules give the state great control, and leave little freedom for the workers and their managers to

schedule work in a way that is best for both of them.

Unfortunately, many Church of God brethren, well-schooled in the benefits of God's law, get His law and man's law mixed up. Some seem to think, "the more law, the better—we will be blessed for learning and obeying all of it". But Jesus made it very clear that many of the laws made by the leaders in His day were bad—even spiritually:

"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers... But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matt 23:4,13).


Since "We the People" are officially still the highest authority in the USA, we all bear some responsibility for the vast amount of overly complex and unjust regulation in our land. I do not know whether Christians can fix this in our lifetime, but anyone who hopes to rule with Christ in the Kingdom of God should be able to understand why the vast body of rules and regulations we have today is not good. As the Pharisees with their complex laws deceived some and prevented them from going into the Kingdom in the first century, so today, the modern concepts of "law" are deceiving believers from understanding Biblical justice and may well keep some of them from ruling with Christ.

Indeed, some CoG brethren view the Bible as "hidden truth" and believe that God will save those who figure His truth out "just right". These also tend to believe that most Christians who have tried to live by the Bible have accepted some false

doctrine, which will prevent them from being in the first resurrection. This idea that "God punishes people for what they did not know" fits in fine with a governing state that has a massive body of regulations and selectively prosecutes citizens for infractions that they could not avoid or did not know about. Indeed, many believers assume that anyone accused by the civil authorities must be "somehow bad", even before they have heard the charges or evidence against them. The leaders of Jesus' day encouraged just such an attitude, they wanted Pilate to assume Jesus was guilty simply because they accused him:

Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you" (John 18:29)

The Bible does not teach extensive regulations designed to "prevent crime" that end up making nearly everyone criminals; it teaches easy access to justice equally fair to rich and poor alike (Ex 23:2–3; Lev 19:15; Deut 1:17; 10:17; 16:18–20). Today, the O. J. Simpson verdicts, the cost of lawyers, and many other cases demonstrate that the wealthy are much better off in the courts than the poor.

Instead of thousands of regulations designed to "protect" truckers from their companies, what truckers need is a court system that would allow them to simply and justly settle individual grievances. Would the courts like this be filled with frivolous suits? Not if the principle in Deuteronomy 19:16–20 were employed. But that is another article. We have a lot of work to do! 

—Norman Edwards

Abrahamic Covenant, Sinaic Covenant and New Covenant

By Wilmer Wilke

For some time I have been a member of a Sabbath-keeping and Holy Day-observing church. Since the break up of the former Worldwide Church of God (WCG) many questions have arisen over the laws and commandments to be observed by Christians. Whilst most splinter groups, formed from the WCG, adamantly maintain that most of the laws given to the Israelites are still to be kept, virtually none of these groups have provided any support based upon the very covenants in which these laws were included. Yet the covenants, (i.e. Abraham, Sinai and the New Covenant) appear to be the basis upon which Abraham, the Israelites and Christians were to establish a relationship with God.

As a result, I have many questions that I feel should be clarified, with supporting scriptures, to provide a sound basis upon which to build and maintain a relationship with God. Surely the covenant agreements should illustrate what God expects of Christians just as the covenants illustrated what God expected of Abraham and the Israelites.

I do not know how any church or Christian group can teach others or maintain a congregation of believers when a reasonable understanding of the covenants is neglected in their teaching. To date I have found very little teaching on the covenants included in the teachings of virtually all the splinter groups that I have had access to via published articles or information made available via the Internet. Surely one must understand the covenants that God has taken the time to reveal to Abraham, the Israelites and to Christians, in order to understand the Sabbath, the Holy Days, Tithing, Clean/unclean meats, etc. Virtually, all of the beliefs and practices of the church ride on how the covenants are understood (i.e. when they started/ended, who was included in the covenant, who was excluded, what

was expected of the participants, the result of breaking the covenant, etc.).

If anyone can provide any answers to my questions or provide your teaching on the covenants, I would appreciate hearing from you.

Some of my questions are outlined below:

What Do Christians Need to Understand About the Covenants?

Background

Scripture illustrates many covenants or agreements between God and mankind following the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. The covenants of interest include: 1. the Covenant with Abraham; 2. the Old Covenant; 3. the New Covenant.

Understanding these covenants is crucial to understanding how God has chosen to work with His creation to redeem man and ultimately, God's plan for salvation; as Christians we need to understand the role that the covenants (with Abraham, Israel and the New Covenant) take in our relationship with God. There are many questions to address in seeking a satisfactory understanding. Some of the questions need to be addressed to fully understand how to position agreements included in the covenants in the life and beliefs of Christians.

The Covenant with Abraham

1. What was the covenant agreement between Abraham and God?
2. Who was the mediator?
3. Why did God made this covenant with Abraham?
4. When was this covenant made?
5. How was the agreement between Abraham and God made?
6. What is the sign of the Covenant with Abraham?
7. What was contained in the agreement?
 - a. What did Abraham have to do?
 - b. What was God promising to do?
 - c. What were the terms of this Covenant?

- d. How long was this covenant to last?
- e. Did the Covenant with Abraham come to an end?
8. What are the moral and ceremonial laws of the Covenant with Abraham?

The Covenant with the Israelites

1. What was the Old Covenant?
2. Who was the mediator?
3. When was the Old Covenant made?
4. Who were the participants in the Old Covenant?
5. Why was the Old Covenant made?
6. How was the agreement of the Old Covenant made?
7. What is the sign of the Old Covenant?
8. What was contained in the Old Covenant?
 - a. What did Israel have to do?
 - b. What was God promising to do?
 - c. What were the terms of the Old Covenant?
 - d. How long was the Old covenant to last?
 - e. Did the Old Covenant come to an end? If so, then how?
9. What impact did the Old Covenant have on the Israelites?
10. What are the moral and ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant?

The New Covenant

1. What was the New Covenant?
2. Who was the mediator?
3. When was the New Covenant made?
4. Who were the participants in the New Covenant?
5. Why was the New Covenant made?
6. How was the agreement of the New Covenant made?
7. What is the sign of the New Covenant?
8. What was contained in the New Covenant?
 - a. What did each participant have to do?
 - b. What was God promising to do?

- c. What were the terms of the New Covenant?
- d. How long was the New covenant to last?
- 9. What impact did the new covenant have on Christians?
- 10. What are the moral and ceremonial laws of the New Covenant?
- 11. What Old Covenant observances still apply to the New Covenant Christians?
- 12. What are the similarities and differences between the Old and New Covenants?

Current Covenant Situation

Upon the death of Jesus Christ, significant changes occurred with the covenant agreements between God and the nation of Israel.

- 1. When are the terms of the New Covenant to be in place?
 - 2. When are the terms and agreement of the Old Covenant to cease?
 - 3. What are the covenant agreements that Christians are to acknowledge and agree to?
 - 4. How do Abraham's Covenant, the Old and New Covenants affect beliefs and practices of Christians today, including Sabbath observance, Feast/Holy Day observance, observance of New Moons, clean and unclean meats, tithing.
 - 5. How are Christians to understand such scriptures as Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:17-20, John 17:4, John 19:30 and Hebrews 12:2, which clearly indicate that Jesus came to do a work (redemptive work), complete the work and shed His blood to initiate a New Covenant agreement?
 - 6. What did the Apostle Paul teach about the covenants to Jewish and Gentile Christians?
 - 7. What covenant are Christians to be in now?
 - 8. What laws, ordinances, commandments and observances are important to Christians? Why?
- I would appreciate any information on the covenants that

I have wanted to study the covenants of the Bible for a long time. I think such a study would help me know what I believe and help me work with other Christian groups that often base much of their theology on "the New Covenant". I do not have time to study it now, but I would encourage others to study the covenants and respond to Wilmer Wilke.

While his outline is a good starting place, I think there are several other issues that need to be considered that are not listed here:

- 1. What other covenants are there beside the three mentioned above?
- 2. Are there commands of God to everyone which are separate and distinct from the covenants?
- 3. What commands or covenants were in effect before Abraham's covenant with God?
- 4. Is it possible that God will still work within the terms of an older covenant, when the parties are unaware of a replacement covenant (traditional Christianity has sometimes been such a poor witness to the Jews that God may not hold them responsible for looking into a "New Covenant")?
- 5. Does God wave parts of a covenant when it cannot be fulfilled (such as when there is no priesthood to fulfill its functions, or when understanding of parts of the covenant have been lost)?
- 6. Are there parts of obsolete covenants that God's people continued to practice because they produced good fruit?
- 7. Are there parts of obsolete covenants that have changed and taken on new spiritual meaning in a later covenant?

— NSE

would answer the questions that I have asked above.

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"Letters and Responses"
from page 21

greater level of anger than I remember in prior issues. I have long admired your courage in taking a stand, but I also have come to realize the importance of tempering (righteous) anger with wisdom and obedience (in doing what God would have us do—and not do).

RESPONSE: Thank you for mentioning this. I have had some personal difficulty with anger over the past months. It is not surprising that it has surfaced in my writing to some degree. But trying to hide it is not the solution. Even wisdom, knowledge and daily Bible study do not by themselves prevent anger. It is the Spirit of God and the life of His Son in us that bring peace and remove anger. Thanks for mentioning this.

LETTER: I was wondering if you have ever

heard the interesting and cautionary message by Phil Arnold entitled "Sabbath Friends and Enemies" (available from Bible Sabbath Association). If you've never heard it, I can send it to you. Doubtless, you'll find it worthwhile both for its entertainment value as well as for the message.

RESPONSE: I believe I have heard of the message, but have not heard the message. I would be interested in listening.

LETTER: Also, I have a question regarding the Original Languages Bible project(s?). I had thought there were two projects currently underway: one by James Trimm that we heard a great deal about in past issues of *Servants' News*. And one sponsored by nazarene.net. But lately I have been seeing James Trimm's name/influence a great deal on nazarene.net. Are the "projects" one and the same? Any info greatly appreciated.

— Jeanie Rosenthal

RESPONSE: James Tabor is the one

doing most of the translation work for the Original Bible Project (www.centuryone.org/obp.html). The translation will actually be called the *Transparent English Version* (TEV). He is a professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Mr. Tabor is an independent Sabbatarian, not a member of any Christian or Jewish denomination. While I do not agree with all of Mr. Tabor's theology, the samples I have seen of the Original Bible Project lead me to believe that he is trying to produce an accurate translation, even when it disagrees with his understanding of the Bible.

James Trimm is producing the Hebraic Roots Version Complete Bible. I am not familiar with it, but one could get more information at www.nazarene.net.

— NSE

**“New Believers’ Bible Questions”
from page 1**

of the group deserve special note. Charlotte Grantham has been a real “workhorse”, handling more than her share of questions in a fairly quick manner. Give me more Christian ladies like this!

It may be hard to believe, but Art Mocarow is the **first** man who was once an “ordained” WCG minister to offer “hands on” help directly to the site (it has existed for seven years). He’s been sent some of the “tougher” Bible questions and has given substantial answers! His 50 years of being a Christian and the knowledge he has will be a definite asset to the site.

Now I know that WCG and its split-offs have had “personal correspondence” departments that answered questions. But these writers were always limited to answer only within the limits of their accepted corporate doctrine (no new study or inspiration) and they always had to point the questioner toward their own literature and church organization. The answerers on my website point people to God, and are free to refer their readers to literature from any source that might be of help to them.

Those with computers can see the question submittal form at

www.biblestudy.org/question/question.html

Answers to selected questions already submitted are at:

www.biblestudy.org/question/answers.html

The Question & Answer part of the site will become a **major** new section, and will have more answers to questions given by the above folks posted on the website in the next several weeks.

Here are some of the first questions received (in no particular order). This is exactly how they were, except for spelling and punctuation corrections:

1. Why was there a war in heaven?
2. Who is God talking to in Genesis when discussing man becoming like “us”?
3. I am a Christian. My friend asked me some hard questions the other day... Why did God need Noah? If He cre-

ated life once, why couldn't He do it again... also, why is there no mention of dinosaurs in the creation story? (I know of the behemoth in Job and of the leviathan somewhere else, but why doesn't it mention it in the creation story?)

4. What current English Bible translation is a true translation from the original manuscripts?
5. Can you explain Genesis 2:9 and also Genesis 3:22? Looking to understand the Tree of Life.
6. Based upon the New Testament pattern, shouldn't church leadership be a plurality of elders who are equals rather than one Pastor calling the shots? I'm basing this on the first Church at Jerusalem and the others since in the New Testament. Those churches seemed to have a plurality of Leadership.
7. What is the meaning of Isaiah 26:20?
8. I have a friend who has recently become a member of a Masonic lodge. Of course being a Mason he won't tell me much other than it supports the bible and they must believe in GOD. Of course they do so many good things and I don't deny this, I really don't know. I do wonder however why all the secrecy? Doesn't the Bible warn us of things done in secret? Any insight you could give me into the Mason's and how it measures up to GOD'S word would be greatly appreciated.
9. At one point God has told me to present my body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in His sight (Romans 12:1). I have read this chapter through and through. What does this chapter mean in elementary terms? I was not putting my body to anything unclean as I knew of.

Note: Jack Lane, answering the above question for the Bible Study website, got the following feedback from the person asking the question after she read his response:

Thank you for allowing God to use you greatly. For eight years I have been in a church that has been leading me to Hell. I was tired of going to

church and not understanding the Scriptures. No one else in my church knew the Scriptures too much either. We couldn't wear makeup, my dress was down to my ankles and no earrings, but I was on my way to Hell because my outside looked saved but my inside was terrible. Thanks to this website, I'm able to get the truth. My spirit bears witness with these teachings. I have cried out to God for help and he has referred me to this site. Continue your work for God that your reward may be great in heaven.


10. How do I know for sure if I'm operating in the will of God?
11. I have always believed that when a Christian dies that their spirit goes to heaven immediately. However in 1 Thessalonians Paul is talking about the second coming of Jesus and says that the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. Does this mean that their earthly body will rise and but that their spirit is already there? Or does it mean that the spirit of those who are dead remains with the body until the second coming? Please help me with this question.
12. Some years ago I read on the Bible a passage that Jesus said that He was Buddha. Now I can't find this passage. Could you help?
13. In 1 Samuel 18:1, 3 what does it mean “Jonathan loved him as his own soul”? Please answer as simple as possible.
14. I am a new Christian, and my pastor thought it would be great learning tool for me to teach the younger children. This will help me learn also. This week we are studying 1 Kings 17:7–16. I would love some help, the ages are 7 and 8 years old.
13. Can you show me scripture on Samson and Delilah?
14. I've always wondered what did Jesus write on the ground in John 8:5–11. Could it have been the law of Lev 20:10 and Deut 22:22 because the Pharisees didn't bring the man also? Or could Jesus have just started listing the commandments and the Pharisees were condemned by

- them? Any other scriptures you know of relate to this act?
15. Those who hold the belief that "now is the only time for salvation". They use this verse to support that belief—Romans 1:2–21. Can you please show me what exactly was Paul emphasizing on this verse?
 16. Can you recommend a great entry-level software package for Bible study that contains all the core library books?
 17. What are the differences of the Judgment Seat of Christ and the White Throne Judgment?
 18. On your website you say that infants should not be baptized. If infants are not baptized and therefore do not receive God's Grace, and they perish before they are old enough to repent, your theory has Hell filled with these precious souls. I am curious to know where your religion places babies' souls when they die?
 19. I'm looking for scriptures dealing with Suicide please. I have a brother who took his life not too long ago and I need to know what the Bible says about a man taking his own life.
 20. What does the Bible have to say about homosexual sins in depth?
 21. I'm a sister from Mexico. Can you tell me if you know where I can get *The Two Babylons* book in Spanish?
 22. Can you tell me what are the five crowns and where they are found? I found the Crown of Gold in Rev. 4:4 and the Crown of Life in Rev. 2:10 but would like to find the others.
 23. How tall and how many giants were there besides Goliath? How many orders of angels are there and their task for God?
 24. Was it preached about the judgment coming before the flood and Noah? Where and in what scripture is it located?
 25. What is your answer about cousin marriages (marriage to first cousins)?
 26. Are there degrees of sin?
 27. I would love to know where I can find a table with which I could convert the weights and measures in the Bible to today's equivalents.
 28. What are the three key points of importance of alertness? How I can be alert

in my life circumstances?

[What a mix of questions! Some of them are fairly easy to answer from the Bible. Some require a little study and searching with reference books or a computer. Others require historical or Internet searching. For some I am not sure I could find a definite answer—we do not always know "why" God does things.

Will the question answerers sometimes give wrong answers, or might two answers get the same question and answer it in different ways? Yes, that will probably happen. But those asking will have a chance to look elsewhere and to find better answers. Whereas a corporate church may give consistent answers, it can easily be consistently wrong, and it may be many years—even decades—before its members realize it.

The most important thing about these questions is that they seem to be from serious Bible students asking for our help—and we should give it to them. If you have not, please read the other article beginning on the front page. If you can help, even on just certain types of questions, please do so. — NSEJ 

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.

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, 26 pages. Explanation of 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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