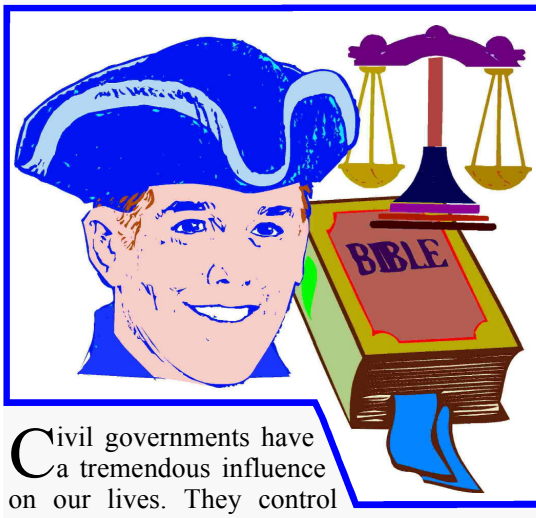
Servants' NEWS

Vol. 13, No. 1 *A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be* **May-June 2009**



To Whom Does God Give Authority for Civil Government, Today? (Part 1)

by Norman Edwards

Civil governments have a tremendous influence on our lives. They control much of our schools, jobs and even interpersonal relations. The land and water from which we gain food, and the money we use to buy and sell are managed or mismanaged by government. Throughout history, civil governments have helped a fortunate few, but far more often have imprisoned, impoverished, enslaved and entombed millions—both their "enemies" and their own citizens.

Why do some nations find themselves at the mercy of kings, dictators and warlords for many generations? How can other nations, such as Germany, experience a prosperous free Republic in the 1920s, an economic disaster in the 30s, and then a cruel dictator in the 40s—where they had to choose to become a part of his war machine, or die refusing it?

Today, we find many nations, including our own, on the verge of the same kind of economic disaster that faced Germany in the 1930s—using the same failed methods to try to "fix it". We also see a repeat of many nations talking peace while disarming their own citizens and building government forces for war.

Before we get started, let us **define civil government**. For this article, **civil government includes** all organizations where-

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Port Austin Bible Campus Update: The Next Generation

by Norman Scott Edwards

July through October, 2008, were good months for PABC. Two *Servants' News* issues were produced, and we sold a lot of offerings on eBay, enabling us to make two $1000 mortgage payments. That progress was interrupted by a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles at Lake Geneva Wisconsin, and then the terminal illnesses and death of my parents. I spent most of November through March at their Arkansas home or hospitals.

I would like to take the first part of this column to honor my parents, who had a profound influence on my life, and then share some significant news about PABC.

In a way, the two are related. At age 53, as far as my family is concerned, I am now the older generation. I no longer have any parents, aunts or uncles from which to seek wisdom.

Indeed, the majority of leaders in Sabbath-observing ministries are even older than I am. **If the next generation does not soon get directly involved in teaching and propagating the Sabbath and other Biblical doctrines that we have taught for so long, then it is likely that much of what we have learned will be lost.** (See the end of the article for more.)

My Parents Last Struggle

Ten years ago my mother, Rosemary, was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and osteoporosis. She took prescribed calcitonin salmon to strengthen her bones and reduce associated pain. Shortly afterward, she experienced one of its known but rare side effects: extreme insomnia. She stayed up continually for 72 hours. She could not be left awake alone in the house, as she might harm herself or the house (leave the store or water on, etc.). Exhausted, late in the third evening, my father, Hugh, took her to the emergency room where they gave her haloperidol. She went to sleep for several days.

Haloperidol is normally used to calm people down from drug overdoses. Destroying brain motor function is one of its listed side effects—it is more likely on people with Alzheimer's. After that one dosage, Rosemary never walked again and had only very limited ability to communicate. She was not expected to live more than six months, but the two of them surprised everyone. For nine years, Dad took care of Mother at home: feeding her, turning her in bed, lifting her from her bed to her wheel chair, and speaking kind words to her.

During 2008, Hugh developed cancer. He continued to care for Rosemary as best he could, but began to need more and more outside help. It was obvious to those helpers that he was having difficulty getting around, but he continued to take care of his wife, his house and his yard. When Norman made the 16-hour trip to Arkansas last November, Hugh was no longer able to walk. The medical professionals did not know why. One actually said, "he just decided he didn't want to walk any more".

Wrong! My father was **never** one to make excuses. He did the best he could, even if it hurt. In spite of the great pain in his right hip, he would stand on both legs to help transfer himself from bed to wheelchair, etc. Two months later, when a doctor was preparing a treatment plan for the

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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 (Yashua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of teaching, writing, music and video 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.

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Editor: Norman Edwards

Staff: Bill Buckman, Marleen Edwards, RIck Heath

Contributors: John Leitch, John Qavah & others

Website Hosting: Gary Lesperance, garyl@mcsauto.com

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New articles and corrections to previous articles will be considered for printing. We do not return writings sent to us, so please make copies of anything you need to keep. Send to:

Servants' News
PO Box 474, Port Austin, Mich. 48467-0474
Phone: **989-738-7700**
e-mail: **nEdwards@ServantsNews.com**
Internet: **www.ServantsNews.com**

Magazine and literature requests may be sent to the following addresses. Money received at these locations will be used for duplicating and mailing. Please make checks out to the name shown with the address:

Australia: Dale Heslin, 9 Alice Jackson Crescent, Gilmore, ACT 2905
e-mail: **daleh@velocitynet.com.au**

Canada: Cherie Zimmerman, 268 Pennswood Way SE, Calgary, AB T2A 4T3
e-mail: **uscazim@msn.com**

Philippines: Jesus & Priscilla Cardona, MCPO Box 3071, 1257 Makati City;
e-mail: **info@manilafellowship.org**

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Books Worth a Look

by Bill Buckman

Global Warming

A scientific and biblical expose of climate change
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"Global warming" has been a much debated issue in recent years. Even among Christians, including those here at PABC, there is disagreement on this subject. The media in general strongly emphasizes the supposed dangers of it. This writer has seen strongly emotional works on both sides of the issue.

This little book, only 95 pages, is the most rational this writer has seen on the matter. The book is authored by several *Answers in Genesis* (AiG) writers, including a PhD and an MS in Atmospheric Science. AiG is a non-denominational Christian organization that publishes much information on the creation-evolution issue and operates the Creation Museum near Cincinnati, Ohio.

The book begins with the biblical viewpoint that God, as the Creator, owns the earth; but has given man dominion over it to use it responsibly. Obviously man has not always been the best steward of what God has entrusted to him. But does this mean in this particular case that man's use, or misuse, of the earth's natural resources is the total, or partial, cause of any global warming? Are stringent measures called for to limit carbon emissions? Would these measures solve the problem? Would these restrictions cause more harm than the original problem? Is global warming necessarily bad? Is there more involved here than just the physical? These questions and more are considered in this book.

On page, 12 Ken Ham, president of AiG, writes: "Even though the resources God created are there for our use, man often exploits these resources at the expense of his fellow man, and causes needless loss and destruction of other parts of God's creation. Surely this is wrong! Conversely, much of the emphasis of the modern conservation movement and global warming alarmists is evolutionary and pantheistic, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1). This ignores the biblical mandate to rule over the earth and subdue it. The development of energy sources…, the mining of mineral resources, the cutting of timber for building, etc., is not wrong…It is the abuse of these resources—-the exploitation, the waste, the greed, and the haste—-that is wrong."

Is global warming really Happening? "According to the National Climate Data Center, the average global surface temperature has risen approximately 1.2°F since 1880." (p. 18)

Are humans causing global warming? "Since the Ice Age the earth's temperature has fluctuated only a few degrees. For example, a medieval "warm period"(AD 900 to 1300) was followed by a "little ice age (1300 to 1880), when the overall temperature dropped about 2°F. These relatively recent fluctuations can be correlated to natural changes, such as volcanic eruptions and cycles in the sun's radiation…. It is logical to assume that similar factors continue to have some influence on today's global warming" (pp. 19-20)

Is global warming causing plant and animal extinctions? Much has recently been said about polar bears. "Polar bears in, reality, are currently thriving." "Currently… there are no documented extinctions resulting from global warming." (p. 21)

These are a few examples found in this book of straightforward answers to global warming questions. Al Gore's documentary is also evaluated, along with some other major climate studies.

The book also notes: "In fact, 20,000 scientists, of whom about 2,700 of them are physicists, geophysicists, climatologists, meteorologists, oceanographers, or environmental scientists, who are in a position to understand the global warming issues, have signed the following statement: 'There is no convincing scientific evidence that the human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gasses is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the earth's atmosphere and disruption of the earth's climate. Moreover, there is substantial scientific evidence that increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide produce many beneficial effects upon the natural plant and animal environments of the earth.'" (p. 28)

In general this book advises extreme caution and much further study before any drastic measures are taken on the global warming issue.

There is also a 48-minute companion DVD documentary to this book. The participants include 9 holders of PhD's. Brief biographies of each participant are given at the back of the book. A word-for-word transcript of the DVD is provided in the book. There are numerous footnotes and a few charts and illustrations. Both the book and DVD are available from answersingenesis.org. Generally this book is not overly technical.

Dr. Larry Vardiman concludes on p. 57: "Global warming may affect some parts of our society negatively but would likely benefit others. In fact, the current warming trend may be returning our global climate closer to that prevalent in the Garden of Eden." 🕮

Expand While the Devil Shrinks!

by Andrew Strom

There is no question that we have covered the "Doom & Gloom" side of the present crisis. But one thing I feel we have not discussed enough is the amazing **opportunity** that God is setting before us through this crisis. In fact, it may be that what is happening now could be the answer to years of our most fervent prayers.

Have you been praying for God to act and bring massive change to the church and to our culture? Have you been praying for the return of spiritual hunger and reality? Have you been praying for God to open closed doors, to soften hearts, and to allow the real **truth** of the gospel to march forth in the land once again? What if this is His answer to all of that—the only way He could bring about the kind of shaking and hunger that is so desperately required? What if He has spent years setting this up? What if it is the golden opportunity of a lifetime? Are we willing? Are we ready?

There is no question that some of our main enemies are on the run right now in the West. In fact, many of them are in rampant disorderly retreat. The great god Mammon is a good example. I don't think the "deceitfulness of riches" will be doing too well in the West for awhile, do you? And Mammon's allies—Comfort, Apathy, Materialism and Humanism are starting to look a little shaky also.

There is a "window of opportunity" starting to open—where a gospel that was once unwelcome will be welcomed again—where change that was once thought impossible comes in like a rush. We are living in a rare moment of history.

In times of Depression—froth, bubble and hype go the way of the dinosaur. People start looking for reality and grounded truth. They want to find a Rock to stand on instead of shifting sand. This happened in the last Depression, and it will happen in this one too.

Are you one who has spent years in the wilderness, waiting for God's moment? Are you a David in the caves, a Joseph in the dungeons? Couldn't it be that this is the very moment that God has been preparing you for, all this time?

You see, the "big boys" with their shallow gospel are in increasing trouble through all of this. They rely on big money, big media, big hype and big budgets to get their message out. And the budget is looking rather sick. Could it be that God is leveling the playing field? Are many that were "last" about to become first? Are the little guys with their message of repentance and heart-holiness about to break through the glass ceiling that has kept them down for so long? Has God actually been planning this for ages?

Personally, I feel like the Lord has been speaking to me lately that as the devil pulls back, I need to expand. There are things that I have put off for years that I need to put into action.

One of these is the "Online Preacher's School" where we send people around the world to preach in far-flung places—after training them first. I get all kinds of invitations from places like Pakistan, India and Africa that I cannot possibly fulfill. It is time that we started doing "basic training and sending"—because the need out there is enormous. And we can do a lot of it online:

www.revivalschool.com

To me, God's message is very clear: We are to expand while the devil shrinks.

Another area that He has been speaking to me about is **music** and **video**—things that I put aside (to a large degree) years ago. God laid it on my heart before we came to Wales that we need to record a music album here—something we have not done for 8 years. (We had better get on with it, as we only have a Visa to stay in Wales for six months!) There are other things also. And what about you, my friends? Has God begun whispering similar things? Such a crisis comes along only once in a lifetime. Could this be the very hour of **mobilization** that He has been preparing you for all these years? 🕮

This article was written by a non-Sabbatarian, but makes a point that we all need to understand: **times of trouble are times when many people seek God.**

When we see economic depression, wars, disease and evil governments arise, some Christians reaction is to check their favorite prophecy chart, and see if things are happening on time. As these woes begin to vex us, it is easy to ask, "How am I going to protect myself?" or "How is God going to deliver me?" If we, as Christians knowing God's power, are fearful of what is to come, how much more fearful are those who do not know God--who look completely to human ability for safety?

They will not fare well. They will be searching. They will be asking if there is more to life than the physical—which is collapsing all around. We need to be there for them. Christ our elder brother gave us instruction for these difficult times:

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:25-26).

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matt 5:13). —NSE

Are Polygamous Marriages Authorized by Scripture?

by Royce Mitchell, Jr.

There are those within the Christian community who claim that polygamous marriages are authorized—even commanded—by scripture. But, does scripture really support that assertion? Or has scripture been misapplied to allow men to do what they want to do with women? The truth is important because the spiritual health of our sisters, and our brothers, is at stake.

To understand the truth, we have to go back to the beginning—to the Garden of Eden. In the Garden we find that God paraded the animals two by two in front of Adam so that he could name them. But, God had an ulterior motive in having Adam name the animals.

Sometimes, because of the way scriptures have been laid out, it is easy to miss a point. Notice the context of the creation of Eve found in Genesis 2:18-22:

"And the Lord God said, '**It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him**.' Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. **But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.**

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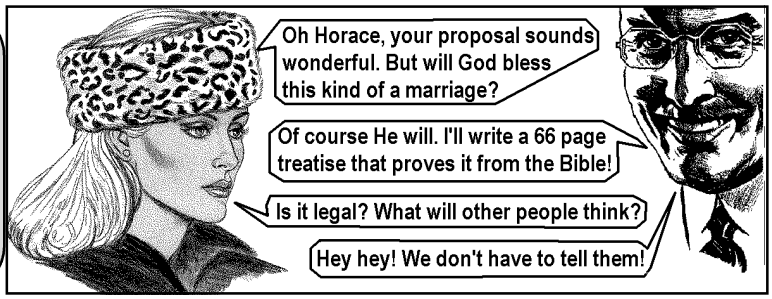
Stop This Marriage Madness



by Norman Edwards

It is good that many people have studied the scriptures and found that they are primarily about an individual's faith in and obedience to the Eternal. In their Bible study, many find no examples of priests, ministers or the state "performing marriage ceremonies". Indeed, history shows that such ceremonies have only been with us for about 600 years. Anciently, a marriage was handled as a contract between the couple or their parents. While a feast was usually associated with a marriage, the marriage itself was a written or verbal agreement, consummated by a sexual relationship. After Abraham negotiated a marriage agreement with Rebekah's family, the marriage went like this:

> Then Isaac brought her [Rebekah] into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death (Gen 24:67).

Bible students should couple this knowledge with the great examples of faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; who were faithful for decades while they waited for the Eternal to fulfill his promises to them. But some make the mistake of using their biblical marriage knowledge, which may include polygamy, to commit all manner of irresponsible, foolish or sinful acts, which have simply made lives miserable for themselves and others. These silly scenarios are listed below in the hope that if readers ever find themselves about to get involved in such a thing, they will **flee from it**, like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. The scriptural teaching against them follows.

1. Justifying fornication by calling it a marriage. When a single man and a woman have found themselves alone together (probably the first mistake) and desiring sex but no serious life-long commitment, some have said brief vows, had sex, and then agreed to a "divorce"—sometimes all within the same day. In some cases, only one party may feel the need to justify their sin with this biblical trickery, so they will say silent vows—lest their partner think they are ridiculous. Sometimes, the man will see no need for the "divorce", because he considers this just one of the many wives he will have, but he usually doesn't bother to tell the woman his "biblical view"—that she will be sinning if she ever marries anyone else during the rest of her life. Sure, sometimes the parties may stay together a few weeks or even months, but their only real intent was sex, they never declared it to be a lifelong marriage to anyone else. This is just one example of a **secret marriage,** which the Scriptures do not support.

2. Justifying adultery by calling it a polygamous marriage. This is much like the previous

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example, except the man is married. Rarely, some women will agree to be a "second wife" to obtain a brief adulterous affair. But then, those women might agree to almost anything to get what they want—lying and adultery go hand-in-hand. More often, the man **does not tell the woman** that he considers her as "another wife" and by biblical standards, she can never marry again unless he divorces her. This is another example of a **secret marriage,** that is no marriage at all, but a rationalization for adultery.

3. Unplanned marriages. A man and woman decide that they want to have sex right now, so they get married right now, really intending to live the rest of their lives together. Often, they previously had only an Internet relationship or had known each other only a few days. Teen-agers do it, 50-year olds do it. This is not a sin, but it almost certainly is a lack of wisdom and frequently spawns many sins and much heartache. When one considers the magnitude of committing the rest of one's life, as well as the possibility of creating new life—a genealogy that could go on forever—a few weeks or months to plan a wedding is a reasonable time to wait for sex. A marriage that begins for immediate gratification is likely to be plagued by similar problems of irresponsibility. This author has seen these marriages fail after a few weeks, a few months or a few years. Only a fraction endured. In almost every case, if the couples had taken the time to seek the counsel of their friends and congregation, they would have been much better equipped to either make the necessary personal changes to produce a successful marriage, or to realize that they should not marry.

4. Polygamy for fun and profit. This is polygamy proclaimed not by a prosperous man who is able to provide for more than one wife, but by someone who wants more wives so he can have sex more often and so he can reap economic benefit from them. The man usually targets downtrodden women, who want to be married but who do not believe that anyone else would marry them. The man reminds them of that frequently. He usually acquires each new wife by telling her he really loves her more than the others—or he may simply get a mail-order bride from Asia. The new wife gets a Bible-based marriage agreement and often a state marriage license as well. Later, after she is pregnant and has learned to fit into the polygamous routine, she will get a quiet state divorce, but be told that her Biblical marriage agreement is still in force. Since all (or all but one) of the man's "wives" are not legally married, the man may have them get state welfare for unwed mothers—but he probably takes most of the money. He may require some "wives" to take outside jobs, while others take care of all the children. Our society has no difficulty with one man and a group of women living together. In every case this writer has seen, these men were not good husbands for even one wife, and adding more wives did not help the situation at all.

5. Predatory marriages. These almost always involve one of the previous four schemes, but add the additional element of a predator who is older and far more aggressive, intelligent, experienced and/or knowledgeable than the other—and willing to take advantage of it. Usually the predator is a man, but this writer also knows of women who have done this. The predator often teaches the victim many good and exciting principles of scripture, but also weaves in the biblical teaching that the two of them can just decide to get married without the need of state or church. They often paint a glowing picture that convinces the other that the Eternal has brought the two together, right here and now, so that they can fulfill their dreams and become married. The victim often finds him/herself married and no longer a virgin, before even thinking it through or seeking counsel. The predator knows that if he/she did not rush the marriage, that it would probably never happen. This is evil.

6. One sided marriages. Some people actually consider themselves married with a life long commitment to an individual, while that individual has no such commitment to them. They may hope to reach a mutual marriage agreement someday, but they want sex immediately. The **uncommitted individual** simply believes they are in an unmarried sexual relationship. While this assessment is probably more honest, the relationship is still a sin. The uncommitted individual may not know about the other's belief that they are already married. If they do know, they neither accept it or acknowledge it to others. This is another bizarre form of an unbiblical **secret marriage**.

Summary: Hopefully, anyone who believes in any of these "marriage madness" ideas will read the rest of this article and reconsider their views. There is no "free lunch" here. In virtually all cases with which this writer has been acquainted, the above practices do not produce the happiness that the people are seeking, but more strife, contention, alienation, divorce and loneliness.

Scriptural Teaching on Marriage Responsibility

All of the above marriage madness occurs when people use their extensive technical knowledge of the Scriptures to justify their own sin, rather than to seek the deep spiritual concepts of love, truth and faithfulness. Those seeking these things speak little of laying down one's life for one's spouse as Christ did for the Church (Eph 5:25; 1Jo 3:16). They are seeking the benefits of marriage without the responsibility. If they were spiritually advanced, shouldn't their view of marriage be like Christ's? How does He view His marriage with the Church? Does He keep it a secret?

> And I heard, as it were**, the voice of a great multitude**, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for

the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of **the saints** (Rev 19:6-8).

Jesus Christ wants His marriage and His relationship with us acknowledged by all. The Bible contains no examples of **secret marriages.** In the Old Testament, every engagement (betrothal) and marriage was a public event that determined which sections of the law would apply to a person. What happens if a man entices a woman when they were alone and nobody can hear them? (Deut 22:22-29; Ex 22:16-17.) If she was married, they are both put to death. If she was engaged, then he is put to death. If she was not engaged, then he must pay the bride price, and if the woman's father accepts him, then he must marry her. If a man enticed a woman whom he thought was single, hoping to marry her, could he then be stoned if there was a secret betrothal or marriage? This is a life or death issue! **Biblical law presumes** that each person's marital status is **known by all.**

Trying to keep his marriage secret was Abraham's major recorded sin. That sin resulted in plagues on Egypt, Abraham being thrown out of Egypt and nearly the death of Abimelech (Gen 12:10-20; 20:1-14). Abraham's sin was not lying—Sarah was his sister. God agreed that Abimelech was innocent (Gen 20:6). Later, Isaac made this same mistake (Gen 26:7-11). These three accounts are in the Bible for a reason: to teach us to trust God for protection, and **that marriages should never be secret!**

When Boaz found Ruth at his feet, he did not propose to marry her right then so he could have sex with her that night (Ruth 3). He had her lay at his feet, and then made plans to take care of the inheritance and declare the marriage publicly, in the presence of elders of the gate who were **witnesses:**

"Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, **I have acquired as my wife**, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. **You *are* witnesses** this day" (Ruth 4:10).

The Eternal is a witness to all marriages and demands that people deal honestly and fairly with each other.

And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" **Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously;** yet she is your companion and **your wife by covenant.** But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth (Mal 2:13-15).

There are too many men who want to use their strength, charm, financial resources or even Bible knowledge to get sex, and who see the details of marriage and commitment one more step to obtain sex. There are too many women willing to use their appearance, sex, and a host of other schemes to manipulate men into a marriage, only to find themselves further and further away from that goal. It is best to look to marriage for godly fulfillment, and to realize that it is ultimately the Eternal who provides a good mate:

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD (Prov 19:14).

It is worth the time for young people to take the years needed to prepare to be married and to find the right person. When marriage trouble arises, it is worth the time to pray, study, fast, counsel or do whatever else is necessary to keep a marriage together. Marriage should be exciting and fun:

Drink water from your own cistern, And running water from your own well. 16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? 17 Let them be only your own, And not for strangers with you. 18 Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the **wife of your youth**. 19 *As a* loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. 20 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, And be embraced in the arms of a seductress? 21 **For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, And He ponders all his paths** (Prov 5:15-21).

Finally, we can learn a lot from the phrase "wife of your youth". "Wife" is singular, it does not say "wives". Solomon, the probable writer, had hundreds of wives and knew all about polygamy, but was still inspired to recommend only one. "Of your youth" means our first spouse, not one acquired after several attempts and failures. Finally, God is watching us and will judge our every work (2Cor 5:10).

"That's fine, someone might say, I can justify my marriage practice from the scripture." But the technical, legal arguments are not the weightier matters of the law. The important stuff is justice, mercy and faith (Matt 23:23). Does our treatment of our spouse represent the love of the Eternal and our respect for Him?

A paragraph of hope for the downtrodden: Some may feel so lonely and depressed that they would rather enter into a risky marriage than just continue down the same lonely single road. Remember this: the loneliness and depression of recovering from a failed marriage is even worse than what you are experiencing now. In addition, failed marriages frequently leave one poorer, by many thousands of dollars, adding to the difficulty. Love, joy, peace, etc. are not ultimately produced by marriage, but by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Seek your Father in Heaven to raise you up from your loneliness and depression, and then you will be ready to help someone in a good and righteous marriage. 🕮

"Polygamy..." cont' from p. 5

> "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. " (NKJV throughout.)

God paraded the animals in front of Adam because they were mated up, and it drove home to Adam at the same time that something was missing for him. After that realization, God then put Adam into a coma, performed a surgical removal of a rib, and from that rib fashioned Eve, the woman.

What happened next was particularly important. Scripture says that "He brought her to the man." God, the Creator of the woman, her "father," presented her to the man, who was to become her husband. Viewed in this way, it is easy to see that this was the first wedding, after which Adam proclaimed Eve to be "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

It is worthy of note that God created marriage by bringing Adam and Eve together for the first marriage. Further, He did not present Adam with a Bridgette, a Carole, a Maria, and a Cindy to go with Eve. God created and presented only Eve to Adam. God did not create a polygamous marriage.

To have a better understanding of what marriage is, we need to understand what happened in the Garden. What happened was what is known as a "covenant." That word is **not used here** to describe this marriage, but it is used in Malachi 2:14 to describe all marriages. Understanding the meaning of a covenant allows us to see that the creation of a covenant is what transpired in Eden.

The Hebrew word for "covenant" is "bereth." It means a *"covenant, alliance, pledge between men; treaty, alliance, league (man to man); constitution, ordinance (monarch to subjects); agreement, pledge (man to man); alliance (of friendship); alliance (of marriage); between God and man; alliance (of friendship); covenant (divine ordinance with signs or pledges)*."

From the definition above, we note that a covenant can be an alliance of marriage relating to God and men. What appeared to be a marriage in Eden was actually a covenant between God, Adam and Eve. It was a sacred, or holy, contract between three, not two, lives.

There is an important aspect of a covenant that is overlooked by those who argue in favor of polygamous marriages. A covenant is unchangeable. Even God does not change the terms of a covenant once it is created. If God is involved in a marriage (and there is no marriage covenant without God), then a covenant is formed between the three of them. It is not possible for the partners to lawfully change the terms of that covenant. Any attempt to change those terms would violate that covenant and be a sin against the other parties to that covenant. Notice Jacob's and Laban's marriage covenant called upon God as a witness. Even though Laban coaxed Jacob into accepting two of his daughters instead of just Rachel, whom Jacob wanted, their contract ruled out any additional wives:

> And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore its name was called Galeed, also Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another. If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us — see, God is witness between you and me!... The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. (Gen 31:48-50, 53).

The would-be polygamist would ask "Where is the sin?" If one covenants with God and God performs His part (and He always does), and then one wants to change the terms of the covenant, it can only be because they have put another god before the One True God with Whom he or she has covenanted.

In order for a polygamous marriage to be legal the man and woman would have to appear before God, and to be in agreement before God that the man could take other women in marriage—**before** the covenant is finalized. Without the satisfaction of this condition, polygamy can never be legal in God's eyes.

In the past, the custom of polygamous marriage was acknowledged. Even the early church, as found in the scriptures, had polygamous marriages within the Church. But, such a marriage prevented a man from being a "bishop" (overseer) or "elder" (1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:6).

Today, it would be hard to find a woman who would agree to polygamy in advance of marriage, assuming that the woman understood the God-inspired nature of marriage. And, what woman would want to be the second wife?

Some women have been convinced by men that God intended men to have multiple wives. But those women have been manipulated by another's interpretation of scripture at odds with the truth of marriage as found in Genesis.

To expose that error, we must examine the scriptures to which others appeal as support for polygamous marriages. To understand those scriptures, we must understand that scripture does not always define matters as black and white, good or evil. There are those things which God commands (keep the Sabbath), those things which God forbids (idolatry, adultery) and those things God allows, but does not command. This third realm is where polygamy lies.

Polygamy Allowed, Not Commanded in O. T.

What this means is that while God may allow polygamy, He nowhere commands polygamy. This is where polygamists go "off base." A scripture used to support polygamy is found in Exodus 21:7-11.

"And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. **If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights**. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money" (Ex 21:17-11).

The reading of that verse produces only one sure fact. If a man takes more than the first wife then he can't diminish the rights of the first wife. This scripture does not order or condone a second wife or polygamy. Neither does it define polygamy as sin, in and of itself. Polygamists point to David and Solomon as scriptural examples of polygamy, but neither command or even recommend it.

Church Leaders Could Not Be Polygamists

It is clear that polygamy also existed in the early church. One can understand that point by extension because the conditions for setting a man as either an elder or a deacon was that he be the husband of one wife. In short, he could not be practicing polygamy.

"Neither shall he [the king] multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself" (Deut 17:17).

Now the **overseer** must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife (1Tim 3:2).

Let **deacons** be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach (1Tim 3:12),

An **elder** must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient (Titus 1:6, NIV).

How the overseers, elders and deacons—in those Christian sects which promote polygamy—deal with the plain scriptures which prohibit a husband of more than one wife from being in those offices escapes this author.

At no point in David's or Solomon's history does God record a command for polygamous marriage. Abraham had only one wife. Isaac had only one wife. Jacob, who became Israel, wanted one wife but ended up with both Leah and Rachel because of Laban's trickery.

There is a very important point to be gleaned from studying those polygamous situations; God never commanded polygamy. The difference between what men want and what God decreed is crucial to our understanding. Polygamy lies in a gray area where we must look to the surrounding circumstances to understand whether or not sin lies here.

For instance, today polygamy is not customary. Only women who have been subjected to scripture-twisting in support of a mandated-polygamy theology would agree to such a marriage. Moreover, although it is this author's personal belief that neither the federal nor state constitutions in the United States authorize interference with the marriage covenants of its citizens, it is clear that every jurisdiction has attempted to interfere with marriage by outlawing polygamy.

First Marriage Covenant Cannot be Violated

Setting aside the law for now, and incorporating the knowledge we already have about the marriage covenant, it becomes obviously incumbent upon the man to secure, in advance, the permission of the potential wife if he desires a polygamous marriage. He cannot wait until after the marriage to spring it on his wife. Moreover, she has to agree to the polygamous marriage before the covenant is struck with God, i.e., before the marriage covenant is entered into.

On top of that, the woman must be convinced by the truth, not a lie. It is a lie to say that God commands polygamous marriages. No scripture agrees with that statement. If the woman knows the truth, that the man desires a polygamous marriage, and if she is willing to give him that kind of marriage knowing that no law of God commands such a marriage, then they may freely enter into such a marriage covenant with God. Of course, there is still the alleged "law" to deal with, but that is a subject for a different article.

There is a reason God designed the marriage covenant the way that He did. If God had determined that man needed multiple "help mates" then He would have commanded polygamy—and would have made it clear to man that He commanded it. God did not command polygamy. Man engaged in polygamy on his own. God determined that, as long as adultery is not involved, then certain rules needed to be created to protect that special wife—the first one.

We ought to have the mind of God in all things. God's mind concerning marriage was the joining of the lives of three: God, the man and the woman. God could easily have made more than one woman from the rib taken from Adam. He didn't do that. Instead He created the union of three as the standard.

In conclusion, we find that, while polygamy is condoned, it is nowhere commanded. Those men who demand a polygamous marriage after a first wife is taken are in fact sinning against God and against the wife. He sins because he desires to change the unchangeable, the covenant with God and his wife. He sins because he develops his desire as a god before the One True God. He sins against his wife because he wishes to change his covenant with his wife.

So, while polygamy is not sin in and of itself, practicing polygamy in a way that violates the covenant with the wife and God is sin, and sin is something of which we should repent when we see it. 🕮

Defining Greatness (in a Lady)

by Serena Halverson

I was assigned to write what I thought it meant to be a woman of God; here I share what I wrote.

Serena Halverson, 19, lives in eastern Kentucky with her family. You can email her at dawn-halver@yahoo.com or connect with her on www.facebook.com

Photos by Serena Halverson (top-left and lower right) and Kathryn Wagers (middle).

What does it mean to be a true, God-fearing, amazing, extraordinary woman?

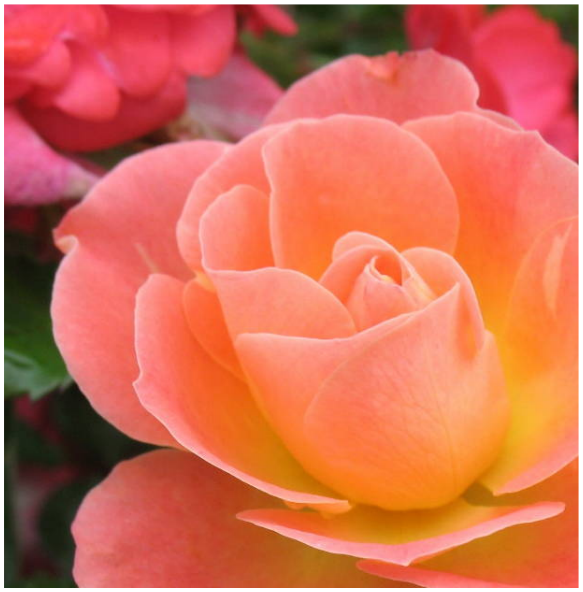
It means honor
It means strength
It means grace
It means virtue
It means beauty
Extending from within and enveloping the whole

It means waiting
It means watching
It means living
It means giving
It means pouring out one's life
To the world around us

It means sacrifice
It means patience
It means love
It means a listening ear
It means an encouraging word
Even when it is easy to nag

It means touching the lives of children
It means shaping manhood around us
It means showing womanhood how amazing life can be
It means following the Master to the ends of the earth
It means reaching out to the lost and dying
Even when it leaves us without physical comfort

It means building up, and not tearing down
It means going against the grain
It means standing up when the world says sit down
It means sitting down when the world says stand up
It means listening to a different song
The song from Above



From a Bible Study at the Lake Geneva Feast of Tabernacles, 2008

Young People's Plan to Build Strong Relationships

by Norman Edwards

If one believes modern TV/movie/novel nonsense, two individuals can "fall in love" knowing little or lies about each other, have sex the same day, go their separate way, and feel they had a meaningful relationship. Most people who have tried that lifestyle learn that it does **not** satisfy their eternal desires for companionship and love, but it produces horror and heartache, from which they need healing. At the opposite extreme, those who believe and practice the Bible teachings of life-long marriage are spared from ever starting down that raunchy road.

So in this world of mass-marketed, often fake, male-female relationships, how does a single person progress to a godly, life-time marriage?

Many sincere Believers do not have a clear answer to that question—neither the young people; nor their parents. Some will say "we simply must trust God to provide a mate at the right time." Indeed, parents and young people should be praying for that very thing. But how many parents take that same approach to their young person when it comes to finding a job? How many parents encourage their young high school graduate to hang around at home trusting that at the right time, "God will provide them a job"?

Four photos of young people at the Lake Geneva, Wisc 2008 Feast of Tabernacles site. The above photo was taken at the baptism of one of the teens. Below, one of many young people's classes.. Photos from www.feast2009.org and Norman Edwards.

I don't think so.

We parents encourage young people to think about what kind of work they like, to go to school to prepare for a job, to visit businesses and see what happens there, and to try their hand at working. Some parents have told their young adults, "If you don't find a job, I will find one for you".

If parents are this diligent to help our children find a job, how much more diligent should they be to help them find a life-long spouse? After all, jobs come and go—there is nothing unscriptural about having many different jobs throughout one's life. But we really hope that our children will have only one good marriage. How much more attention is needed to get this right?

The patriarch Abraham, called the father of the faithful (Rom 4:16), was a man of faith and works (Jms 2:21). He wanted a wife for Isaac that was "from his own people", but he did not want Isaac to return to their land and its religion—God had called him out of that. Isaac was 40 years old, and neither Isaac nor God had provided him a wife, so Abraham sent his servant to "find one for him" (Gen 24). Abraham invested many $10,000s worth of gold and other precious things to make a good impression. Abraham's servant took his responsibility very seriously and asked the Eternal for a miraculous sign—that the woman he would approach would say exactly what he prayed she would say. The servant received the miracle and successfully completed his mission. But this successful marriage was initiated by Abraham's original plan (Gen 24:2-9), Rebekah's agreement to the marriage (v 58-59) and the physical union of Isaac and Rebekah (v 67).

Parents in the small, Sabbath-keeping congregations today face a situation similar to Abraham's. We want our children to marry somebody "from our own people"—somebody to whom they are attracted and with whom they are compatible, but we do not want them to go back to the religion from which the Eternal has called us out. Like Abraham, parents need to help their children go outside of their geographical area to find someone who is compatible with their son/daughter, and also of similar religious beliefs. Unfortunately, parents are frequently preoccupied with the world's overemphasis on college and jobs and do not imitate Abraham's commitment of time and money to help find the best mates for their sons and daughters.

Both parents and young people are frequently affected by popularized philosophies of "falling in love" with someone, rather than the biblical teaching of a complete package: simple friendship, physical attraction, a planned-out working relationship, spiritual compatibility and lifetime commitment.

While parent-arranged marriages were certainly common in biblical times and while there is much that parents can and should do for their sons and daughters today, parent-arranged marriages are not commanded in Scripture. The scripture clearly lays the responsibility for choosing a mate on the young people:

> Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24).

The young man is given the responsibility to leave home. The young man and woman are responsible for becoming "one flesh"—the sexual relationship consummating the marriage.

The Bible gives many clear examples of righteous men who chose their own wives: Abram (Gen 11:29), Jacob (Gen 29:15-18), Moses' father (Ex 2:1), Aaron (Ex 6:23), Eleazar and (Ex 6:25) David (1Sam 25:39-43). While the Bible also records examples of parents who chose good spouses for their children, sometimes it ended in disaster (Gen 38:6-26). The biblical laws about who can marry whom are all written in terms of the individuals who are marrying. No laws are addressed to parents who are arranging marriages for their offspring.

So what can Sabbath-observing young people and their parents do to help them make happy marriages that will last a life-time?

We asked some young people at the Feast of Tabernacles in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin—and we received some good answers. About 70 young people attended, from ages 13 through their late 20s, about 40 men and 30 women. The first two questions were asked to the entire group. The second set was asked to men and women separately.

Question #1: How do you build relationships with the opposite sex?

1. Find common interests with other young people.
2. Get involved in group activities where one can build friendships without pressure.
3. Be outgoing, initiate conversations and ask people to sit down and talk in small groups. Saying, "hey, do you want to hang with us for a while?" can go a long way.
4. Make it a priority to make yourself available when others ask you to do things—even if it is not something you ideally would want to do. You do not always know how it will turn out.
5. Go to church together.
6. Be honest: Do not be pressured to agree with others; do not hide who you are or what you feel.
7. Respect boundaries: Do not pressure people to talk about things that they do not want to talk about; Do not pressure people to go places or pair-up when they do not want to; Do not pressure people to go against parent/school/work imposed schedules and rules; Do not pressure others for physical intimacy they do not want.

Question #2: You meet some great people at the Feast, then what?

The young people said:

1. Continue to communicate with them via:
   a. Phone

b. e-mail
c. texting
d. FaceBook
e. IM
f. video conferencing
g. postal mail (especially to Elyse)

2. Plan future meetings:
   a. Find various weekend and summer meetings for independent Sabbatarians.
   b. Plan your own road trips to visit friends.
   c. Take an active part in making plans, do not wait for parents or others to do it.
3. Learn to talk about significant things with others, not just about the movies, music, mall merchandise and other mess that marketing men use to mesmerize and make money from you.
   a. What are you passionate about?
   b. How has God helped you this week?
   c. What is Christ doing in your life?
   d. What are you studying in the Bible?
   e. What are you planning for the future?
   f. What do you hope to accomplish with your life?
4. Talk to your parents about the people you met at the Feast and what you learned at the Feast.

Question #3 to Women: How would you like men to approach you? What could they say?

Men should:

1. Approach with confidence—women are more likely to be attracted and say "yes".
2. Be friendly and "break the ice".
3. Be polite and respectful—even chivalrous.
4. Relax—it's not that big of a deal (a dance is not a marriage).
5. Take it slow—don't expect a mega-relationship to develop in 5 minutes, 5 hours or 5 days.

Question #4 to Men: How do you want women to respond (whether they are interested or not)?

A list of points will not do justice to the way the young men answered this question. As soon as the question was asked, nearly every man in the group enthusiastically said something like:

"We want to hear, 'Yes!' "

After that initial unified outburst, more consideration was given and various men said that they wanted the truth with no pity, but a definite, blunt and honest answer—which is actually somewhat contradictory to the above. After more thinking, it became clear that they really hoped for a "yes" answer, but they realized that "no"s do come about in life and when they do, they hope that women will be "short and sweet" about it. In other words, please say "no" nicely, and do not launch into a long explanation of why—especially one that only women could understand anyway.

Question #5: What are some female roles?

Men's Answers	Women's Answers
Balancer of relationship	Nurturing
Provide stability, Take an active & contributive role	Spend more time on building a relationship
Respectful—especially in disagreements	
Supporter, helper	Supporter, responder, comforter
Home-maker	
Child bearing	
Child nurturing	
Secondary provider	

The above items include everything that the men and women put on their lists. The order has been changed to group similar concepts together, with the similar men's and women's categories lined up across from each other

This writer found it interesting that the men listed the traditional women's roles of home-making and child bearing/rearing, as well as the modern roll of "secondary provider". The women left out those things. It is not that they are opposed to them in any way, but they did not ask to put them on the list. While the "women's lib" movement has certainly opened up opportunities for women to do many kinds of work that were once reserved for men, it has also done them a disservice by falsely trivializing the role of home-maker and mother. This has affected what we, as Christians, expect of Christian young women, and how they respond to our expectations.

Today, if a Christian young man says, "I am planning to have a good job so that when I get married and my wife can stay home and raise our children," we usually encourage him. But if a young woman says, "I am preparing to be a good mother and an efficient homemaker, and marry a man who wants me to stay home and raise our children", we usually consider her naive and encourage her to start a career.

Where are these hard-working Christian young men going to find their stay-at-home wives if no Christian young women are prepared to do it? Christian parents need to teach their daughters that the role of motherhood is a very worthwhile thing to do with their lives. Certainly, many Christian women will have major and/or minor careers as well. The woman in Proverbs 31 did. But from this writer's experience, there are far too few Christian young women, when asked what do they plan to do with their life, that mention motherhood as a part of it. Most women only talk about a career. We at least need to recognize that a home-maker/mother is a full time job, especially if

there are several children, home schooling, or a substantial garden/barnyard involved.

Question #6: What are some male roles?

Men's Answers	Women's Answers
Spiritual Leader Vision for relationship Source of stability	Leader
Provider	Provider
Source of strength—can "take it" when things get tough	Protector
Leader in simple things, such as a dance	Initiator, Chivalrous to woman's family, mom & sisters as well

There was much more unity of understanding on the men's roles. Everything was made to fit together above, but the women's word "protector" is probably stronger than the men's "source of strength"—women really want somebody who will protect them. Also, the women's request for men to be chivalrous to them and other women in the family is a lot more developed than the men's "leader in simple things".

Question #7: How does a woman know that a man is interested in her?

The young women said that a man who is interested in them will:

1. Be intentional in seeking her out.
2. Work hard to get the woman's attention—try to impress her.
3. Be thoughtful and remember the little things.
4. Be intentional in asking her questions—he will really try to get to know her.

Question #8: How does a man know if a woman is interested in him?

This question was reminiscent of question #4, above. At first, nearly all the men gave the same answer: "**There is no way to tell**". It appears too many women try to appear to be interested when they are not; while others who are genuinely interested pretend that they are not—so as not to scare the man off. After some discussion, the men put forth some other answers that might work. An interested woman might:

1. Show it by her body language—lean toward him, make more eye contact, sit or stand in relaxed and informal postures around him. However, the man agreed that women are in general much better at detecting and expressing body language than men.
2. Invade a man's personal space—touch or brush up against him.
3. Look at a man differently.
4. Tease a man.
5. Attempt to communicate frequently with a man.
6. Watch him often and talk about him to her friends.

The men also came up with four pro-active ways they could try to find out if a specific woman was interested in them. They said they could:

1. Ask the woman's friends. This is likely to yield some answer—as many people have opinions about these things—but it may not yield a correct answer.
2. Ask the woman directly. Besides taking a lot of courage, this also has its drawbacks. The woman may not answer, may give an evasive answer, or may answer based on how she feels at the moment—the answer could be different only a little bit later.
3. Pick a flower and pull the petals out one at a time, reciting "She loves me" and "She loves me not" on alternating petals. Take the result from the last petal. Mathematically, this has a 50% chance of being right. While the odds here are not great, they may not be much worse than some of the previous methods.
4. Pray and ask God to reveal if a specific woman is interested in you.

Summary of young people's answers

The above answers show that there is a lot of good thinking among the 70 Christian young people who contributed to these answers. This writer, who was present with the young men for the entire study, was very happy not to hear a single sexually degrading remark about women. This is better than some Christian adult studies he has been to.

These young people know that most of the popular media's approach to male-female relationships is trash. They know that they want real relationships based upon Christian principles. The men want to be men and the women want to be women; they want each other to be who they are. There writer did not hear one word about "there should be no difference between male and female roles."

They also know that these things do not come easy and that the temptation to slip into the world's ways are great. They have the same struggles with surrendering to God and growing in His grace and knowledge that we have. They have the same struggles that we had at their age to grow in confidence and in brotherly love for others. Many struggle with overcoming difficulties from their family life. God wants them to overcome in all things. We should want the same for them.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2Pet 1:2-4). 🕮

An Important Message to Parents

Nearly every parent works hard to encourage and help their older children get a good education and a good job. That is good. But should their selection of a spouse be left to someone whom they happen to "fall in love with" when they were lonely or bored? No. The selection of a spouse should be thought out and prepared for just like a job.

A lot can be learned by comparing a young person's need to find a job with their need to find a spouse. There are many similarities along with major differences. Certainly love and emotion play a major part in marriage. But if both parents and their adult children will begin thinking of finding a spouse as an important task, comparable to finding a job, it will be better for both of them.

The table below various characteristics of find a job with finding a spouse. Studying it can cast a new light on how parents can help their young adults.

"Help" does not mean doing the job for them. A parent who does a child's homework is **not** helping them be ready to work. Similarly, a parent who wants to tell a young person how to dress, what to say, where to go and who to like is not preparing that person for marriage. Parents much respect their children's life decisions, even though they do not agree with all of them.

Adults need to lift up good marriages as a Biblical ideal and encourage young people to prepare themselves, and passionately pursue it. When the young people are ready to talk, be ready to listen! — NSE

Characteristic	*Job*	*Spouse*
Personal preference	Neither parents nor anyone else can make a young person like a specific job. They have to decide that they like it and want to do it.	Neither parents nor anyone else can make a person want to marry someone else. They have to want to do it of their own accord.
Introduction	A parent can research and introduce a young person to certain types of work—for them to make up their own mind.	A parent can consider and introduce their young person to other young people they think might be good for them. The young people will have to take it from there and make up their own mind.
Aptitudes	People need to find a job for which they have the right aptitudes—the necessary physical and mental abilities. There is rarely a "perfect match for a job", but some jobs are far better suited for one individual than they are for another.	People need to marry someone whose characteristics are a good match for theirs. While there are rarely perfect matches, a person who hopes to spend their life living outside on a ranch or mission field should not marry someone who feels they must live in a normal house.
Paying their Way	Many parents save money to help their children get a job-related education or to help them start a business.	Parents save money for their children's weddings, but few spend money to help them find a Christian spouse. Sponsoring youth programs is all that many do. Should not parents consider funding good relationships that might lead to marriage—just like they fund education that might lead to a job.
Education	Some people acquire good jobs by being alert and diligent, "working their way up" as they go. Others require certain education before one is able to begin them.	Some people seem to naturally do well in relationships—figuring them out as they go along. Others are not gifted in this area at all and they need a lot of teaching and help from others to relate to a potential spouse.
One or Many?	Some people start in a job they like and keep it most of their life. Others try several jobs before they find one that they like and that will support them. While bosses don't like to lose a good worker, a peaceful transition can be made when the person changing jobs gives proper notice and takes care of loose ends.	Some people marry the first person with whom they have had a serious relationship. Others, including this writer, have a succession of serious relationships where marriage is considered, ending with the one they marry. **The secret to this is to follow the Bible teaching against physical intimacy before marriage.** When this is followed, nobody carries the emotional scars that are usually present when a sexual relationship breaks up.P 🕮

The "AT LARGE" Christian

Forces Acting within the Church of God over the Last Several Decades have Created a Cadre of what are Regarded as 'Independent' Christians. How should we Regard these who Sidestep Strict Organizational Loyalty?

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In the middle decades of the twentieth century, a movement within the Churches of God began to gain a momentum not seen previously in the modern era. What began as a radio based ministry took root and grew exponentially, providing a nucleus for a potent organization that changed the landscape of the Church for the next several decades. From rather simple beginnings, that organization grew to become the most dynamic within the spectrum of organizations previously known. It created waves among its predecessors, but even more among the evangelical religious community. The organization went on to gain a credibility we, a generation later, can only hope to regain.

But, while some things were exemplary, growth also brought problems of a rather intractable sort, that eventually became unmanageable and led to the precipitous demise of that organization. So long as God led the Church, growth was impressive. But, human nature being what it is, political agendas and errant perceptions were brought into play. Interpersonal posturings, those common within the organizations of men, created a situation that eventually rendered the organization structurally unsound. Then when spiritual ineptitude gained the chief seat, it all came apart rather quickly.

So from its shattered 'remnants' several nucleus organizations were formed intending to preserve and, to the greatest extent possible, replicate what once had been. The problem is, that certain of the characteristics these various remnant groups want so much to replicate, contain the embedded elements which were the factors that caused the problem. Some 'successor organizations' have even taken these characteristics and amplified them to a much greater degree than ever was seen in the CoGs in their best days.

A prime example is the demand for unconditional 'organizational loyalty'. In fact, among some, the strictest of organizational loyalty is required. In the nineteen eighties it was alleged that ones' salvation would be forfeit should the Christian ever withdraw from that one organization. Incredibly, that idea still holds a few in its grip, causing them to remain with the old organization, despite it now having cast off its former teachings, and even changing its name to sever all association with its former reputation. They still 'hold fast' to the memory of what it had been, as though it would some day miraculously reappear from within itself.

Externally, we see others attempting to "raise the ruins", as they say, by preserving the memory of what had been, and incorporating key elements, good or bad, into their replica organization, without due regard for the real reason why it all fell into ruin in the first place! Again, being exclusive with their 'one-and-only' organization is touted as essential to ones' very salvation.

Scattered Sheep

But from this climate, a generation of scattered sheep emerged. Most, having been battered by unpleasant experiences, find themselves jaded and reluctant to wade back into the political fray still common among the various new groups.

From the other side, members of the successor organizations cast a negative eye toward (and even will expel) any regarded as 'independent'. Nothing but whole-hearted support of their organization is accepted. Their organization is seen as the very Work of God, and no suggestion of a wider inclusiveness is acceptable. Though the old term, 'not a dimes worth of difference' is often the assessment of impartial observers of their respecttive doctrinal positions, these groups mutually exclude each other. It's generally unacceptable that a UCG member attend with LCG or either of them with the PCG! Even though their ministers were trained in the same institution, they wouldn't be allowed to speak before each others congregations. Not so much due to any doctrinal differences, but because of their organizational orientation.

Yet these all (separately) regard themselves as the Church of Brotherly Love! But, in fact, it was the absence of practical love that helped create the counterproductive environment within the original organization. We've gained very little in that area since. Though there **is** a certain inward-reflecting love within the various organizations, that love is largely conditioned on loyalty to the organization. That love, being broad enough to be extended based on the indwelling of God's Spirit, is not seen in very many situations. We are not yet that enlarged of heart!

(It would be interesting to see what would happen if a True Saint from a former age were to be made alive and brought into one of these modern congregations without them being made aware of who that individual was. What kind of reception would that person receive?)

An Inserted Intermediary

One of the major stumbling-blocks we placed in our own path is the idea of a minister (or group of ministers) being placed in an intermediary position between ourselves and God. Wonderful organiza-tional charts were produced in the early 1980's showing **a man** in chief leadership position within the Church. (read that as **the** supreme 'authority position', second only to Jesus Christ) Though it might have worked reasonably well in one situa-

tion, it proved to be very temporary! It served to create a loyalty to the leadership, but when we attempted to transfer another man into that charted office, it served more to overthrow all that had been built in that church. We were stymied by our own doing. We dared not challenge, we dared not speak out. We allowed an essential component to be effectively cancelled out of our relationship with God. The idea of a 'personal relationship' with Jesus Christ was a **minor** consideration, if even mentioned at all! We were to relate to God **through** our chief minister, as a prominent evangelist drummed into us so often.

It was the severing of the **direct** link between our-selves and our Chief Apostle, our only intermediary and the insertion of a human office between the individual Saint and God, that removed from within the Church its true stabilizing element. The '*pillars and grounds of the truth'* were effectively stripped of their God-ordained responsibility! Even the ordained ministry of the organization was short circuited. Any who spoke up, especially those early on, were dismissed by a membership oriented to letting the leadership do all the thinking. Such 'dissidents' were quickly run off! Small followings gravitated toward a certain few outcast ministers, but not all of the causes of our problems were abandoned even with them!

Despite the suppressive climate, a few began to come out of the self-induced 'organizational orientation', turning back into their Bibles, and broadening their awareness of what God expects of those who are in possession of His Spirit. To some degree, these found themselves at odds with the professional ministry in direct proportion to how oriented that ministry was to its organization. (We must keep in mind that there was a paycheck to consider.) Those individuals were seen as 'independents', and were diminished in reputation, and in some cases expelled from service or attendance.

Trained to Be...?

We need to ask ourselves, we who were 'trained' for decades in the Church, at what point in time are we sufficiently trained to where we can walk by Faith? Was the training we received adequate for use in our lives, or not? The ministry still considering us 'babes in Christ, still needing to be fed the milk of the Word', should provide us a partial answer. Some **are still** under-developed spiritually. It's not all the fault of the teaching establishment.

But then we have the flip side of that, where the ministry wants to keep the membership held to a certain limited awareness level in order to discourage them from 'walking by Faith' as that would put more stresses on their oversight than they'd want to have to deal with.

Two Kinds of Independents

As the membership matured, and as the break-up of the established organization occurred, independents began to emerge more and more. Perhaps that was God's ultimate intent! But as in any such situation, there is the danger of 'independent thinking' drifting into varying degrees of error. It is the exposure to brethren that can help channel any drift. "Iron sharpens iron", we were told so often. Will we allow that to take place? Can the membership function effectively in that capacity? Those who survive through the trials in the end-time are those who "*speak often one with another"*. (Mal. 3:16) Are our eminent organizations fully comfortable with members doing that?

There are **two kinds** of independents that can develop: That **kind who shies away** from contact with others, usually finding too little common ground to warrant fellowship, and the **kind who is amenable to a wider spectrum of organizations** and fellowship situations, recognizing the presence of God's Spirit as the prime consideration, not just a persons' organizational affiliation.

Though the label 'independent' carries a negative connotation in many of today's Churches, there's a **kind** of independent who can be an asset in the greater fellowship of Saints. To distinguish them from the isolationist type, we should perhaps recognize them instead as **"At Large Christians"**, those who are willing to extend an open hand of fellowship based on the indwelling of God's Spirit, evident by the fruits in ones' life, not merely ones' organizational affiliation.

Were the first century Churches of either type? Were they strict exclusivists, or did they face into a wider fellowship situation than our members would do today? Negative situations they experienced provide some answers to that question.

Yes, There ARE Challenges

Paul experienced 'perils among brethren' (2Cor 11:26) and was treated badly by associates (2Tim 4:10-15). John the Apostle was barred from contact with the true brethren by a local minister in at least one notable situation (3Jo 9-10). Was that an endorsement of 'isolationist or exclusivist' policy? Would we be stronger or weaker if we succumbed to our fears of having to face life's challenges?

When we withdraw into our organizational 'safe zone' as we perceive it, can we fulfill our personal responsibilities to the greater fellowship of Faith? By becoming withdrawn, we do disservice to the others in other organizations or other fellowships who would benefit from exposure to challenges to their narrowed thinking. Iron does sharpen iron! Open dialog spurs more effective study!

When we attempt to achieve 'organizational purity' (often referred to as 'being of like mind') by being exclusivists, we risk being remiss in our responsibility to uphold the Truth as God has allowed us to understand it and we deny ourselves the benefit of the growth opportunities that come with challenges. There will always be diversities of Gifts, there will always be a new generation that needs to be worked with in order for us to convey to them the same understanding we have, developed by years of being led by God's Spirit. Reticence has few benefits, not to ourselves and not to others of like mind! 🕮

Fasting and the Vegan Diet in the Scriptures

by William Swenson

Everybody knows fasting is in the Bible. Jesus and His disciples fasted (Matthew 4:1, 2; 9:14, 15), Moses fasted (Exodus 34:28), Elijah fasted (1 Kings 19:3-8), John the Baptist and his disciples fasted (Matthew 9:14; 11:18), Paul and the early church fasted (Acts 9:9; 13:1-3; 14:23), etc. Fasting is an important part of being a serious believer. It's an excellent tool for humbling oneself and gaining the focus needed for seeking knowledge and understanding as a part of a life of Bible study and prayer. In many cases, the Scriptures show a humbled state or a period of fasting first preceded major revelations or the start of a new ministry.

In Secrets to Fasting and Prayer, author Rebekah Montgomery, points out the difficulty but necessity of fasting. She says:

"Fasting is hard. But God honors the person who denies her own bodily desires for a time and devotes herself to prayer and fasting. It is clear from Scriptures that God expects us to fast. Jesus said, 'When you fast... ' not 'If you fast... ' He also gave instructions how to conduct your private times of prayer and fasting (Matthew 6:5-18)."

But how many people know a vegan diet can be considered fasting and that it's much easier than water only fasting? Many health and fasting experts consider a strict vegan diet to be a partial food fast and this can be found in the Scriptures as well. On one occasion before receiving an important revelation, Daniel mourned for three weeks and ate no choice food, no meat and drank no wine. Daniel 10:1-3.

Daniel and his brethren also practiced a vegan diet or partial food fast with the Lord's help during the initial stage of their captivity in Babylon. Daniel 1: 8-16. Faced with the unclean, unhealthy, luxury diet of the Babylonians they chose to eat only vegetables instead. As a result of their diligence and perseverance, they were rewarded with the good health effects that flow from a vegan diet, fasting, and following God's law. Their spiritual life was enriched and strengthened as can be seen by the rest of their story in the book of Daniel.

Some Christians take Paul's teaching in Romans 14:1-23 to indicate that foregoing meat and eating only vegetables is the act of someone who is weak in faith, and that it's permissible to eat everything and anything – even meat designated unclean by the law set forth in Leviticus 11:1-47. This clearly is not the case. We who understand the Law know Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. Matthew 5:17. Not only does the Messiah's statement that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets apply to not abolishing the Law of clean and unclean meats, but includes

continued on next page

by Norman Edwards

For centuries, some Bible students have debated whether or not the Bible teaches **veganism** (eating only fruits and vegetables) **or vegetarianism** (veganism plus eggs and milk)**.** A condensed summary of the scriptural arguments is as follows:

> And God said, "See, I have given you [Adam] every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food (Gen 1:29).

God also gave Adam dominion over all the beasts of the field—with no instruction whether he could or could not eat them. Abel was a "keeper of sheep" and offered some to God (Gen 4:2,4). It is difficult to imagine that he only raised them for wool and never ate them. However, God's statement to Noah after the flood seems to indicate a change in mankind's diet:

> "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Gen 9:3-4).

Arguments for veganism claim it was God's original diet, but meat eating came about because of either Adam and Eve's or the pre-flood world's sin. In the Kingdom, they say that mankind will stop eating meat, just like the big carniverous animals will be changed to eat straw (Isa 11:7; 65:25).

Scriptural arguments in favor of eating meat stem from the dozens of scriptures that place meat-eating in a favorable light. When the Eternal visited Abraham, he served Him meat, milk and butter (Gen 18:1-8). Israel was promised a land of "milk and honey" (Ex 3:8, etc.), and commanded to eat the passover lamb (Num 9:11-13). Meat is listed as a desirable thing at the Feast (Deut 14:26).

The new Testament continues with many positive references to meat-eating. Eggs and fish are identified as "good gifts" given by human fathers (Luke 11:11-13). In Jesus' story of the Prodigal Son, the father, symbolizing God, has a fatted calf killed to honor his repentant son (Luke 15:21-23). Jesus pictures the celebration at his return as a beef dinner:

> "Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding"' " (Matt 22:2).

If meat were "bad" for us, our Savior could have chosen other good things as symbols for his parables, but He did not. He ate broiled fish after his resurrection just to prove he was real (Luke 24:42-43).

> Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them (Rom 14:2-3, NRSV). 📖

the righteous acts of the Prophets such as Daniel's decision, with the support and assistance of God, to not defile himself with the royal food and wine which may have been sacrificed to idols or contained unclean meat prohibited by the Law. Daniel's example of eating only vegetables when confronted with unclean food and his foregoing choice meat and wine as a part of a 21 day fast are righteous acts worthy of emulation. We must not twist Paul's teachings to our own detriment. 2 Peter 3:15, 16.

There are many good reasons for going vegan and fasting. Here's a partial list.

1) Going vegan and fasting saves money on the food bill, a very important consideration in these tough economic times. Like Daniel in Babylon, we're also faced with an array of unclean, unhealthy, luxury foods that are just too expensive for regular indulgence.

2) A vegan diet and periodic water only fasting can quickly detoxify the body and reduce the cravings for drugs, alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, addicting junk foods, and excessively sweetened and artificially flavored drinks. Pollutants, toxins and metals that reside in the body's fatty tissues are also removed. Again, money is saved.

3) The vegan diet and periodic water only fasting have been recognized by medical science to slow the aging process and to prevent and treat a host of diet-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, auto-immune disease, etc. See, for example, Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), at http://www.pcrm.org/health/prevmed/index.html; Study Finds Fountain of Youth, Vegan Diet and Exercise, at http://www.dbtechno.com/health/2008/09/16/study-finds-fountain-of-youth-vegan-diet-and-exercise/; and Pub Med research report entitled "The effect on health of alternate day calorie restriction: eating less and more than needed on alternate days prolongs life", at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16529878. Again money is saved on medical bills and by being able to remain fully productive for longer.

4) By going vegan you don't feed the meat and dairy industry the money it needs to stay in the business of feeding you and the rest of the population unhealthy food while it, at the same time, wastes natural resources such as water and land and pollutes the environment with excessive amounts of animal excrement and greenhouse gasses that contribute to global warming. Factory farms lace the water and grain it feeds its animals with tranquilizers, antibiotics and hormones in order to fatten and keep the animals healthy under crowded, unsanitary, cruel, and stressful conditions. These drugs and the conditions of confinement produce a fat-marbled and drug-tainted food product that it is unsafe and unclean for human consumption by both biblical and common sense standards.

5) By going vegan you make a statement that the health of the poor and hungry comes first. The Worldwatch Institute, says: "grain is used much more efficiently when consumed directly by humans. Meat production depends on feeding nearly 40 percent of the world's grains to animals, creating competition for grain between affluent meat eaters and the world's poor." And, water only fasting on a regular basis reminds us what it's like to be hungry like the world's poor.

The supreme diet in my opinion is the strict vegan diet. No meat, no dairy, no eggs. It's the diet God started man out on in the beginning with a blessing, calling it "very good." Genesis 1:29-31. It wasn't until after the flood God permitted meat eating on the condition the blood be drained from it. Genesis 9:3,4. This was later modified to include the elimination of fat and certain animals considered unclean. Leviticus 3:14-17; 11:1-47.

Many Christian vegetarians, as well as this writer, believe God intends to restore the vegan diet during the Millennium when He brings peace to the world. Predatory animals living in harmony with their prey and eating vegetation mentioned in Isaiah 11:6,7, and the God made covenant between animal and man mentioned in Hosea 2:18 certainly suggest vegetarianism to be the Millennial diet.

In Micah 4:3, 4, God promises a Utopian horticultural society during the Millennium much like the Garden of Eden—before sin and animal sacrifices were necessary and peace and harmony prevailed - as men begin to focus on horticultural technique instead of war. Nothing is said about raising animals for slaughter and food, but instead a vine and a fig tree symbolic of abundant vegetation is mentioned. Certainly, man will finally figure out that it's an unnecessary waste of time and labor raising animals for food, and that they can nourish themselves much better and live healthier and longer lives on fruits and vegetables than on meat.

Today it's much easier to go vegan than in Daniel's time. There's a wide variety of meat substitutes available as well as many creative recipes. And, as calorie restriction and anti-aging research picks up, more ways to attain optimum nutrition while consuming less calories will certainly be devised. For now, however, the vegan diet is the best and easiest method available for restoring health, adding years to your life-span, and connecting or reconnecting with your Creator on a spiritual level. 📖

Internet resources for further study:

For further information, Internet links and educational videos supporting fasting and the vegan diet see the author's blog at http://fastingandvegandietinscriptures.blogspot.com/

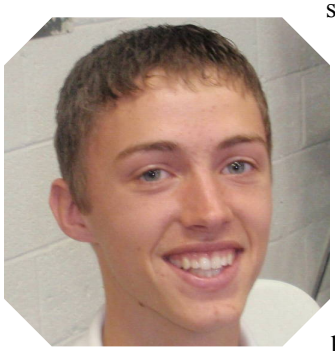
What the *Students* are Saying about Spring Vale

Lizzy Baker, Sophomore, Oregon: I like the friendships you make. You find out who you are because people are honest with you. I appreciate the staff. They have good intentions for us and want to see us succeed and live a good Christian life. They do what they do because they care.

Shelsie Pollock, Sophomore, Washington: I like the positive Christian environment and how everyone (both students and staff) is growing together in their Christian walk. I really admire some of the staff members because they work hard in their relationship to students to help them get what they need to succeed in life.

I like the school because I can get advanced classes. They try to schedule your classes according to your needs; they don't just put you on a track. I'm really excited about the dual enrollment because I could do honors English this year and college English for the next 2 years.

Kelen Caswell, Senior, Michigan: The seniors are saying this is the best year they have had since they've been here. This year, we had students accept Christ, who I thought never would have. The positive atmosphere is what's making the good behavior happen. I'm hoping to get started with an accountability partner and to encourage others to do the same thing.



Hannah Klopfenstein, Student Body President, Senior, Indiana: It's great to be able to come to a place where there's a Christian environment, and you can grow. Sometimes, I think, kids only realize this after they get out of school. The staff work very hard for us students, and sometimes kids never see it. I think the academics are good here, and I'm really glad about the college classes. Miss Noble is a demanding teacher, but we learn a lot from her. I like a smaller school, because you get to know everybody personally. There are a lot of opportunities here.

Carissa Carbajal, Junior, Wisconsin: The friends that you make at Spring Vale are amazing! Deans and teachers want the best for you. It's not just because it's their job- it's because they want to do it. They're really helpful and understanding. School's not easy, but I'm doing better than in the last two years. At home, I never really did my schoolwork. Now, I'm getting everything done. I like Friday night worship (led by students.) I also like the way the Pastors speak and how they are as people (their character.)

Christian Perry, Freshman, Texas: I like Pastor Tim. He's helped me get closer to Christ, and he's helping me get baptized. The countless opportunities to go to church have really helped me.

Keeping Our Teens—The SVA Way

by Norman Edwards

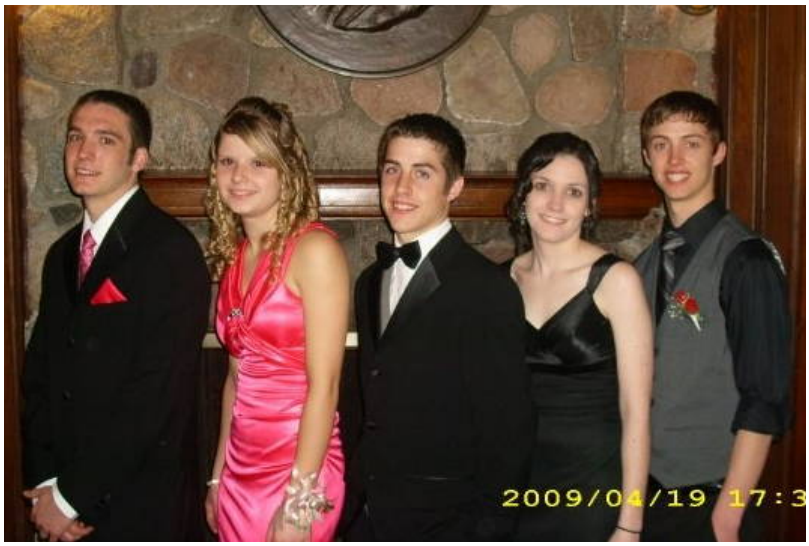
Hopefully, everyone who believes in serving the Sabbath-observing churches will read this article! Whether you have children, grandchildren, friends that have children, or simply have the ability to help those who do, this article is for you!

Nearly all of us are encouraged when our congregations grow. We should be (John 15:8; 1Cor 3:11-15). And so when we, in our congregations, desire to teach truth to others, what better place to begin than with young people in our congregations? The apostle John writes:

> I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father (2Jo 1:4).

Here John is addressing "the elect lady". Whether that is a literal woman or a representative of the church, her "children" are certainly those who have learned from the woman/church.

What can be more important than helping the young people of our congregations to remain in the truth? Why would families want to join our congregations if we do not retain most of our young people?



Bendon, Jessica, Cory, Erin and Kelen at the SVA Junior-Senior Banquet, 2009

The Eternal made young people, as they mature, to begin to decide for themselves what they will do and think. Young people combine what they have learned from their parents, their congregation and the rest of their environment. Try as we might, even with home school and home church, we cannot stop them from learning from their environment. But, we can change their environment!

This article is about Spring Vale Academy (SVA), a boarding high school in Owosso where the Sabbath is observed. This writer had two sons graduate from there and another son who will graduate in 2010. While this writer does not believe that every Sabbath-observing high-school student should attend there, he believes that SVA has such great potential to make a difference in the lives of our young people that every parent and church leader ought to thoroughly investigate and consider the option of sending each young person there for one or more of their high school years. Spring Vale Academy offers a complete environment for young people where they can learn that living by the Scriptures, including the Sabbath, works for a great many interesting and fun people—not only for mom and dad.

Before anyone says, "We don't need to spend that much money on a kid's education", please realize that this is not about education; it is about evangelism. While the SVA academic courses are better than the average public school, that is not the main reason why one would send a young per-

Coach Coulson & team singing "SVA for Jesus" after the end of a close (64-62) game.

son there. The purpose is to send our sons and daughters so SVA so that they will:

1. Live among dedicated brethren looking out for their spiritual and physical welfare—serving as mentors as well as faculty and staff
2. Make numerous friends their age who have similar Bible beliefs—seeing that the Christian way works for others their age
3. Meet many others of the opposite sex that also have a belief in keeping themselves pure for marriage—giving them strong evidence that purity, not promiscuity, is the way to go
4. Attend Friday night and Sabbath Services every week—with their friends (Learning the Bible with their friends causes young people to learn so much better. The SVA students have a major part in the music, scripture reading, prayer and teaching in the Friday night service.
5. Participate in short morning chapel services and evening dorm worship services—with their friends
6. Attend Bible classes every day—with their friends
7. Grow more confident in sports, music and drama programs with no conflict with the Sabbath and without the profanity and promiscuity typical of most high schools
8. Strengthen their leadership skills in student government and student projects
9. Escape the influence of a negative local environment (The young person may have friends encouraging bad behavior or the home environment may be bad due to an abusive parent, divorce, step parent, etc.)
10. Gain practical work experience in the required SVA student jobs (This writer knows of more high school graduates who obtained jobs because of their high school work experience, rather than their grades or curriculum.)

The ability for young people to have whole-hearted participation in any activity they choose is vital. In non-Sabbatarian schools, it is very difficult for students who want to keep the Sabbath to participate in student government, sports, and other activities, and it is almost impossible for them to become leaders.

Most People Are Already "Sure" That They Do Not Need Private School

We have covered 10 reasons **to send** a young person you know to a Sabbath-observing high school. Before we give more details about Spring Vale Academy, we need to answer people's biggest objection. Most people think they "don't need private school". This writer should know; **he thought the same thing for years.**

The main reasons most people give for not needing private school are:

1) "My child is already in high school." Your student can enter SVA at any time. Less than 20% of SVA students attend all four years there. The majority come in their Junior or Senior year. Some enter at the semester or even at some random point during the year. High school graduation requirements are similar throughout the county—millions of students move every year, and the schools work with them. The SVA principal and faculty are experienced in integrating other school's curricula to satisfy graduation requirements most efficiently. In the few cases where it is necessary, SVA arranges for correspondence courses and/or individualized help.

2) "Private school is too expensive." SVA's $8,733 per year base charge appears expensive if one thinks in terms of "how could I raise an **additional** $8,733 dollars?" The actual experience is that parents only need to raise well **less than $5000 additional** per year, and sometimes that figure is zero or negative! How can that be? When a teen is home for nine more months of the year, they consume $3000 to $6000 in food, utilities, clothes, public school fees, hobbies, entertainment, as well as auto insurance, payments, maintenance and training. Most of those expenses are eliminated or reduced when students are at SVA. The cost is usually further reduced by student work opportunities, scholarships from SVA and sponsorships from relatives or local congregations. There are students who have arranged for their entire bill to be paid by asking relatives and friends to pay so much per month to sponsor them. **SVA has had so much good experience helping parents find sources of funding, that they are willing to accept applications from parents who do not have enough money as long as they are willing to work together with SVA to find sources of funds.** So until a parent has pursued it this far, they cannot use lack of funds as an excuse!

3) "Parents are giving up their responsibility to raise children by sending them to private school." Parents are exercising their responsibly to raise their children when they send them to SVA! The goal of a parent is not tell their child what to do until the child either becomes a clone of the parent, or rebels and escapes. In younger years, parents should teach right and wrong to children, and use rewards and punishments to enforce right behavior. But as their young people grow older, they need to develop their own relationships with God, their own ability to make decisions and their own means of earning a living. When a Christian parent has diligently worked with their children up to high school age, they are usually ready to leave home at some time during their high school age. There is nothing like a semester away to test this out. Sending

them to SVA is not giving away the responsibility to others, but wisely giving children a **safe** opportunity to apply what their parents have taught them in previous years. It is much better for a young person's first experience away from home to be in a Christian school like SVA than it is to be in a secular university or an apartment with unbelieving friends. SVA parents can call them or visit their children as often as they deem necessary. Parents who send their child away to SVA are almost always amazed to find that they want to talk to them—even though their relationship may have been troubled before.

4) "My child is not ready to be away from home yet." Sometimes this is true, but parents often make this assumption without thinking it through or even asking their child. If the young person is not ready now, when will he or she be ready? What specific things does he or she need to change in order to be ready? Do you have a plan in place to make sure he or she is ready to leave home eventually? Are specific responsibilities being turned over in a planned manner (set own bed time, schedule own homework, do own laundry, buy own personal items, learn to prepare meals, etc.)? In many cases, leaving home forces teens to take on responsibility. Often, **it is the parent** who is not yet mentally and emotionally ready to let the maturing young person leave.

5) "My child will learn different doctrines at SVA." While most SVA students and faculty are Church of God (7th Day) members, the school operates independently from the church and has had **numerous non-CG7 faculty and students,** including this writer and his children. They came from many church groups: independent Sabbatarians, Church of God groups, sacred Name groups, Messianic Jews, Seventh-day Adventists and other Christian denominations. This writer has talked to numerous SVA students and their parents from these groups and could not find one who considered doctrine a significant problem or who removed their child because of it. The reality is that all young people will grow in their doctrinal beliefs just as we, their parents, grew in our doctrinal beliefs from our teen years until now. Sabbatarian young people are at far more risk of losing all of their biblical doctrines at secular high schools and colleges. SVA Bible teachers are content to accept Bible test answers that match the parent's doctrinal teaching when it differs from CG7 teaching. There are SVA faculty and students who attend the annual Feast Days every year, even though the Church of God (7th Day) does not officially teach them.

6) "My child would refuse to go." Before a parent ever accepts this answer from child, they should show them the website, or obtain an SVA DVD and give them a taste of what it will be like. Many teens are astonished that their parent would actually make that big of a plan and commitment just for them. Even so, some young people will certainly insist that they want to keep going to their high school and this writer's children did not want to go when he first sent them. But he explained to them that the reason they did not want to go is that they knew their friends at their current school, but did not yet know the friends they would make at SVA.

Parents Are the Most Important

A private school does not replace parents!

Parents will always be the most important influence on their children's lives. For the first five or six years of life, parents are nearly everything to their children. At that age, children will still usually prefer to live with their parents even if they are abusive. Between the ages of six and twelve, children generally still hold their parents as their biggest influence, but begin learning and accepting some values from other adults, as well as their peers. The way parents raise their children during these first 12 years is nearly always the single biggest influence in their life, other than the way God works with them.

Beyond these years, most teens begin to make up their own minds about what they believe. Sometimes they stay close to their parents' teaching, and sometimes they will depart far from it, often coming back to it again. During these teen years, especially for teens who learn a lot from others,

"I'd give $1,000,000 to get my child back."

I've heard parents say that. You probably have too. Parents are usually talking about their children who have left home and won't communicate, have totally rejected the parents' values, or have suffered some great tragedy. Things like substance abuse, police records, serious accidents, illegitimate children and suicides are frequently impossible to "undo".

If the parents either had or could borrow a million dollars, they would probably spend it to get their child back, if possible.

How much better would it be to spend only an additional few thousand per year to send young people to Spring Vale Academy and never lose them? When parents or fellow brethren recognize that a young person is on the edge of forsaking their biblical teaching, it is very prudent, if necessary, to dig into one's college savings, take out a second mortgage or use short term credit to get them out of their negative environment immediately. These things can eventually be repaid; broken lives are much more difficult to mend. —NSE

it is good for these young people to be surrounded by others who are soundly rooted in the Bible. Teens are good at finding parents' faults. However, when they see that there are other Bible-believers who do not have those faults—and who have other good qualities—they are much more likely to think seriously about God and His ways.

The big issues that young people ultimately need to grasp are:

1. How will I serve God?
2. How will I live on my own? (This includes education, a job, learning to use one's resources wisely and learning to deal with business, government, medical, insurance and other bureaucracies.)
3. Will I find a compatible mate, who has also had a similar grasp of the above two issues?

One semester of a private school provides a time for the young person to be away from parents and realize just how much they do know, and how much they are lacking. Young people are often amazed to find that problems that they thought were their parent's fault are still with them at private school—and it is indeed the young person who must overcome them.

Young people are also often amazed to find other young people who are much less capable than they in some areas— and they become thankful for how much their parents know and how much they taught them.

Young People All Different

It cannot be overemphasized how much difference there is between one young person and the next. One may be irresponsible and depart from the Bible and his parents' teaching just to have fun. Another may be very responsible with her own conduct, though she may be judgmental, considering herself a better Christian than her parents. She may want to go her own way because she feels she can make better decisions (which may or may not work out).

Some young people would want to go to a private school just to get away from their parents—and some of those because they think they can handle it and others because they hope to do things there that their parents won't let them do. Others would be fearful to go away to school, some really are not yet ready, and others have been babied too much and really need the additional responsibility. Still others are completely different from all of the above.

Spring Vale Academy is not the answer for every young person's life, but it can be a powerful help to young men and women for many different reasons. Young people have gone there because they

1. Want the Bible classes and positive Christian environment
2. Are natural leaders but need to be challenged or encouraged
3. Wish to participate in sports, drama, athletics, etc. and still observe the Sabbath
4. Need and desire a certain degree of independence
5. Want many fellow Sabbatarian friends
6. Need to get away from destructive friendships and habits in their hometown
7. Are having serious difficulty at home

Reasons why young people would not want to go to SVA are listed below. Young people who are described by most or all of the following statements probably do not need to go to SVA:

1. They already have a solid personal commitment to God.
2, They have already gained a basic knowledge of the Bible from parental/church teaching or personal study.
3. They have a good working relationship with their parents—are able to talk about almost any significant subject and are in agreement with major moral practices.
4. They regularly attend their local church congregation and are largely content with it.
5. They have an extended physical family (grandparents, uncles, cousins, etc.) who have similar religious views, and with which they feel closely identified.
5. They have a clear idea of which higher education and/or career opportunities that they want to pursue.
6. They have a variety of friends their own age, either locally, or whom they meet regularly at Feasts and other gatherings.
7. They are at peace that they will find a similarly-believing person to marry at the proper time.

Yes, it is true that two young people may go to SVA for nearly opposite reasons: one because he or she already has a deep commitment to God and want to further there Biblical learning; the other because they have little interest in God and their parent is sending them away from a disastrous lifestyle (crime, substance abuse, immorality, etc.). The two actually work well together. The students with a strong relationship with God are frequently able to mentor the students who are struggling.

SVA does have a record of accomplishment. Many of its alumni, thankful for the benefit they received, have continued to support it for the rest of their lives. Many Spring Vale graduates go on to be leading members in their local congregations and naturally want to send their children to SVA so they can grow to be leaders, too. Quite a few SVA students are the second or third generation in their family to attend.

And of the students sent to SVA against their will, to get them out of a destructive situation in their home town, some leave SVA as firmly committed Christians. And even of the few who struggle through SVA, never really committing their lives to God, the writer has still seen a profound impact. Many of them make Christian friends there whom they keep up with for years. This writer has seen some live a troubled life for a year or two, realize that

their old SVA friends are doing better than they are, make a few phone calls, and come back to God. (The SVA Director and staff do have the wisdom to expel students who would be a threat to their fellow students or the staff there.)

What Is Spring Vale Academy?

Spring Vale Academy is the only Sabbatarian boarding high school in the U.S.A. not affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventists. It has been in operation continuously since 1946. The introduction to SVA's manual reads:

> The mission of Spring Vale Academy is to disciple young people to Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher, preparing them to be Christian leaders and workers; and to prepare young people socially, academically and psychologically for further education and for the responsibilities and relationships of adult life.

Spring Vale Academy provides:

1. A standard 4-year high school curriculum, with college-prep or technical option. College-bound students can take Honors' English, a foreign language, Advanced Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Anatomy and Physiology, etc. Technical students may take Industrial Arts, Speech, Drama, Computers, etc. All students take a Bible class every semester.
2. College classes for qualified students so they may simultaneously earn both high school and college credit.
3. Individual help for students with academic difficulties.
4. A boys' and girls' dorm, each with a dean and an assistant dean, who look after the students' physical and spiritual welfare when they are not in class or on a school activity. The deans, often with the help of the older students, conduct dorm worship every evening.
5. A dining hall that serves three meals per day, only biblically clean foods!
6. Morning chapel services every school day, a Friday night Bible study run by the young people, a morning Sabbath school and a Sabbath service with the local brethren. There is a full-time youth pastor to coordinate all of this.
7. Continuous monitoring of students' whereabouts—they are never left free to roam campus or beyond without staff knowledge and supervision.
8. School rules to largely assure that students will get adequate sleep and keep up with homework and other responsibilities.
9. Individual attention given for medical or any special needs.
10. Practical work experience through required campus jobs.
11. Sports programs that compete with other local Christian schools
12. Opportunities to travel with two touring groups: Sound, a musical group, and Action, a drama group. A great variety of social activities.
13. Good parental communication, including weekly e-mail updates, online grade reports, mailed grade and progress reports as needed, and phone calls to parents with any relevant questions. Students are encouraged to call home frequently.
14. A four-week long winter break, for students to return home and reconnect with parents.

Affording SVA

The cost of the entire Spring Vale experience is $8700 per year. Again, SVA has had so much good experience with helping parents find sources of funding, that they are willing to accept applications from parents who do not have enough money, but who are willing to work together with SVA to find sources of funds.

Discounts are provided for a variety of reasons, such as parental involvement in Christian ministry, siblings attending concurrently, etc. Scholarships, offered by the school or local church are also available. Most students are able to attend by obtaining sponsors who agree to donate a certain amount every month toward their bill. From a historical perspective, it has been common to send young people to a good Christian school to give them a good start in life. Even non-Sabbatarians have helped to sponsor friends and relatives at Spring Vale Academy. Some young people have been able to attend exclusively through sponsorship, while others' use of sponsorship is supplemental.

The Time is Now

If you think Spring Vale Academy could help your children, or some whom you know, please get more information. You do not get a chance to redo those high school years. At least find out what your options are. If nothing else, your efforts will show these young people that you are interested in making big changes to help them. Some young people will like the idea of moving out of the house. Others will be strongly against moving away from their friends, but can be persuaded by asking them to try it just for one semester. This writer has had two children graduate from SVA and one who will graduate in 2010. The first year when the older two began, they did not want to go. But in less than a month, they wanted to stay--and they did.

The SVA staff is very friendly and helpful. They will be glad to send a brochure or school handbook, and answer your questions. The contact information is:

Spring Vale Academy
Mark Caswell, *director*
Debbie Boyles, *public relations*
4150 South M-52
Owosso, MI 48867
989-725-2391
Web: **www.springvale.us**
svasecretary@chartermi.net

See page 30 for more Spring Vale Academy pictures and student activities!

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.

Encouragement

LETTER: July 20, 2008

Mr. Edwards,

I just read much of your info about what's been going there and will be praying for the success of the community. I have similarly gotten myself into severe financial distress and despite feeling strong desire to help you all with your difficulties, I'm unable to help except for prayer. I would love to come and help and live in a community like you describe. Unfortunately my circumstances won't allow that currently, perhaps someday God will. For now I'll be praying for the diversity of people to come and help, the heavy debts to be erased, the repairing/education of your family and people to be served. I know you have the strength to endure and believe that God will bless your efforts.

Your brother in Christ,

—Kevin Wright, California

RESPONSE: Thank you for your encouragement. There are times when I really need it!

—NSE

Are Sermons Biblical?

LETTER: July 4, 2008

Brother Norm,

Excellent work. I especially enjoyed the articles entitled People of the Passover and Are Sermons Biblical?

By the way, I will be publishing a new website in a few days that will reinforce and expand what you have found to be true regarding Greek rhetorical influence in the church. Look for it next week:

www.aramaicbibleperspectives.com

It will start off small like any work but grow like a mustard seed, God willing.

All the best,

— James J. DeFrancisco, Ph.D.
MILTHA Ministries

RESPONSE: While I did not have time to study it in detail, I know that some of our readers will appreciate knowing about your website. Your efforts to deal with the Aramaic versions of the scriptures are commendable, since it was the common language of Jesus' day, and since most Bible scholarship deals only with Hebrew and Greek.

—NSE

People of the Passover

[This article was sent via e-mail in April, then published in the July/Aug 2008 Servants' News.]

LETTER: April 20, 2008

Dear Norman Edwards,

My wife Mary and I just are settling down and getting ready for bed after sharing a large group meal and some pretty decent fellowship. Thank you for including me to send the article to. I will read it and perhaps respond with any thoughts I might have regarding it. Hope you shared an edifying Passover with a pleasant portion of God's people. Of course when you speak of the people of the Passover you are speaking of the same people spoken of in 1 John 3:1-4. Even as we contemplated identifying the body of Christ/discerning the body, we should have been giving thought to purifying ourselves to become more like Jesus. That thought would have been concerning how we can give others more consideration than we give ourselves, becoming more like Yeshua/Jesus is.

Along that line, I often think of the reason and usefulness of fear. **Love casts out fear and love of the brethren obviously does the same.** As a point for the "sheople" among us, fear causes them to be unthinking and desiring of escape. That isn't the path we want to open for them. There are some that can be saved by fear, but with the consideration of what was told us.

At some point we give up our concern of discerning the sinful or evil amongst us and allow that God can do the winnowing and what we cannot clearly see or isn't clearly evident we shouldn't be spending a lot of effort fearing. We know that there are some amongst us whom God will "weed" out at His own time. We know they are there, even like Christ knew they were there. What does it hurt if those are also loved by those of us who are given to loving one another? If they cannot stand love that might tell us that they need it the more or have problems we can help with. [We also must realize that there] would be evil actions that we would have to be afar from.

Your own experiences hopefully have not overly colored your judgments. :0) The words of Stephen are our best reference. "Father; forgive them for they know not what they do." It is so with so many today, that they simply don't know what they are doing.

Have a very good Unleavened bread.

— Bob Phelps

RESPONSE: Thank you for your wisdom. This verse used to trouble me:

> He [Judas] did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it (John 12:6, NIV).

Jesus knew the thoughts of people (Matt 9:4; 12:5), he certainly knew that Judas was stealing. Why couldn't Jesus run a financial operation without corruption? If Jesus was sinless, shouldn't his organization be without internal thievery?

It took many years to realize that Jesus was not perfecting organizations he was perfecting people (Matt 5:48. His work was not about money. Christ could have miraculously taken care of their food or

other needs. It was a blessing to those who gave to his ministry, and it was a curse to Judas who was tempted, then succumbed to stealing.

—NSE

Former Ford Employee Looks at Economic Future

LETTER: December, 2008

Hello Norm,

In response for information on Sept-Oct *Servants' News*, I decided to write this letter.

I received a good buyout from Ford, instead of paying off our house, I paid off all other debts, though I have a 401K loan, which they take from my account each month. I also have money in a couple of 401K accounts, which dropped about 40%, partly my fault. (I paid an on line investment firm, $7,000 for a lifetime of service; lost $20K with their advice). I realize now, I should have paid off my house, as I'm not an "investment person". We are barely making it every month. I can see I had my "head in the sand" for years, from my Worldwide days, with the outlook that was drummed in our head.

With the (lack of) business at Ford, what would happen if they go under? It is possible that I would get half or less pension and then wait six months for a reduced SS payment to flow in. I suppose circumstances could happen for us to be foreclosed on. (Happened to my grandfather in the 30's).

When the news mentioned Ford, the idea many of us would be homeless brought your issue in mind. Could PABC have an influx of new "poor people, whose jobs, pensions and money disappeared with the banking crisis?

Servants' News: I do like many of the articles written like "People of the Passover"—very insightful. The articles in the latest issue on money and politics are very good also.

I reread the July issue on the future of PABC; you sure have paid a price the last few years there: being separated from your family, money problems, trouble with those who were once with you, fire in your home, etc. You seem to be waiting for direction from God to see what you should do now; more or less reading the signs to see. I wish I could make a choice on whether or not you should continue, but it isn't my place to decide if you should make the sacrifices necessary. The time you missed can't be made up, but is it really wise to continue? I wish I had the answer.

I do the same thing for decisions I make, sometimes it works, sometimes not. I find out when not, I was putting my own thoughts and desires into it, rather than waiting to see what God really knows is best for me. So I suffer. Perhaps it is a learning experience to discern what the Spirit "says".

Your focus on helping the community is very good. The [church of God group I attend] is doing the same: food banks, community garden, blanket drive, etc.—in some bad areas of town. The pastor said "Doctrine is not where it is at".

I have several decisions to make in the near future. Should I take the Electrical Contractor's test and start a business? Doing Factory Electrical work is one thing, but starting a small business is something else. But who would hire someone like me? One fellow at club we belong to, said he would call me about a job driving three days a week, $23 an hour. No call at all, so far.

You are an example on overcoming obstacles for something you believe in. I can see your plight you are facing now. All I can say is that I'll pray about your situation.

— Michigan

RESPONSE: Thanks for sharing your story. I remember my father and other advisors telling me when I was young that the best thing one could do is get a good job working for a big company with a good retirement program. Companies like Ford and GM would be considered the best.

That was a time when company leaders often had dedication to make their product the best that they could, make their company strong and ultimately make the nation strong.

Today, advancing one's personal economic situation has replaced all of that. If leaders can reap huge profits by sending most of the jobs to aother country, they often do. If they can reap temporary profits by decreasing quality, or selling off the assests of the company and leasing them back, they often do. If they know their company is about to fail, they can make a secret deal with a friend to "short sell" their own company's stock, and make a profit from its demise. (Yes, that is "insider trading", but if the S.E.C. never finds out about the secret deal, they cannot prosecute it.)

Finally, corrupt leaders can vote themselves a big bonus, retire, and let the next leader figure it out. Not all executives are like this, but there does seem to be more and more of them.

The reality is that people who worked for a big company all of their lives, saving a generous retirement, may find their company unable to pay what they promised, their personally managed funds lost to market crashes, and government social security insolvent. I saw an article just today stating that the estimates for viability of social security and medicare have to be shortened by several years because so many unemployed or underemployed people are now paying much less into them.

I realize that PABC may play a role in helping poor people who have lost their job and resources. One can certainly live much cheaper by pooling resources in the community. There would be a lot of work for them, as well as serving as mentors for young people. I have tried to encourage people who still have resources left to come to PABC now and help get it ready. But most people do not get interested in coming until all of their resources are gone.

A friend who runs another ministry, and who has considered starting a community there with it, said that most Americans do not want to live in a community until they are forced to—but it would sure be helpful if we could get some practice learning to make communities work before the economy forces us into them.

As more people lose jobs and the pension, unemployment and welfare systems are unable to pay what they used to pay, I think the federal government will set up camps that the homeless, penniless people can go to. The camps will provide minimal housing, food, clothing, supplies and medical services. People will be assigned work if it is available, but it probably will not be paid. The

camps will not be called prisons, but it will not be easy to get out of them. There is evidence that these camps are already being built, but that is a subject for another article.

— NSE

Prayer Is the Difference

LETTER: July 23, 2008

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Greetings and loving regards to you and your beloved family and the brethren with you. Thank you for sharing with us all there is to know about PABC project since its inception and its yet quite uncertain future. Some individuals having to do with the project have also presented their side of the matter.

It used to be that when I find myself presented with a set of conflicting circumstances, I would readily get to work in analyzing the pros and cons, would weigh the two sides presented with the end in view of finding which side is at fault, etc etc, and would make my own conclusions, observations, and of course, finding myself ending up exhausted emotionally, mentally, physically.

More often than not, in such cases, one can only say, as you said so yourself, "This writer is content to accept God's ultimate judgment..."

But being presently in an ongoing difficult and most trying time in my life, which has been going on for three or so years (affecting self, family, and the small body of believers with us), I have learned to fully appreciate the marvelous change in my approach to handling or looking into the who, what, why, and the wherefores of things.

This has been greatly brought about by what God has called my attention to in His Word in 1Thessalonians 5:16-18:

> Rejoice always, Pray without ceasing, In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

For the first time in my long number of years in God's church (thankfully, without discontinuity), it is only of late that I have been moved by God to focus on this most enlightening scripture and together with Isaiah 26:3, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in You."

I am amazed to find myself making gains over discouragement and depression which could at times become so overwhelmingly suffocating.

But I am not, here and now, to talk about what my family and I and the brethren with us have gone through and are going through even at this time of writing. There will be a time for that, I'm sure.

For now, I feel I owe such a one as you and your exceptional wife and children something God has inspired me to share if only to help us realize some things that could be easily overlooked when they are the very things to rejoice forever about, to pray for unceasingly, and to thank God forever.

For indeed I rejoice and thank God there is such a one as you, a servant of God so courageous and so zealous and enthusiastic in the service and love of God, and his fellow believers as to put his life, limb, and property and those of his beloved wife and dear dear children on the line. True, it may have been done imperfectly. But no matter, it has been done in great faith. And paraphrasing the words of Jesus Christ, I can say I have not personally seen or heard such great faith, no, not among God's people!

I can pray without ceasing to direct and guide you to the accomplishment of His will for PABC, not only, but also for yourself and for your family.

Proverbs 16:1,9, 33 and James 4:15 are a solid support for this ceaseless prayer. There are also occasions when reasoning with God upon His invitation (Isaiah 1:18) and making a wall and standing in the gap before God (Ezekiel 22:30) proved amazingly helpful as God even makes room for, no, invites and looks for.

And if it would help in any way in sharing with you what I have learned through the years from the troubles, persecutions, afflictions, tribulations in my own life, and from those of other people, though you may also have known and experienced them, I may just do so by way of a timely reminder:

- "He who commits himself to something worthwhile will always experience the hostility of those who stand for nothing." (God is our Fortress, remember?)
- "One can see beyond one's trouble to the good that may come out of it." (Surely the trial of our faith is more precious than gold)
- "Is there anyone who faces no trouble or adversity? (...this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man by which they may be exercised)
- "Both blessing and adversity are not forever."
- "The troubles, pains, tribulations, adversities make us realize our humanity, our failures, our inadequacies, our insufficiency to handle situations and thus make us acknowledge humbly our need for the LORD's help, His strength, His wisdom and guidance, healing, forgiveness and deliverance.
- "A true believer's trouble has to be regarded as that which the hand of a loving God allows to accomplish what may never be seen or realized in this lifetime. (This is where Isaiah 26:3 perfectly fits, and this is perfectly exemplified in the words of Jesus Christ "Yet not My will but Your will be done.")

How you have so far handled the complicated situations you are in has been truly commendable as it demonstrates the godly way to put an end to turmoil and chaos and brings about peace:

- Stopping "blame game" that only brings about anger, irritation, distress, etc, etc;
- Getting your relationship right with God;
- Willing and ready to hold out the olive branch.

Dr. Harold J. Sala, an author, counselor and Bible teacher, has a timely encouragement in his book, Today Can Be The Best Day of Your Life. he writes,

> Though God never promised to exempt His children from the ravages of bacterial infections, or bad decisions, or from the mistakes and failures of imperfect knowledge, He did promise to walk with us and to meet us at the point of our pain. (Hebrews 13:5,6) It is this that allows us to forgive ourselves, pick up the pieces of our lives, and go on."

Mr. Edwards, as prayer is the best way I know to help you at this time, I am moved to share with you an inspiring enlightenment about prayer from an old old book dated 1854, written by Margaret Maria Brewster, Work--Plenty To Do and How To Do It. It is in chapter 12, entitled "Praying Work," which the author intro-

duces with Isaiah 45:11 and John 15:7. And follows it with a prose by Trench,

"LORD, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make;
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take;
What parched grounds refreshed as with a shower!
We kneel and all around us seems to lower;
We rise and all—the distant and the near—
Stands forth, in sunny outline, brave and clear,
We kneel; how weak! We rise; how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong:
Or others, that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?"

The chapter continues,

Prayer is the life of all work. Without prayer, work would be as useless as the soot of armor without the living man within it—or, as the richly-carved casket from whence the gems had been stolen—or, as the scabbard from the sharpened steel.

Without prayer, 'everyday work' would be but a dull, round of uncongenial tasks. Without prayer, 'social work' would degenerate into worldliness on the one hand, or weariness of the flesh and spirit upon the other.

Without prayer, 'home work' would be but another form of self-entrenchment. Without prayer, 'warfare' weapons would dim with rust, and there would be a turning back in the day of battle—Psalm 58:9.

Without prayer, 'waiting work' would become sloth and self-indulgence; 'preparatory work' would turn into intellectual idolatry, and 'desultory work' would be aimless and spasmodic. Without prayer, there could be no 'praising work' or it would be but the diffusion of the natural heart, praising nature but not God, admiring beauty but not its Creator.

Without prayer, 'special work' would be nought but the 'splendid sins' of the self-righteous, and the self-justifying. Without prayer, the missionary in his hut beneath the banyans would be weak as other men. Without prayer, the Jew of Tarsus would have been a blind leader of the blind gentiles. Without prayer, the strengthening angel would not have appeared to the Agonized of Gethsemane.

Nor is prayer the medium only through which we receive spiritual blessings and consolations—an opening of the heavens, through which, like the captives of Kebar, we may see visions of God—nor is it only the salt which preserves from corruption—thus the throb of life in the living work; it is in itself work—the noblest, the highest, the most successful; for it moves God Himself to work; it commands His hand!

This wonderful work is not limited in its sphere; it is suited to all situations and all capacities. Many there are who cannot work what man calls work, but none there are who cannot pray. The lonely dweller among the mountains, with no neighbors save the eagles of the corrie, with no listeners save the winds of the heavens, can pray; and the dry bones of the far-off world may become a living army through his lonely prayers. The pale silent sufferer on the couch of pain can pray. And by her voiceless petitions may be hastened the outpouring of the Spirit, the coming of the Kingdom. Far away may we be from those whom we love better than life; Powerless may we be to guide them, to watch over them, to comfort them; but we can rouse up for them an untiring Watcher, an unchanging Lover, an unfailing Comforter—we can pray.

Agonizing may be our fears for precious souls hurrying on the broad road to destruction—our words fall unheeded, our anxieties are laughed to scorn, our presence is avoided. Can we do nothing? We can pray! We can call down upon them the mighty Spirit, the resistless Pleader; we can bring the Savior to them, though they will not go to the Savior.

There was once a little child who understood somewhat the nature of sincere prayer; he refused to pray one evening; his mother reproved him, but to no purpose--he would not pray; he was asked his reason, and weeping bitterly, 'My sparrow dee'd last night, and I couldna' say 'Thy will be done.'

Yes, it is hard to pray, but we make it harder. We come as subjects to a king, but we come not as children to a Father—we come as slaves to an Overseer, but we come not as brethren to an elder Brother. We are afraid of irreverence in prayer; or we think there is little need of telling God what He knows already; or we dread being selfish in our petitions, and so we do not come to particulars in prayer.

"We confess our sin in a general way. But we do not detail its sufferings, its temptations, and its aggravations. We pray for our friends, and we implore the Divine guidance upon our way but we do not specify times and seasons, circumstances, sorrows, idols, fears, names, cares, and reasons; And thus we have so few answers to prayer--so many heavy and unrelieved burdens often made up of trifles like rocks of microscopic shells.

Yes! it is hard to pray; but, blessed be God, we are not left to pray alone. There is One who will put within us the courage of sons, the confidence of daughters, One who is the Teacher of prayer, loving to teach, and loving the taught, and who is the Helper of our infirmities; One who ever liveth to present our petitions, that they may be answered for His own sake. Oh, then, Christian, pray and work, work and pray! Prayer is the beginning of work. Prayer is the end of work, Prayer is work itself."

With our continuing love and prayers, from the family and the brethren in the Church of God Sharing Village,

— Priscilla Cardona, Philippines

RESPONSE: Thank you for your long letter of encouragement! We do not normally publish letters with long quotes like this, but this teaching on prayer seemed particularly important now. Even Jesus, who never sinned, had the Spirit without measure, and worked great miracles, still continually arose early to pray..

—NSE

Youth Rally at Spring Vale Academy

by Debbie Boyles, SVA Public Relations

Eighty attendees from four Michigan churches converged at Spring Vale Academy for the annual Youth Rally on November 22, 2008. At the first Sabbath service, they enjoyed a sermon by Andrew Fernandez on "The Best of the Bible." Fernandez' fresh and honest preaching style distinctively caught the attention of his listeners. The morning concluded with the baptism of Christian Perry of Richardson, Texas.

The afternoon service featured the energetic Paul Coulson, who compared and contrasted comic book superheroes-his favorite is Captain America-and heroes of the Bible. The "undiscovered" Paul Coulson is one of the most enthusiastic communicators to youth in our time. Coulson kept his audience in rapt attention while he delivered a message that was both exciting and challenging.

The Spring Vale Academy drama class presented four skits during the afternoon service. The evening concluded with a talent show, where the house was brought down by Christian Perry and Abel Molinar's rendition of The Cheeseburger Song, and a pizza-movie night in the rec center.

The youth rally was planned by Pastor Tim Hinds and FYC officers: Kelen Caswell, Courtney Coulson, James Edwards, Abigail Nienhuis, and Shelsie Pollock, the theme was "Best of the Bible: Heroes of the Faith."

The pictures at right give a little flavor of what it would have been like to be at this event. You can contact me with questions at:

dboyles@springvale.us
989-725-2391
Web: www.springvale.us 📖

Sabbatarians Not Immune

Most Sabbatarians are very diligent to teach their children the ways of the Bible, as Proverbs 22:6 instructs. But there are many **other** Bible principles that affect young people's development. They need to see good examples, and learn to make good decisions themselves. This writer has witnessed many success stories among the children of Sabbatarians, but also heard parents say things like this:

- My children always attended our services as teens, even though they were not excited by them. But when they went to college, they just quit attending. When I hinted that I would only continue to support church-going children, they made it clear that they would rather be completely on their own than let me control that part of their life. I was not ready to give up my relationship with them.
- My son attends services with us but prefers his high-school friends to his church friends. Some of them are involved in smoking, drinking, sex, and drugs. My son feels that they are kind and caring people, though, and has begun to follow in their ways.
- My daughter believes in the Bible and actively participates in our services. However, she has a boyfriend whom she is serious about marrying, but who has very little Bible background. She tells me that she cannot marry someone who believes like us because she does not know **anyone** who believes like us whom she would consider marrying. I cannot refute her.
- I knew my son did not like our church service, but was shocked when he said he was done attending and that if I tried to make him go, he would simply move in with a friend. I was surprised to find that the local government in my state will do nothing to help me keep my 17-year old at home.
- My daughter is good at sports, music, drama, and other school activities that take place on the Sabbath. She feels that developing her talents while she is young is preparing her for a life of service to God, and that participating in these activities on the Sabbath is neither "working" nor "doing [her] own pleasure" (Is 58:13).
- I thought I had a candid relationship with my daughter. Even though I didn't agree with everything she did, I thought she had a reasonable balance between her church friends and other friends. Now she's pregnant. She has stopped going to church because she says the people there judge her, but her other friends accept her.
- My teen-agers are good kids, but our church, the Bible and God all seem irrelevant to their world. They've heard many prophetic sermons that have failed, and seen many church leaders who don't practice what they preach. I don't know what to do to help them.

Bringing up children in a moral environment is very critical. God was so serious about this in the Old Testament that He had the civil government put people to death for murder, blasphemy, witchcraft, adultery, homosexuality, deliberate Sabbath-breaking, etc. This greatly encouraged everyone to do what was right:

> Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; **so you shall put away the evil from among you**, and all Israel shall hear and fear (Deut 21:21).

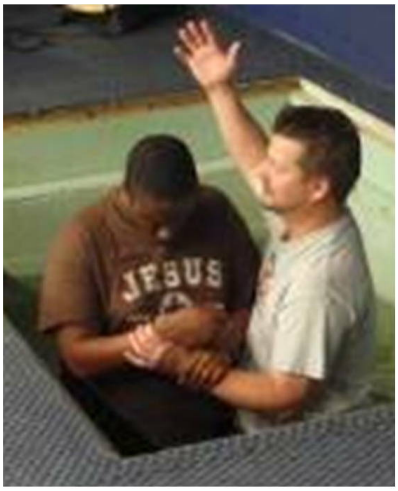
Today, our nations have not promised to obey the Old Testament laws, so neither man nor God enforces them. Instead, there is continual bombardment to do what is wrong, more so in high schools and colleges. We cannot purge the sin out of the world. But we can place our children in an environment (like Spring Vale Academy) where they see godliness and biblical standards succeed. After growing strong there, they are much more ready to take on the world. —NSE

...As Seen in Pictures

Coach Paul Coulson preaching on "Super Heroes of the Bible"

Andrew Fernandez preaching on "The Best of the Bible"

Stefanie Kendrick & Sarah Noble lead worship with SVA musicians



Pastor Tim Hinds baptizing Christian Perry.

Kelen Caswell, senior, FYC president and master of ceremonies

Drama skit with Isaac Molinar, Azalie Belnavis, Blake Whisman, Tabitha Weekes, and Estela Ortiz

Skits play in important of SVA life. Verteran drama teacher Kendra Nobel has helped students through a great variety of Christian drama, involving them in important Bible lessons. Moreover, the other students pay attention to what their friends are doing.

Talent Show skit: Justin Shapitka, Cory Caswell (dead at the moment), James Edwards

Abel Molinar and Christian Perry bring down the house with the "Cheeseburger Song"

Jacob Betancourt and Jaime Rodriguez Karate demonstration

cancer in his spine, I asked if the plan would include his right hip. The doctor decided to actually look at the 3D bone scan results and discovered that his leg bone was completely broken right below the hip joint! Scar tissue indicated it was not a new break. It had broken when he stopped walking, but he had been standing on that broken leg for 2 months! I will not attempt to cover the rest of the various diagnoses, mis-diagnoses, treatments and mis-treatments that occurred along the way.

Managing Complex Illness

Trying to process all of the information about treatments available from doctors and alternative medicine is a massive job that cannot be done to perfection.

For a complex illness such as cancer, various mainstream medical establishments have many different approaches, from very good to very bad. There are even more alternative herbal, dietary and other natural approaches, again from very good to very bad. One can find testimonies from people who recovered by using every one of the treatments. One can also find someone who died using each treatment. The exact chance of success of any particular treatment is often very difficult to establish. Even if those chances were known, not everyone responds the same way to the same treatment. The best health practitioner with the best treatment for a given disease still does not ensure success.

I quickly realized that my parents were likely to die before I could possibly feel confident of what was the best treatment for them. And then, would they accept my recommendation over their own opinion, or the opinion of other relatives?

How a family handles a life-threatening illness, such as cancer, is a test of how a family can work together. A person's life is on the line, and there is no simple way to guarantee success. **Just as the struggles of raising children have the purpose of preparing a child for adult life, so the struggles of a life-threatening illness have the purpose of preparing a person for the Kingdom of God.**

Simply turning over all decision-making to a doctor or hospital is to me, idolatry. We should not let another man stand in the place of God. While everyone should pray for healing and follow the Biblical instructions to request healing (Jms 5:14-16), there is no biblical teaching against physical procedures to help a person recover (2Ki 20:7; Luke 10:34; 1Tim 5:23). We should accept tests and treatments that we believe will do more good than harm—just like we put a band-aid on a cut or eat citrus fruits when we have a cold.

The key is to focus on what God is doing in a person's life—as well as focusing on the treatment. Do they need to make peace with someone? Do they need to finally overcome a sin? Are there messes in their lives that need to be cleaned up?

By early January, it became clear to my father that none of the health care professionals he was dealing with felt that he would recover—they were only talking about easing some pain and delaying some inevitable events. Hugh decided that he was done with medicines and treatments, and simply wanted to go home. He blessed his children and grandchildren and prepared himself to peacefully meet his maker. As Solomon said, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth" (Eccl 7:1).

Hugh Edwards' Obituary

Hugh Edwards peacefully died Thursday, Feb. 19, 2009, in his Lincoln, Ark. home at age 86. He was born June 27, 1922, in Brewton, Alabama, and grew up in Montgomery. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, then obtained a degree in electrical engineering from Auburn University. He continued with postgraduate studies at Princeton University, then he worked for the Medical Systems division of General Electric Co. from 1950 to 1974. He worked as Biomedical Equipment Maintenance Manager at Washington Regional Medical Center in Fayetteville from 1975 to 1987.

Hugh was survived by his wife of nearly 59 years, Rosemary (Fochek) Edwards; three sons, Douglas (and Ruth), Russell (and Diane) and Norman (and Marleen), and four grandsons, Joel (and Erica), Josh, Jesse and James Edwards. He was the youngest of 9 siblings, all of whom preceded him in death.

Hugh was an honest and hard-working man who was faithful to his family. Ever since I can remember, he was either at his job, or at home with his wife and children, frequently including them in the garden or some other project he was working on. He was a "do it yourself" man. If he did not already know how to do something, he would be reading a book and then buying the tools to get the job done. His tools and equipment were well organized, and if something broke, he would usually fix it. I can see that I acquired many of these traits—even more than I realized at first.

My Mother's Influence

During the first 40 years of my life, I certainly would have said that my father had much more influence on me than my mother. But since that time, I have come to realize that it was indeed my mother who was probably most responsible for my success in life. I was glad that I was able to express this to her at that time, when her mind was still functioning. My mother was always ready to listen to my creative, unconventional ideas, to help me in sorting out the good ideas from the bad and to encourage me to bring the good ideas into reality. Not all parents can bring themselves to encourage their children to do greater things than the parents did—but that is clearly a Godly method of parenting (John 14:20). It was my mother who gave me the confidence to try and accomplish things that nobody had done yet.

My mother was also greatly responsible for the peaceful family life that we had. While my father

was calm and considerate of his family, he generally wanted to make the final decision on nearly everything. My mother nearly always went along with his way to keep the peace. And we had peace; I can remember only a couple of times in 18 years when they had a loud argument—and it was short. I suppose one could say that my mother sacrificed her own desires for peace with her husband and the good of the family. This was a wonderful Christian example.

My mother was also a source of inspiration for me to marry and raise children. Marriage and child-rearing cannot—or at least should not—be run like engineering projects. Marriages and families cannot be precisely measured and calculated beforehand, and made to perform to specifications. They are too complex and all of the relevant factors are rarely understood when they are over, let alone beforehand. Whenever one marries or conceives a child, they are facing huge unpredictable events that must be dealt with as they occur. One has to make one's best assessment of the known facts, and then just do it. Faith in God is for more valuable than the best-known figures and formulas. My mother could operate in this realm.

When I was a teen, I can remember my mother telling others that she had prayed that one or more of her children would go into the ministry. I do not remember my father ever commenting on this one way or another, but I distinctly remember her wanting to dedicate her children to God. When I heard it, I thought of our black-robed minister and said to myself, "I don't want to be like that".

It was not until many years later that I studied the Bible to understand that a "minister" is a "servant", one who helps others in physical and spiritual ways—not a person who has been declared to have an elevated spiritual status by a human church organization. My mother agreed. For the last 14 years, I have been involved in humble, "servant" type of ministries: the Servants' News publication and the Port Austin Bible Campus. Even as I reflect now, I realize that most of my family has been opposed to these ministries from lesser to greater degrees, but my mother was always encouraging.

I would like to publicly thank my mother for all that she did for me—and to encourage other mothers-to-be to learn from her example.

Rosemary Edwards' Obituary

Rosemary Fochek Edwards died peacefully in her Lincoln, Arkansas home, Friday, March 6, 2009, 3 days before her 88th birthday, just 15 days after her husband Hugh passed away. Rosemary was born and reared in Omaha, NE. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in social studies at Grinnell College in Iowa, then took a job in Princeton, NJ, where she met Hugh on a tennis double-date. They married on May 27, 1950. (See Hugh's obituary for children & grandchildren.) After her first child was born, Rosemary worked at home, taking care of her children and husband.

Important PABC News

There are now six people who live at PABC: Norm, his wife, Bill Buckman and William Swenson, all who have been here for several years. Since last fall, Richard and Karen Heath have been here full time, helping with maintenance, kitchen work and other aspects.

We hope to soon finish paying off the winter utility bills, and generate additional money for improvements via eBay sales. **We would be happy to accept one or two young people who would like to live here and learn to work hard selling on eBay.** We would also be happy to receive offerings of things you are not using, that are mailable and saleable.

The results from the back page survey from the Sept/Oct 2008 *Servants' News* were encouraging: The readers asked us to:

- **50%** Continue sending *SN,* continue with PABC (6% offered to help in some way).
- **5%** Continue sending SN, discontinue PABC.
- **5%** Continue sending *SN*, not sure about PABC.
- **32%** Continue sending *SN*, said nothing about PABC.
- **8%** Discontinue sending *SN.*

Many people called us by phone or send e-mail instead of returning their response page. However, there were several hundred people we did not hear from at all, so we removed them from the mailing list.

The local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous now meets in one of our PABC rooms. Chip Drake, one of its members, had alcohol and narcotics addictions in his younger days, but has spent the last 20 years clean and helping others to recover. He has opened up his home as a half-way house for recovering addicts, funded by his own money and the addicts' meager incomes. Tony Loewe, the Port Austin mayor, was also an addict many year ago, and has spent much time helping individual addicts, as well as serving on government boards that allocate recovery funds. Most CoG groups are more interested in "teaching truth" than dedicating their lives to helping "sinners", but Jesus said:

> "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Luke 7:47).

Mr. Drake and Mr. Loewe believe they could obtain government funding and enough dedicated people to operate an addiction recovery facility on the PABC property. While both of these men are dedicated Christians, they agree that the program would have to be outwardly secular to obtain government funding. Also, we all agreed that it would not be good to mix recovering addicts and college-age young people.

We still plan to educate/mentor Sabbatarian young people here. We continue to look for more similarly dedicated Sabbath keepers. Perhaps the work will actually be done by our young people, the **next generation**. More on this next time. 🕮

"Civil Government" continued from p. 1

by either all or some (the ruling class) of the people living in a particular territory produce and enforce laws and statutes for the people in that territory.

Civil government is in contrast to the Church established in the New Testament, which was instructed to practice and teach the truth in any society, but not to enforce its practices on others. After all, individual salvation is a matter of the heart, not something that can be forced upon an individual. The Bible instruction is for Christians to pray for a civil government that will allow them to seek godliness in peace:

> Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this*is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1Tim 2:1-3).

Sometimes civil governments do exactly that. But there are also times when civil governments greatly persecute Christians. Then on the other hand, there are certain times when various church denominations have greatly influenced civil governments or even become the civil government. And strange as it may seem, there are times when one Christian denomination has used a civil government to persecute and kill other Christian denominations.

In all of this mess, we need to know what the Bible says about civil governments. The Old Testament gives a lot of information about how to operate a civil government, and the New Testament tells us how to deal with things of the Spirit. So how should Christians deal with civil governments today? When do we fight them, when do we join them, and when do we just try to leave them alone?

In the Beginning...

The first time the word for "govern" appears in the Bible is here:

> God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars (Gen 1:16, NIV).

This gives us a clear idea of what God had in mind for government: providing a stable, useful service. The sun and the moon give us their light in an orderly manner. They do not take anything from us to fulfill their own agenda.

In the Beginning, God did not give mankind any instructions for a civil Government. He gave mankind authority over the creation, but not over other men:

> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen 1:28).

When Cain killed Abel, there was no indication Adam, Cain or anybody else had any concept that he had violated a law or that he was to be punished for it. Cain appears concerned that someone else would take it upon themselves to simply kill him in vengeance. God Himself gave Cain a punishment.

> "So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." 13 And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! 14 "Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me." 15 And the LORD said to him, "Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him 16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. 17 And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son — Enoch (Gen 4:11-17).

This is the first time that a city is mentioned in Scripture. The Hebrew word for city used here refers to a physical place. While most cities have some kind of government, the Bible says nothing about how the "City of Enoch" was governed. Since Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord", it seems unlikely that the government or laws used there would be from the Eternal.

Later on in the same chapter, Lamech killed someone who attacked him and he declared that if anyone killed him he should be avenged seventy-seven fold (Gen 4:23-24). There appears to be no law that anyone recognizes, but more of a make-it-up-as you go approach. When God finally condemned the pre-flood world, He did not do it because they rejected His laws, but because He could see the intent of their hearts—which was evil:

> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually Gen 6:5).

There is no evidence that God ever punished their sins individually according to a set of laws. He may have hoped that they would have seen suffering brought about by their own evil deeds. But as nearly all Bible readers know, God then destroyed all of mankind by a flood, except for eight people who were on the ark

(Gen 6-8, 1Pet 3:20). After Noah and his sons left the ark, God added some law regarding murder that differed from His previous methods used with Cain:

> "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is,* its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning;* from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man (Gen 9:4-6)

The Eternal says that **He** will require a reckoning from animals, men and "men's brothers" that kill other men, but also states "by man his blood shall be shed." The means whereby man was to seek out and punish the murderers is not spelled out. There is no provision for courts or standards of evidence, such as how many witnesses, to determine that someone is or is not guilty of murder. Whether God gave them more detail on this matter, expected them to develop a court system themselves, or intended to remain involved in each case is unclear.

Just a few verses later in the chapter Ham or Canaan did some evil thing, and Noah pronounced a curse upon him (Gen 9:21-27). Again, there is no evidence of any law or punishment according to law.

Civil Government Starts:

Not too long after the flood, Ham's son, Cush, and grandson, Nimrod, begin the first civil government mentioned in the Bible. This is the first place that the word "kingdom" is used in the Bible. The Hebrew word (Strong's #4467) definitely means a place where there is a king, human rulership. It is not just a territory.

> Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." The first centers of his **kingdom** were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. {That is, Babylonia} (Gen 10:8-10, NIV).

Nimrod attempted to make this a single unified kingdom that would unify the people of the earth:

> Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.... Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:1,4, NIV)

God did not want a world-ruling kingdom at that time and His response was to confuse the languages of the people and to eliminate this kingdom of Babel:

> That is why it was called Babel {That is, Babylon; Babel sounds like the Hebrew for confused.}–because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth (Gen 11:9, NIV).

The name "tower of Babel" is well known, but the Hebrew here is the word for "Babylon" and would be better translated as such. God stopped this Government by confusing the speech of people and scattering them over the whole earth. Today, with the existence of electronic communications coupled with simultaneous language translation, it is again possible for the entire world to communicate. Revelation 18 shows the final end of a future world-ruling civil government of Babylon, that makes its leaders wealthy, while oppressing those who serve God. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Even with the initial dispersion of people at Babylon, kings and kingdoms began to show up in many places (Gen 14:1-2; 20:2,9). God promises Abraham that his descendants will become a great nation (Gen 12:2), but also warns that his descendants will serve as slaves to another nation (Gen 15:3-4). God promises Abraham and Sarah that kings will descend from them (Gen 17:6,16) and that Ishmael will father 12 princes (Gen 17:20).

Did God give Abraham any rules or laws whereby he should rule? Did he give him an advance version of the law of Moses?

God frequently commended Abraham for obeying His voice and for righteousness in Genesis chapters 12 through 25. He never cites any particular laws or rules that he obeyed. Abraham is even praised for being willing to sacrifice his own son as a burnt offering, something later condemned in the "law of Moses" (Deut 18:10, 12:31). It is not until after Abraham is dead that the scripture records that he obeyed God's statutes and laws:

> "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (Gen 26:5).

The book of Job also provides insight. We can tell it was written several generations after Abraham, because Job's friends and some of the people who attacked Job's children are in Abraham's genealogy. Job is referred to as a man who is "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1,8; 2:3). Even after disaster fell upon him, it says "In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong" (Job 1:22). Yet the book of Job never refers to any written law that Job obeys. Job 22:21-22 states:

> Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; Thereby good will come to you. Receive, please, **instruction** from His mouth, And lay up His words in your heart.

The word for "instruction" here is "torah", the word translat-

ed "law" many other places in the scriptures. However, this is instruction or law direction from the "mouth of God", and may well be in a figurative sense. There is nothing here, nor anywhere else in the book of Job that refers to a written law that he obeyed. Job gave offerings to God himself (Job 1:5), which certainly would not fit the Levitical law.

In summary, prior to the time of Moses, the Bible gives very little information about civil governments and virtually no law or instruction about how to operate one.

Old Testament Civil Government

In the Old Testament, we can read a massive amount of information about how to operate a civil government. There is way too much to expound in this short article. While this government can be classified a theocracy, because it did enforce the worship of the True God (Lev 20:2,27; 24:16; Num 25:5; Deut 13; 18:20), the vast majority of its laws and punishments are simply the wisest way for any government to deal with people. God says that if the nation carried out His laws, that other nations would see them and recognize the wisdom in them:

> "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according *to them* in the land which you go to possess. 6 Therefore be careful to observe *them;* for this *is* your wisdom and your understanding **in the sight of the peoples** who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.' 7 For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation *is there* that **has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law** which I set before you this day? 9 Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren (Deut 4:5-9).

As one example, in man's law, governments see the plight of the poor and pass laws to tax the labor that working people have already accomplished and give some of it to the poor. Other people see the poor getting money for doing nothing and they find out what they need to do to qualify to get free money the same way. The number of "poor" goes up. God teaches that the poor should be fed by eating from other's fields without taking anything home, or by going into other's fields and gleaning after the harvesters, which they can take home (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 23:24-25; 24:19-21). This provides food for the poor, but it is more work to obtain than if they were harvesting from their own land. The working people do not lose their work, only the least profitable part of their harvest. This teaches the disadvantage of being poor and encourages poor people to use their resources wisely. The people who are supporting themselves, but who are too poor to own a field do not get taxed at all. These laws are obviously wise laws, whether people believe in the God of the Bible or not.

While God promises to be the leader of the nation that follows him, the Bible teaches a separation of functions between civil government and the priesthood (Gen 49:10; Deut 18:1), with the exception that the priesthood was involved in the highest levels of the judicial system. In general, the Bible teaches local leaders appointed by the people, as opposed to a top-down ecclesiastical hierarchy. Both of these principles can be used by secular governments.

> "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you" (Deut 16:18-20).

In case there is any uncertainty as to who the "you" is that was to appoint the judges and the officers, only two verses prior we find "you" being people who were to bring offerings to the Lord, in proportion to how they have been blessed. Everyone knows it is the working people who are to bring offerings—and they are the ones who are to appoint judges—the judicial system, and officers—the executive branch.

It is interesting that the judges and officers were to be "in your gates", which refers to the gates of a city—local government, and "according to your tribes", which we could compare to state or regional government. This should be the basis of government. Finally, there was a small place for national government:

> "If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge *there* in those days, and inquire *of them;* they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment (Deut 17:8-9).

It is most interesting that the U.S.A. has local, state and national governments, as well as local courts, state courts and national courts. These correspond to the "gates", "tribes" and "the place which the Lord your God chooses"—which became Jerusalem, the capital of the nation. Our founding

fathers were Bible readers and they patterned this and many other laws on bible principles.

Old Testament Laws Not Being Enforced Today

However, it is very important to realize that **the civil laws of the Bible are not in force today—neither for Jews nor Christians.** Now and then, some zealous Christian will try to carry out the Biblical death penalty on someone for homosexuality (Lev 20:13) or witchcraft (Lev 20:27). Orthodox Jews have been known to stone people who drive cars in their neighborhoods on the Sabbath (Ex 31:14). (For some reason, the same people seem to be a bit slower to want to put someone to death for adultery (Lev 20:10) or cursing their parents (Lev 20:9).) But the reality is that our modern day nations have not adopted these laws as their own laws—we have not promised to obey them as ancient Israel did saying, **"Everything the Lord has said we will do"** (Ex 19:8; 24:3,7; Deut 26:17-19; Josh 1:16; Neh 10:29). It is not just or godly to carry out the punishments of these Biblical laws upon people who have not agreed to these laws.

If the people of a nation would agree to make these Bible laws the laws of their nation, if they would execute justice speedily, people would largely do good (Eccl 8:11). Carrying out the death penalty would be a rare thing, because people would be diligent to avoid anything worthy of death. The nation would enjoy the blessings of living by the best civil government laws—given by the Creator himself.

It is important to realize that God gave these laws to us for our civil governments to carry out. **God never promised to enforce these laws and indeed reality shows that He does not!** He allows adulterers and murderers to live to a ripe old age; He does not immediately put them to death. Government and business leaders, as well as common thieves steal millions from people; God does not force them to restore double or four-fold according to the scriptures (Ex 22:1-4). Does God simply ignore this sin? **No!** God sees the sin but promises to deal with it in a longer-term way. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 explain how God will greatly bless those who obey Him, but how he will send disease, famine, infertility, military defeat and eventually captivity upon those who do not obey Him. The process can take generations. We can look through history and see that God has indeed done this—He has eventually brought destruction upon nations for their sin.

In today's world of nearly endless complexity, it is easy to think that the rather simple system of primarily local government in the Old Testament could not work. But we have a good example of how it did work in the book of Ruth. Boaz and another relative were deciding who was going to marry Ruth, and thereby receive the land that she had inherited. Today, this kind of thing would be handled by probate courts and family courts—and might take weeks or months and might involve lawyers and thousands of dollars.

> Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down. 3 Then he said to the close relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which *belonged* to our brother Elimelech. 4 "And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it,* redeem *it;* but if you will not redeem *it, then* tell me, that I may know; for *there is* no one but you to redeem *it,* and I *am* next after you.' " And he said, "I will redeem *it."* 5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy *it* from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance." 6 And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem *it."* 7 Now this *was the custom* in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave *it* to the other, and this *was* a confirmation in Israel. 8 Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, "Buy *it* for yourself." So he took off his sandal (Ruth 4:1-8).

We can see a number of advantages to what happened here. The transaction was done before the elders that were available in the gate. If some one person were away somewhere, the process could still go on. The purpose was to provide a group of reliable witnesses that could testify to what happened if there was a disagreement in the future. Apparently, they did not generate any paperwork. By taking off one shoe and giving it to the other man, they both had a permanent record of the transaction that they could keep—they would each have half of a matching pair of shoes. Is it possible for something to go wrong with this system if someone were to try to cheat? Yes. They could claim that the deal was other than it was, or burn the shoe and claim the transaction never happened. But complex systems, such as we have today, do not stop attempts to cheat either. One simply ends up with complex cheating: forged documents, bribed officials, altered surveys, etc.

Please think about this very important principle of government: When we find someone cheating or misusing government, we have a tendency to want to pass a law that would have prevented **this particular instance** of cheating. This is often done

without any thought to what the next criminal will do to cheat with the new law. In most instances, more laws simply create a greater burden of compliance on law-abiding citizens, but simply alter the means whereby cheaters will cheat. **The secret to good government is to punish those caught doing evil, <u>not</u> to try to pass laws that prevent anyone from doing evil** (Eccl 8:11, again). If government is given too much power to "regulate" citizens, criminals simply join the government and do their dirty work there.

People Want a King

The government that God gave ancient Israel was a great success after they entered the promised land. This was one of the few times on earth where there was a human government that provided freedom, prosperity, peace and safety in a righteous environment. Everyone owned their own land, free and clear, from the division by lot (Josh 21). They all served God:

> Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel (Josh 24:31).

After this, during the time of the book of Judges, the people would go into sin, God would send famine or their enemies against them, they would repent, and God would send someone to deliver them. Rather than learn the lesson and remain individually diligent to follow God and retain His protection continually, the people thought that they needed an army to defend themselves—just like most people today think we need armed forces and/or "Homeland Security". (Sadly, many Christians, today, may not have much more faith than ancient Israel.) To those who obey, God promises:

> Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you (Lev 26:8).

Nevertheless, God knew that people would eventually want a king and the military methods that they saw other nations use. He gave them these laws showing them the best way to choose a king:

> "When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me **like all the nations that *are* around me**,' 15 you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you **may not set a foreigner over you**, who *is* not your brother. 16 But he shall **not multiply horses** [military power] for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' 17 **Neither shall he multiply wives** for himself, lest his heart turn away; **nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold** for himself. 18 Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that **he shall write for himself a copy of this law** in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. 19 And it shall be with him, **and he shall read it all the days of his life**, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, 20 that **his heart may not be lifted above his brethren**, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel (Deut 17:14-20).

Sadly, only a few kings of ancient Israel ever made an effort to follow those laws. Even though the laws of our nations are not the laws of the Bible, most leaders today do not even try to obey the portion of these biblical laws for kings that they could personally follow. Nor do the people of most nations seek a leader who promises to obey them. God clearly blames the **people** for **desiring** a king, it was not a matter of a king taking over. (Even when David, whom God chose, became King, it was the elders who made him King (2Sam 5:3). The story of how ancient Israel made the transition from a primarily local secular government to a centralized monarchy is found here and is well worth reading:

> Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5 and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." 6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; **for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.** 8 According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day — with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods — so they are doing to you also. 9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them." 10 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. 11 And he said, "**This will be the behavior of the king** who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots. 12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, *will set some* to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and *some* to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters *to be* perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. 15 He will

take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. 17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18 And **you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day**." 19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles" (1Sam 8:4-20).

Those who trust God should not desire a king—a powerful human central government—to be over them. These verses show that those who want a King will not be heard by God when that King later oppresses the people. Servants of God should always know and realize that God never taught men to form strong central governments—even though that is what most people want.

Even so, there is a more important Bible principle we must understand: God is not developing systems of government now; he is developing people! God does not refuse to work with a people simply because they reject the form of government that He taught. Indeed, God worked through King David and several of the other Kings of Judah who served Him. God is simply able to work and teach vital eternal lessons even when man has chosen what is not the best:

"Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen *and* whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you. 14 **If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God.** 15 However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers. 16 Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: 17 *Is* today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves." 18 So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. 19 And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; **for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves**." 20 Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, **but serve the LORD with all your heart.** 21 And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they *are* nothing. 22 For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. 23 Moreover, as for me, **far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.** 24 Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. 25 **But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king**" (1Sam 12:13-25).

God agreed to continue working with the nation even when they committed "the evil of asking a king for ourselves". Nevertheless, Samuel, a prophet with the Holy Spirit, said that he would continue to teach them the right way. This is a vital principle of how God apparently deals with most civil governments: He works with them in their error, but he and His people continue to declare "the good and the right way". Bible students today can teach the limited, primarily local, government of the Scriptures, even though they still work with the corrupt, non-biblical governments that rule our lands.

Conclusion of Part 1

The major Bible teaching about civil government before Moses is that God did not want the human world-government of Babylon. God gave Moses extensive information about civil government, which was to be largely local and consist of judges and officers appointed by the people. He said other nations would be impressed by His wise laws if Israel followed them. This government worked during the time of Joshua and the elders, but degenerated as the people disobeyed the Eternal during the time of the judges. The people demanded a King, and God told them that they could have one, but that they would suffer for it. Nevertheless, He still promised to work with the people and their king, and to teach them the right way through his prophets.

Part 2 will survey the important biblical examples where ancient Israel's Civil government worked very well, and when it was disastrous. It will show the great variety of ways in which God's servants worked with or escaped from these governments. Finally, it will include the New Testament teaching on Civil Government and the practical implications for Christians today 🕮

Feast of Tabernacles 2009

You are invited to the Feast of Tabernacles at Grizzly Jack's Grand Bear Resort, Utica, Illinois, October 3-10 (Saturdays), 2009. This site is near the junction of I-80 and I-39 (see "F" on map) and is only 1 hour 45 minutes from Chicago O'Hare airport. The site is sponsored by the same independent group that organized the tremendously successful Lake Geneva, Wisc. site last year, with about 180 in attendance, over 70 of which were in their teens and 20s (see article, page 10).

Grizzly Jacks' has a variety of accommodations on site, including the 1800 sq ft 2-bedroom, 2-bath villas with a full kitchen, pictured below. Also, there are inexpensive motels and campgrounds very close by. It has an indoor water park and numerous other entertainment facilities.

See **www.feast2009.org** for full information. If you don't use the Internet or have other questions, please contact Aaron Baker at 517-281-2073. Also, to make it easier to plan group meals, messages, and activities, we would appreciate either a call letting us know that you are coming or an email message to:

feast@feast2009.org —NSE

Small Port Austin Feast, Also

All are welcome to attend the Port Austin Feast according to the calendar you understand. On campus rooms are available on an offering basis. Please use info below to contact us at least a month in advance. Norman Edwards will be attending the Utica site with his family.

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