

WHO ARE WE?

Group Name: We have no official name--nor do we want one--however we provide the following: INTERDEPENDENT-INTERACTIVE, CHURCH OF GOD, SABBATH SERVICES, BIBLE STUDIES, AND OPEN FELLOWSHIP.

Address: 320 N. Griffin St. City: Bismarck State: ND Zip Code: 58501

Country: USA Phone: (701) 258-7172 FAX: (775) 239-2119

E-Mail: Darwin-Laura@Juno.com

Website: <http://darwinlauralee.150m.com>

Leadership Body: Christ the Head of God's Church, Colossians 1:18, Ephesians 5:23, and I Corinthians 11:3. Local contact persons are Darwin or Laura Lee.

Purpose: To provide Interdependent-Interactive, Church of God, Sabbath Services and Bible Studies to all of God's People, including those who are not welcome to visit or attend other groups due to having been suspended or disfellowshipped, as well as those who want a place to attend weekly, those who are just visiting our area, and anyone else who is interested in God's way of living. We also have open fellowship here, meaning that you are welcome to come visit with us during our open fellowship times even if you are not interested in attending our Sabbath Services or Bible Studies.

History: We held our first Bible Study here on June 30, 2000 and our first Sabbath Service was held on December 16, 2000.

Affiliation/Membership: Our Affiliation is with God our Father and His Son Jesus the Christ. Our membership includes *all* of God's people, no matter where they are.

Distinctive Doctrines: John 13:34-35

Use Sacred Names?: Since salvation is between God and each individual (Philippians 2:12), so the use of sacred names would be between each individual person and God.

Observe Holy Days?: We believe that God commands us to keep the Weekly Sabbath as well as Passover/Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day, however, we also believe there is much controversy out there in understanding if certain ones should or shouldn't be kept, how to keep them and when to keep them. So with this in mind, we will try to the best of our ability to accommodate these differences, believing and having faith that someday through God's Holy Spirit, we will all be brought into the same understanding on this subject. Until then let's follow John 13:34-35.

Evangelistic Efforts: We provide a service to God's People no matter where they are to the best of our ability. This service includes Interdependent-Interactive, Church of God, Sabbath Services, Bible Studies and Open Fellowship. We also welcome live speakers for interactive, and special music, on a volunteer only basis.

Periodicals: We have a newsletter, which we publish every 2 months.

Literature: We distribute tapes and literature for others and ourselves to the best of our ability.

Parent Group: The greater Church of God--The Ekklesia. Language: English

Other Language: None Country: USA

Name: Contact Persons are Darwin & Laura Lee Address: 320 N. Griffin St.

City: Bismarck State: North Dakota Zip Code: 58501

Phone: (701) 258-7172 E-Mail: Darwin-Laura@Juno.com

Directions To Meeting: 320 N. Griffin St., Bismarck, North Dakota, located at the corner of Rosser Avenue and Griffin Street, with plenty of side street parking.

Time of Meeting: Usually 1:00PM, but may vary.

SABBATH SERVICES--Every Saturday unless stated other wise on page 3. We generally do a phone hookup, video tape, or cassette tape, service with various speakers. If you have a video or audio tape you think we should hear, please send it.

We also welcome live speakers, and special music, by others on a volunteer basis.

Sabbath Schedule is as follows:

12:00 Noon--Open Fellowship
(Door Open, Come In)
1:00 PM----Sabbath Services
3:00 PM----Open Fellowship

BIBLE STUDIES--We have Bible Studies approximately every 6 weeks. We have a Pot Luck Meal before we start our Bible Studies, so please bring food if you would like to participate in the fellowship, which goes with a meal.

Bible Study Schedule is as follows:

6:30 PM----Open Fellowship
(Door Open, Come In)
7:00 PM----Pot Luck Meal
(Bring Food)
8:00 PM----Bible Study
9:00 PM----Open Fellowship

Bible Study Dates are as follows:

Friday, October 18, 2002
Friday, November 29, 2002
Friday, January 10, 2003

GUEST ROOM--If you are from out of town and are here to attend Sabbath Services or one of our Bible Studies, we do have a guest room. Please call ahead so we know when you will be arriving. (701) 258-7172 (Please Leave a message.)

LOCATION--Sabbath Services and Bible Studies are held at the home of Darwin & Laura Lee, located at 320 N. Griffin St., Bismarck, North Dakota. Please use the upper back door by the garage. Phone Number (701) 258-7172 (Please Leave a message.)

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE--The deadline for submitting articles and letters for possible inclusion in our January/February 2003 Newsletter is December 15, 2002. Thank You. Laura Lee (Editor)

E-MAIL & SNAIL MAIL

Prayer-Requests-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com Please use this E-mail address for prayer requests, prayer request updates, and prayer request inquires and information. All prayer requests go around the world via E-mail and are always printed on our Web Site and they are also available via Snail Mail on request. Thank you.

Newsletter-Only-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com Please use this E-mail address for anything which you want considered for inclusion in our newsletter such as articles, advertisements, letters to the editor or points of interest. If you do not want it printed, then do not send it to this E-mail address. The deadline for Issue #13--January/February 2003 is December 15, 2002. Thank you.

Answer-Me-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com Please, use this E-mail address only for those letters which you want an answer to. Send tape, literature and newsletter requests and unsubscribes to this E-mail address. If you do not want or need an answer to your E-mail, then do not send it to this E-mail address. Thank you.

Darwin-Laura@Juno.com Please only send things to this E-mail address if you only want us to read it and you do not need or want an answer to it. Also, if you want to unsubscribe and do not need a notice stating you have been taken off, this is the place. Thank you.

FAX--We now have fax 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our Fax number is: (775) 239-2119.

SNAIL MAIL--When you send a letter or information via snail mail, and you do not need an answer back or if you do not want it printed, please be sure to clearly put that information in your letter. Our snail mail address is Darwin & Laura Lee, PO Box 2333, Bismarck, ND 58502. Thank you.

WEB SITE ADDRESS--<http://darwinlauralee.150m.com>

AD SECTION--If you have an ad that you would like to have us print, please write it up and send it to: **Newsletter-Only-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com** We may not print all ads, but we will read them for consideration of inclusion in this newsletter and then will let you know one way or the other. Some ads will also be posted on our Web Site.

VIDEOS

We will be showing the following videos. These video showings as well as our regular Sabbath Services are all open to the general public, so please feel free to come join us at 320 North Griffin St. in Bismarck, North Dakota.

November 9 at 1:00PM--"Too Long in the Sun"--Did you know that activities labeled by the Bible as "abominations" are being practiced in traditional "Christian" churches? Are we being told the truth about the things we are encouraged to participate in?

Join Richard Rives, author of the book TOO LONG IN THE SUN along with Jim Gaylor and Jeff Welter, hosts of the Prime Time Christian Broadcasting television show, "Light of the Southwest." This thought provoking 2 hour television documentary will inform you of shocking truths which are not being proclaimed in the pulpits of most "churches" today.

Find out how, through the perversion of God's commandments, the "Love of the LORD" is being transferred to our "adversary."

"Sin is the transgression of the law." "The wages of sin is death." Our eternal life is at stake! This video will expose the false teachers and deceivers who attempt to persuade that the laws of God are now void and of no value. (Copied from the video case.)

December 14 at 1:00PM--"Noah's Ark"--Wyatt Archaeological Research presents a complete documentary of the discovery of Noah's Ark. 2 hours. (Copied from the video case.)

January 11 at 1:00PM--"The Search for the Real Mt. Sinai"--"What could possibly upstage the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls? Maybe the news that Mount Sinai has been found in Saudi Arabia by Robert Cornuke and Larry Williams." (Copied from the video case.) Afterwards we will also show--**"The Exodus Revealed--Search for the Red Sea Crossing"**--A journey that reveals physical evidence for the Exodus including: the remains of 3800 year old Hebrew settlements in Egypt's Nile Delta; Egyptian records of the Israelite's bondage under Pharaoh; the precise route they may have followed to freedom; their crossing site on shore of the Red Sea; and the location of Mr. Sinai. (Copied from the DVD case.)

--JOIN US--

FINANCIAL DISCLOSER

Even though, all of the things we do to try to help others, through our prayer line, this newsletter, local services, and many other things we do, to try to help others, is all given free of charge, the reality of the situation is, that all of these things do cost money. We want you our readership, to know, that we do not take any wages from the donations that we do receive. In the near future, we plan on including on our Web Site a Financial Discloser Page. On this page, we plan to list the things we generally order on a regular basis and the postage stamps we most often use. For those who are uncomfortable with sending cash donations, we do and will accept the products we use most often as well as the postage stamps we use most often. Please wait until we have our product list up before sending things like paper or envelopes, etc. as we don't want you to send us things that we cannot use. If you send cash donations, please make the check or money order out to either Darwin Lee or Laura Lee or both. It doesn't matter.

On this page, we also plan to list the donations that we do receive. Instead of listing a donation and a name of a person, we will assign each donator a number and post that number on there, next to the donation. This way everyone will always know when we have a need and when we don't.

Our more detailed Financial Discloser will start on January 1, 2003, although the page will be on the Web Site before that. We will also post an undetailed discloser for expenses and donations for the years 2001 and 2002 as we have those figures.

For those who do not have access to the Web, please let us know and we can send a Financial Discloser to you via Snail Mail. Anyone who needs a receipt for their donations for 2001 or 2002 or in the future please request it. Thank You Laura Lee

INFORMATION SECTION--This section is meant for various items which should be of interest to the general public. Again as a reminder, we are not in agreement with all things we print. If you have an item to be considered for inclusion in this section, please send it to: Newsletter-Only-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com

GRACE VS LAW

sent by Rusty Ames
Proctor, Texas

Martha Undergrace was hurrying from her shift as a volunteer at the homeless shelter kitchen. Since the weather was cold, they had served many more hungry people that morning, and she was late in leaving.

As she drove to her Bible Study class at church, Martha exceeded the 55 MPH speed limit. Soon she noticed red flashing lights in the rearview mirror and she realized she was being pulled over by a traffic officer.

Officer Johnny Law explained "Mrs. Undergrace, you were driving 70 MPH in a 55 MPH zone and that is against the law. The penalty for this offense is a fine of \$100." Martha had a sinking feeling upon receiving this news.

Then she was amazed at Officer Law's declaration, "Mrs. Undergrace, even though you are guilty of this offense, I am granting you mercy. For my own good pleasure, I will sacrifice and pay this \$100 fine for you out of my own budget. I will

also insure the offense does not appear on your driving record. Go and speed no more."

Martha was dumbfounded at Officer Law's charity, but she gladly accepted his offer.

In loving response to Johnny Law's grace, mercy and charity, what did Martha Undergrace do as she drove away to her Bible Study Class... (You complete the sentence)

❖ A. Martha Undergrace obeyed the law and drove 55 MPH.

OR

❖ B. Martha Undergrace assumed that the law was done away with, resumed her lawless behavior and always drove 70 MPH.

Of course, Martha Undergrace accepted the grace offer, but the speed limit remained 55 MPH. The law was not abolished. Her penalty for breaking the law was simply paid for by another.

Martha Undergrace could not take Officer Law's charity for granted. She was not above the law and free to exceed the limit placed by the law. She thankfully accepted the grace and in **LOVING RESPONSE** to Officer Law's sacrifice,

Martha Undergrace thereafter, always diligently and willfully obeyed the speed limits.

This is our response to the law vs.. grace issue. We have been freed from the penalty of our sin (death), but we are not free to abuse YHWH's sacrifice of His only begotten son, Yahshua, by living a lawless life. The law remains intact...our penalty has simply been paid for by the crucifixion of our savior, Yahshua.

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY A 'LAODICEAN'?

sent by Jeffrey Caldwell
Cupertino, California

Question: How would believers identify the Laodicean church? There is a WCG splinter group pointing the finger at all other groups and labeling them "Laodicean." I have always thought of Laodiceans as being an attitude prevalent in the end-time church as reflected in the thought, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of

nothing.” I believe this is self-sufficiency. J.T.G., Ovilla, TX

Answer:

Without a doubt, the “Laodicean attitude” is “alive and well” in the Church of God today, but it also existed in the early church. Proof of this is in the book of Revelation itself. Even the most radical of the “Philadelphia fundamentalists” accept the fact that the seven churches named and described in Revelation 2 and 3 literally existed when the apostle John received the visions that would make up this book. One major difference between them and me is that they accept as a matter of *doctrine* the view that these seven literal churches represent seven successive eras spanning the entire church age, from Pentecost to the Parousia. I firmly believe it is a mistake to put this view in the category of “doctrine” or “dogma.” At best, it is a *theory*; and, in my opinion, it lacks any real biblical or historical support;

You suggested doing a study addressing the question, “How would believers identify the Laodicean church?” I would prefer to revise the question somewhat. Perhaps something like this would be more in line with my preferences: “What are the characteristics of a ‘Laodicean’?” I prefer this question because *all* the characteristics described in Revelation 2 and 3 can probably be found in every church. In other words, each congregation probably has a few “Philadelphians” as well as a handful of “Laodiceans.” I wouldn’t want to label a whole congregation one way or the other.

I agree with your assessment: at least one of the problems with the church in Laodicea was its self-sufficiency. They boasted, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” but Christ said they didn’t know they were “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

The city of Laodicea was known for its wealth, its garment industry, and a medical community that produced a salve for certain conditions of the eye. Christ alludes to the city’s wealth and resources when He describes the spiritual condition of the church, and when He admonishes her members to zealously repent: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that

the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (verse 18).

Self-sufficiency of the sort that afflicted the church of Laodicea is rooted in *pride*. As long as the prideful spirit is allowed full expression, there can be no honest self-evaluation, no facing up to the truth about one’s own motives. Pride, if given full reign, leads a person to redefine himself completely. Serious sins become minor weaknesses. Minor accomplishments become grand achievements. Vices become virtues. Revisions like these are possible only when a person blinds himself to his own motives. Such is the fruit of pride.

Many erroneously assume that the problem with the church in Laodicea was nothing more than spiritual apathy. This is based on Christ’s condemning depiction of this church: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (verses 15-16).

The Laodiceans’ spiritual condition is compared with lukewarm water, which is not good for quenching thirst (as cold water is) or for soothing painful conditions (as hot water is). The terms “hot” and “cold” do not refer to spiritual fervor (“hot”) and apathy (“cold”), for then we would have Christ saying that He would rather see His people apathetic than mildly enthusiastic. “Lukewarm.” Then, does not refer to a spiritual condition midway between indifference and passionate; it refers to a deplorable condition wherein prideful arrogance is mistaken for righteousness.

While apathy most likely existed in Laodicea, the condition Christ condemns was far worse than a mere lack of spiritual zeal. The Laodiceans’ sin was the antithesis of the humility and spirit of obedience God wants to see in His people.

It’s not too difficult to spot a Laodicean – except when the Laodicean is oneself. Unfortunately, when a Laodicean glimpses his own arrogance, he is usually able to quickly redefine what he sees. “That’s not pride,” he says; “it’s *passion* – passion for the work of God! I guess that makes me a Philadelphian.”

Reprinted by permission from *The International News*, Vol. 23, No. 2, p. 5,

from the “Questions & Answers” column by Vance A. Stinson, published by the Church of God, International.

ARTICLES SECTION--We are always looking for good articles written by ordinary people, to consider for inclusion in this newsletter. Darwin and I do not always agree with every single thing that we print. Darwin and I also do not know everything. Like most people reading this newsletter, we are still learning. We do strive to bring to you Biblically Based Articles--The problem is that opinion and interpretation of scripture varies from person to person. So with that in mind let’s let “iron sharpen iron” Proverbs 27:17--Let’s learn from each other. Send articles to: Newsletter-Only-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com

**THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH
PART #6**
by Catholic Mirror 1893
Baltimore, Maryland

APPENDIX I

These articles are reprinted, and this leaflet is sent forth by the publishers, because it gives from an undeniable source and in no uncertain tone, the latest phase of the Sunday-observance controversy, which is now, and which indeed for some time has been, not only a national question with the leading nations, but also an international question. Not that we are glad to have it so; *we would that it were otherwise*. We would that Protestants everywhere were so thoroughly consistent in profession and practice that there could be no possible room for the relations between them and Rome ever to take the shape which they have now taken.

But the situation in this matter is now as it is herein set forth. There is no escaping this fact. It therefore becomes the duty of the International Religious Liberty Association to make known as

widely as possible the true phase of this great question as it now stands. Not because we are pleased to have it so, but because it is so, whatever we or anybody else would or would not be pleased to have.

It is true that we have been looking for years for this question to assume precisely the attitude which it has now assumed, and which is so plainly set forth in this leaflet. We have told the people repeatedly, and Protestants especially, and yet more especially have we told those who were advocating Sunday laws and the recognition and legal establishment of Sunday by the United States, that in the course that was being pursued they were playing directly into the hands of Rome, and that as certainly as they succeeded, they would inevitably be called upon by Rome, and Rome in possession of power too, to render to her an account as to why Sunday should be kept. This, we have told the people for years, would surely come. And now that it has come, it is only our duty to make it known as widely as it lies in our power to do.

It may be asked, Why did not Rome come out as boldly as this before? Why did she wait so long? It was not for her interest to do so before. When she should move, she desired to move with power, and power as yet she did not have. But in their strenuous efforts for the national, governmental recognition and establishment of Sunday, the Protestants of the United States were doing more for her than she could possibly do for herself in the way of getting governmental power into her hands. This she well knew, and therefore only waited. And now that the Protestants, in alliance with her, have accomplished the awful thing, she at once rises up in all her native arrogance and old-time spirit, and calls upon the Protestants to answer to her for their observance of Sunday. This, too, she does because she is secure in the power which the Protestants have so blindly placed in her hands. In other words, the power which the Protestants have thus put into her hands she will now use to their destruction. Is any other evidence needed to show that the *Catholic Mirror* (which means the Cardinal and the Catholic Church in America) has been waiting for this, than that furnished on page 21 of this leaflet? Please turn back and look at that page, and see that

quotation clipped from the New York *Herald* in 1874, and which is now brought forth thus. Does not this show plainly that that statement of the Methodist bishops, the *Mirror*, all these nineteen years, has been keeping for just such a time as this? And more than this, the Protestants will find more such things which have been so laid up, and which will yet be used in a way that will both surprise and confound them.

This at present is a controversy between the Catholic Church and Protestants. As such only do we reproduce these editorials of the CATHOLIC MIRROR. The points controverted are points which are claimed by Protestants as in their favor. The argument is made by the Catholic Church; the answer devolves upon those Protestants who observe Sunday, not upon us. We can truly say, "This is none of our funeral." If they do not answer, she will make their silence their confession that she is right, and will act toward them accordingly. If they do answer, she will use against them their own words, and as occasion may demand, the power which they have put into her hands, So that, so far as she is concerned, whether the Protestant answer or not, it is all the same. And how she looks upon them henceforth is clearly manifested in the challenge made in the last paragraph of the reprint articles.

There is just one refuge left for the Protestants. That is to take their stand squarely and fully upon the "written word only," "the Bible and the Bible alone," and thus upon the Sabbath of the Lord. Thus acknowledging no authority but God's, wearing no sign but His (Eze. 20: 12, 20), obeying His command, and shielded by His power, they shall have the victory over Rome and all her alliances, and stand upon the sea of glass, bearing the harps of God, with which their triumph shall be forever celebrated. (Revelation 18, and 15:2-4.)

It is not yet too late for Protestants to redeem themselves. Will they do it? Will they stand consistently upon the Protestant profession? or will they still continue to occupy the "indefensible, self-contradictory, and suicidal" position of professing to be Protestants, yet standing on Catholic ground, receiving Catholic insult, and bearing Catholic condemnation? Will they indeed take the written word only, the Scripture alone, as

their sole authority and their sole standard? or will they still hold the "indefensible, self-contradictory, and suicidal" doctrine and practice of following the authority of the Catholic Church and of wearing the sign of her authority? Will they keep the Sabbath of the Lord, the seventh day, according to Scripture? or will they keep the Sunday according to the tradition of the Catholic Church?

Dear reader, which will YOU do?

APPENDIX II

The following appeared in an editorial on pages 8 and 9 of the Catholic Mirror of Dec. 23, 1893:

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

THE GENUINE OFFSPRING OF THE UNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HIS SPOUSE. THE CLAIMS OF PROTESTANTISM TO ANY PART THEREIN PROVED TO BE GROUNDLESS, SELF-CONTRADICTORY, AND SUICIDAL

We beg leave to invite the attention of our readers to our advertisement in this issue, of the above pamphlet of 32 pages, containing four editorial articles published in the columns of THE MIRROR in our issues of 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd of September of this year. The daily appeals to us, from all sections of the country, for copies of the above issues, very soon exhausted the supply on hand, and we were obliged last month to issue a reprint of the articles in the issues of Nov 18th and 25th, to meet the wishes of our subscribers.

This arrangement failing to meet the persistent and increasing demand for additional copies of the articles we deemed it necessary to issue the same in pamphlet form, revised and enlarged by the writer, whose attention had been called to the propriety of developing more fully the spiritual grounds of the argument sustaining the command of the Redeemer to [pg. 9] hear the voice of His church as they would His own. "He that heareth you heareth me." The avidity with which these editorials have been sought, and the appearance of a reprint of them by the International Religious Liberty Association, published in Chicago, entitled, 'Rome's Challenge: Why Do Protestants Keep Sunday?' and offered for sale in Chicago, New York, California,

Tennessee, London, Australia, Cape Town, Africa, and Ontario, Canada, together with the continuous demand, have prompted the *Mirror* to give permanent form to them, and thus comply with the demand.

The pages of this brochure unfold to the reader one of the most glaringly conceivable contradictions existing between the practice and the theory of the Protestant world, and unsusceptible of any rational solution, the theory claiming the Bible alone as teacher, which unequivocally and most positively commands Saturday to be kept 'holy,' whilst their practice proves that they utterly ignore the unequivocal requirements of their teacher, the Bible, and occupying Catholic ground for three centuries and a half, by the abandonment of their theory, they stand before the world today the representatives of a system the most indefensible, self-contradictory, and suicidal that can be imagined.

We feel that we cannot interest our readers more than to produce the 'Appendix' (At the close of this editorial, Appendix I of this pamphlet was reprinted in full.) which the International Religious Liberty Association, and ultra Protestant organization, has added to the reprint of our articles. The perusal of the Appendix will confirm the fact that our argument is unanswerable, and that the only recourse left to the Protestants is either to retire from Catholic territory where they have been squatting for three centuries and a half, and accepting their own teacher, the Bible, in good faith, as so clearly suggested by the writer of 'Appendix,' commence forth-with to keep the Saturday, the day enjoined by the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; or, abandoning the Bible as their sole teacher, cease to be squatters, and a living contradiction of their own principles, and taking out letters of adoption as citizens of the kingdom of Christ on earth - His Church - be no longer victims of self delusive and necessary self - contradiction.

"The arguments contained in this pamphlet are firmly grounded on the word of God, and having been closely studied with the Bible in hand, leave no escape for the conscientious Protestant except the abandonment of Sunday worship and the return to Saturday, commanded by their teacher, the Bible, or, unwilling to

abandon the tradition of the Catholic Church, which enjoins the keeping of Sunday, and which they have accepted in direct opposition to their teacher, the Bible, consistently accept her in all her teachings. Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives; either Protestantism and the keeping of Saturday, or Catholicity and the keeping of Sunday. Compromise is impossible."



Jesus Our Passover for Our Salvation

The Passover lambs were killed to place their blood on the doorposts and then eaten so the LORD would not kill the firstborn of the children of Israel the night (Exodus 12:3-30) he freed the Israelites to come out of Egypt. This foreshadowed the future sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation.

7. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: (1 Corinthians 5:7)

4. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

5. When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (John 6:4-5)

During the Passover Jesus explained his body and blood would make it possible for us to receive salvation to live forever.

53. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in

him.

57. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. (John 6:53-58)

Jesus explained he is the real shepherd who cares for us. He said his sheep would recognize him and without fail he would give them eternal life.

9. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

11. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (John 10:9-11)

27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. (John 10:27-28)

The All Time Greatest Act of Love

The life of Jesus given for mankind was the supreme example of love that would be set for mankind.

16. For God so loved (agapao) the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

31. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

32. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

33. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.

34. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love (agapao) one another; as I have loved (agapao) you, that ye also love (agapao) one another.

35. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love (agape) one to another. (John 13:31-35)

Notice again. In verse 34 the Greek word used for the love (agapao) God and

Jesus had for mankind is the very same word for love (agapao) he expects us to have for each other! Not only did Jesus command mankind to love (agapao) one another as in the last six of the 10 commandments, he set a magnifying example of laying down his own life in agape love for us.

Love is the Greatest

The all time most famous love discussion of the Bible is in the thirteenth chapter of the book of First Corinthians.

1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (agape), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
2. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (agape), I am nothing.
3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (agape), it profiteth me nothing.
4. Charity (agape) suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity (agape) envieth not; charity (agape) vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
8. Charity (agape) never faileth: but whether *there be prophecies*, they shall fail; whether *there be tongues*, they shall cease; whether *there be knowledge*, it shall vanish away.
9. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.
10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
11. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
13. And now abideth faith, hope, charity (agape), these three; but the greatest

of these *is* charity (agape). (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

Is it more important than agape love to be powerfully persuasive speakers? No. Is it more important than agape love to know how soon the end time tribulation will come upon the world? No. Is it more important than agape love to understand the greatest mysteries of the ages? No. Is it more important than agape love to have faith that will result in amazing miracles? No. Is it more important than agape love to give away all our worldly possessions to the poor and even our bodies to be tortured to death? No.

Is agape love patiently tolerant? Yes! Is agape love kind? Yes! Is agape love jealous of the good fortune of others? No. Does agape love arrogantly put others down? No. Does agape love behave selfishly? No. Does agape love try to impose its own will on others? No. Does agape love seek to support the legitimate will of others even if it is different? Yes! Is agape love easily angered? No. Does agape love think evil thoughts of others? No. Is agape love happy when others suffer? No. Does agape love have joy in truth? Yes! Does agape love endure hardship and suffering while hoping and believing good will happen? Yes!

Does agape love ever fail? No. Will foretold future events fail to happen? Yes. Will great speeches and sermons be forgotten? Yes. Will great stores of knowledge be forgotten? Yes. Will the human existence of those with agape love be replaced by God's gift of immortal life in the future? Yes! Is agape love greater than faith and hope? Yes!

Remember the word (agape) translated, as charity repeatedly in the passage above is itself translated as love 86 times elsewhere in the KJV. Especially notice that verse 13 above concludes charity (agape) is even greater than faith or hope. A description of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians includes essentially the same qualities mentioned in 1 Corinthians.

22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love (agape), joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Love No Matter What Others Say or Do

God obviously has created us all different and logically enjoys a world full

of differences everywhere. This quality of great variety is self evident in the gloriously wide range of God's created animals, birds, trees, plants insects, rocks, minerals, atomic matter, stars and galaxies which we are still endlessly discovering. Perhaps our discoveries will continue to extend into eternity after God gives eternal life to all his beloved ones. The widespread diversity in our world strongly hints at God's great tolerance and suggests he also enjoys endless varieties of behaviors that can coexist peacefully and not clash with each other. When someone does something they have grown in their experiences over time to enjoy but we dislike it because of the way we have grown up and lived then how do we react? Is it something we automatically lash out against? If the deed does not violate God's way of love then we could look upon it as a challenging opportunity to develop patience, kindness and expand our understanding beyond our own limited experiences. A person with an attitude of agape love will take great care to try to understand where the other person is really coming from before responding negatively.

Don't forget, Jesus also told us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us along with praying for them.

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love (agapao) thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44. But I say unto you, Love (agapao) your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (Matthew 5:43-44)

It should be far easier for us to just get along with those who are different from us or who hold different opinions! After all, how can any imperfect human be sure he or she is absolutely right and all others are wrong? If you were right then you would have to forgive that person who argued with you, before God will forgive you of your sins (Matthew 6:14-15). What if it turns out in the end that God shows where you were actually wrong about what you were bickering so bitterly over? You would then be in the humbling position of needing to be forgiven. Why can't people talk about religious differences with dignity and respect for each other? If you or I listen really carefully, we might discover some new

insights or understanding we never had any idea existed! Only God can perfectly know everything. Surely getting along with others is an aspect of agape love.

Agapao Love is Associated with Labors of Mercy

Can we love (agapao) brethren by doing nothing? Is love some kind of magical quality that just flows automatically without effort back and forth between God and us or between individuals? If so, then why would Jesus and the disciples repeatedly *command* us to love (agapao) one another, even those we are close to?

22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren (philadelphia), *see that ye love (agapao) one another with a pure heart fervently:* (1 Peter 1:22)

A Greek Lexicon says the Greek spelling for philadelphia is filadelfia which is pronounced *fil-ad-el-fee'-ah*. It is translated brotherly love 3 times, brotherly kindness 2 times and love of the brethren 1 for a total of 6 times in the King James Version. The Lexicon says it means the love, which Christians cherish for each other as brethren.

We are told that love involves having compassion on others and doing something for them if needed and it is within our power. This active kind of love is more than just sympathizing talks with a person. Surely active love goes beyond praying for God to do something for them if we have the means and ability ourselves to do something.

16. Hereby perceive we the love (agape) of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

17. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love (agape) of God in him?

18. My little children, let us not love (agapao) in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

On the subject of loving one's neighbor Jesus told a story of a Samaritan who went to extensive and expensive effort to treat a stranger with mercy.

27. And he answering said, Thou shalt

love (agapao) the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30. And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*,

34. And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37. And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise. (Luke 10:27-37)

The Fruit of Love

Jesus says we are to abide in him like branches on a vine so we can bear much fruit. Remember agape love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). This indicates we are not abiding in Jesus with his words in us if we do not produce the fruit of agape love. He says if we do not produce a lot of fruit then we will be burned! Then Jesus continues on to say keeping his commandments as he keeps his Father's commandments is abiding in his agape love.

5. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He

that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9. As the Father hath loved (agapao) me, so have I loved (agapao) you: continue ye in my love (agape).

10. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love (agape); even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love (agape). (John 15:5-10)

If a work consistently produces a lot of bitter fruits and little or no love over a long period of time then it is highly likely that work is not actually of God. How can any church that grossly neglects the subject of agape love be a true church of God even if it has and keeps a lot of knowledge of other truth (1 Corinthians 13:2)?

At the same time, a church with bitter fruits may contain sheep that are deceived. Such sheep desperately need help from Jesus the good Shepard (John 10:11). Only God knows the state of each of our hearts for sure so we must not judge any individuals in a church even if the fruits of the church are not good. We must treat all individuals with agape love.

Grace

There are some who like to stress "grace alone" and imply nothing else in the Bible matters. However the two words "grace alone" are not found together in the King James New Testament. Grace is mentioned as helping us believe.

27. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: (Acts 18:27)

God's grace not only brings us salvation but also teaches us to live godly lives in the present.

11. For the grace of God that bringeth

salvation hath appeared to all men,
12. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness

and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; (Titus 2:11-12)

Although the grace of Jesus mercifully justifies us by washing us clean from sin so we can have eternal life, we are told to be careful to keep doing "good works".

4. But after that the kindness and love (philanthropia) of God our Saviour toward man appeared,
5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;
6. Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;
7. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
8. *This is* a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. (Titus 3:4-8)

A Greek Lexicon says the Greek spelling for philanthropia is *filanyrwpia* which is pronounced *fil-an-thro-pee'-ah*. It is translated kindness 1 time and love toward man 1 time for a total of 2 times in the King James Version. The Lexicon says it means love of mankind or benevolence.

The grace (of Christ) makes it possible for us to be saved through faith, which is a gift of God. It is plain we are not saved through any works, however we are told God expects us to walk in good works. While our salvation is a gift from God we are still expected to bear much fruit or we will be burned (John 15:5-10). The fruits of agape love are undeniably "good works". It cannot be said that abiding in Christ and consequently bearing the fruits of agape love is any attempt to "earn salvation by works".

5. Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)
6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:
7. That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.
8. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is*

the gift of God:

9. Not of works, lest any man should boast.
10. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:5-10)

Paul talks about people who attempt to be "justified by the law" instead of grace.

4. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4)

Notice the verse does **not** say the law is "not good". The verse does condemn the wrong use of the law. Clearly, keeping "the law" does not justify our salvation. Our salvation is a gift through the grace of God. *At the same time* we are expected to bear much fruit of agape love, which results from God's Spirit working in us. This strongly suggests those not producing the fruits of agape love do not have God's Spirit in them. If someone wrongly attempts to "justify" themselves and "earn" salvation by keeping the commandments that does not mean the commandments are worthless garbage. The wrong use of something good does not change it to "no good".

Jesus said the Spirit would be given to those that believe on him after he was glorified.

37. In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
38. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.
39. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) (John 7:37-39)

The "rivers of living waters" flowing out of us appears to be the Spirit working to satisfy our thirst for the love and salvation of God. Jesus also said the Spirit would guide us into all truth. It is also of interest to note that Jesus said this on a festival high day! Why would Jesus bother to time such an important statement on an annual holy day if such days are no longer to be a significant matter as some claim?

13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:

for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:13)

No one can rightfully claim that Spirit guided efforts to keep the commandments of Jesus to Love God and love one another, which in turn summarize the agape love of the Ten Commandments, destroys the "gospel of salvation" by grace.

Conclusion

I feel this discussion just skims the surface on the subject of love and mercy, as it is so huge that even though books have already been written on it, even more important books remain yet to be written.

5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:
6. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. (Malachi 4:5-6)

These last verses in the Old Testament sound like a prophecy of future "love" in action to me! What else but actively merciful agape love can turn hearts of individuals towards each other?

The following set of scriptures clearly say God **is** love (agape) and confirms many of the things written in this paper.

7. Beloved, let us love (agapao) one another: for love (agape) is of God; and every one that loveth (agapao) is born of God, and knoweth God.
8. He that loveth (agapao) not knoweth not God; for God is love (agape).
9. In this was manifested the love (agapao) of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.
10. Herein is love (agape), not that we loved (agapao) God, but that he loved (agapao) us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.
11. Beloved, if God so loved (agapao) us, we ought also to love (agapao) one another.
12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love (agapao) one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love (agape) is perfected in us.
13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.
 15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.
 16. And we have known and believed the love (agape) that God hath to us. God is love (agape); and he that dwelleth in love (agape) dwelleth in God, and God in him.
 17. Herein is our love (agape) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.
 18. There is no fear in love (agape); but perfect love (agape) casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (agape).
 19. We love (agapao) him, because he first loved (agapao) us.
 20. If a man say, I love (agapao) God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth (agapao) not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love (agapao) God whom he hath not seen?
 21. And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth (agapao) God love (agapao) his brother also. (1 John 4:7-21)
1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth (agapao) him that begat loveth (agapao) him also that is begotten of him.
 2. By this we know that we love (agapao) the children of God, when we love (agapao) God, and keep his commandments.
 3. For this is the love (agape) of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. (1 John 5:1-3)

I hope this discussion helps a few people like it has helped me. My own changes of attitude have been painstakingly slow and laborious but hope has been growing in my heart. Some say we can change behaviors but we are in constant danger of reversions to old behaviors, danger until our attitudes are fully changed with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

The King James verses and Lexicon quotes in this paper are from the "Online

Bible" a computer program produced by Timnahserah Inc. of Winterbourne, Ontario, Canada.

This paper is intended to be an expression of my own study findings and personal experiences. In addition to the King James Version of the Bible, I have studied numerous writings of others on the subject of love most of which were written by individuals who have never been associated with the Worldwide Church of God or it's many splinters. It can be used as a study guide if you wish. I do not claim to be perfect. I do not claim it to be absolutely free of all errors nor a monopolized expression of the only truths of God. There are many ways of looking at the same thing. If you were to look at the front of a truck at the same time as I look at the back of that same truck, it surely would look different to me and to you while it still remains the same object. You are encouraged to study God's word with the help of his Spirit to prove to your own full satisfaction if my statements are true or not. If not then I trust God will show me the corrected truths in his own time or that God will provide some people able to persuasively show me my errors with merciful agape love free of any strife. What you choose to believe is a personal matter between you and God only. You are free to share this with others if and when you feel it can help them too. After all, truth actually belongs to God and not to any human. May we all look eagerly forward to God's quickly approaching millennial time of inspiring and wonderful treatments of agape love and his promises of eternal salvation.



Every year, I hear more complaining about the approach of Christmas with all the hassles of trying to be creative in buying gifts. My answer is always the same: If you don't want to do it - don't.

Why feel pressured to participate in a buying frenzy propagated by merchants?

That's when the discussion turns spiritual. "But it's Jesus' birthday."

Fine, if you believe it's his birthday, get him a gift and go about your way.

It has been more than 20 years since I have celebrated Christmas. Over that time, I have collected stacks of booklets, articles (including an excellent front-page essay in the Dec.15, 1988, Journal-News) and studies which show that the day we celebrate as the birth of Christ long predates him as a celebration of sun worship by ancient cultures.

Church history is forthright in admission that it was indeed a pagan holiday with all the trimmings, but to convert those same pagans to Christianity, they merely superimposed Jesus' name on it. On the surface it may seem to be a good thing to do, had not God warned many times not to honor him by using heathen practices (Deuteronomy 12).

"I know all the bad stuff but tradition is hard to break," many say. Absolutely. Every time one steers off the wide popular way everyone else is on, it is hard. Did not Jesus lament that wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to death and many will go that way - but narrow is the gate that leads to life and few will find it? (Matthew 7).

The study into the roots of Christmas is a fascinating and interesting venture. It is good and wholesome to prove your beliefs. We are instructed to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The prophet Jeremiah's instruction was clear, "learn not the ways of the heathens ... for their customs are vain, they cut a tree from the forest ... decorate it with silver and gold and fasten it with nails so that it will not topple ..." (Chapter 10).

A lesson we always try to teach our children is just because everyone else does, it doesn't make it right. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).

True religion is an intensely personal subject. It is when you are one-on-one with your creator -- no minister, no friends, family or offending parties to point to. At this time, God is a still small voice, not enforcing his will on mankind.

He is giving us space to repent, turn from our erring ways and seek his way. Jesus often ended his teachings by saying, "Let those who have ears hear." Are you listening? If not, pray to God to grant you ears to hear the message you need to hear.



FROM TROUBLE TO JOY

by Michael Porter
Africa

Gardening takes work. It involves planting, watering, and pulling weeds. Bugs and other animals must be kept out. It takes work, sweat, and hope that the rains will be just right.

Growing as a Christian is similar to taking care of a garden. The seed of faith is planted when a person accepts Christ as his or her personal Savior. That seed grows through Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. Temptations and confusions of the world must be weeded out. With the right amount of care and cultivation, faith can blossom into a deep-rooted confidence in Christ.

James recognized that young believers, struggling to mature, needed help in developing into mature Christians. He knew that faith and hard work go hand in hand. He offered sensible advice on how to live out personal faith every day. He urged believers to make wise choices and to be alert to the schemes of the world. As you examine James' advice, look for things you are to be doing to grow as a Christian.

TESTED FAITH (JAMES 1: 1-4)

James began his letter by reminding Christians that living for Christ can be quite an adventure. Sometimes, when the world is against us. It can be a stormy ride. What tests do you and your friends encounter because of your faith in Christ? It's hard to imagine these circumstances being called joyful! The trials themselves aren't joyful, but the results of the trials bring about happiness and growth. James recognized that when faith is put to the test it becomes stronger. Just as a tree grows stronger and more steady after it

weathers a storm, a Christian who endures rough times matures and becomes stronger in his or her faith. How are the tests you listed above helping you grow stronger, causing you to trust Jesus in a deeper way?

CONFIDENCE FAITH (JAMES 1: 5-8)

What do most of us want when we want something? We ask for it, of course! In fact, some of us will whine, beg, nag, demand or do whatever we must do to get what we want; we communicate our needs (and wants) to anyone who is willing to listen. God wants our relationship with Him to be one of open communication, a relationship in which we feel comfortable asking Him for whatever we need. James knew that when we face difficult times we need wisdom or practical insight that only God can provide. God's requirement for granting this wisdom is faith. When we ask in faith, we are to be confident that God will respond.

Have you ever watched the tide come in? The sand shifts and moves, going in and out, controlled by the water and wind. James warned us not to be like that when we approach God with our requests. Firm faith is the mark of a growing relationship with God. When, why, or where do you need godly wisdom? Answer this question using words or phrases that begin with the letters in the word wisdom.

LASTING FAITH (JAMES 1: 9-11)

Our world has its own definition of rich and poor. However, James used these terms in a somewhat different context. "The brother of humble circumstances" is a description of devoted followers of Christ. On the other hand, "the rich man" is James' portrait of someone who is evil and unbelieving. According to James, there is a stark contrast between the two. The believer will continue to flourish and enjoy the benefits of faith in Christ Jesus. The unbeliever will soon decay because he or she has no roots or substance. What are you doing so that you grow in your faith relationship with Christ?

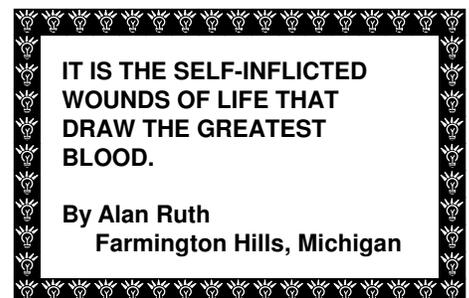
ABIDING FAITH (JAMES 1: 12-18)

What's the difference in trial and temptation? A trial is a difficult circumstance that comes from an external source, something you can't control. A temptation is the result of an inward desire or lust. It's not a sin to be tempted;

temptation becomes sin when you give in to it. Temptations are real. Giving in to temptation can lead to destruction and even death. James urged his readers to resist the world's temptation and the dangers associated with them. James did include a word of good news: God provides every good gift we possess. He is constant and unchanging; that is God's character. How does this relate to temptation? Many temptations seem to relate to misusing a good thing created by God. For example, prescription drugs help us deal with all kinds of illnesses. However, when these drugs are abused and misused, they become a problem with potentially deadly consequences. Write beside this gift all the good things God has given to you. How could these good things become a source of temptation in your life?

MATURING FAITH (JAMES 1: 19-21)

There's an old saying that states: God gave us two ears and one mouth so we'd listen twice as much as we talk. James must have known that truth when he wrote these verses. What's the difference between listening and hearing? When we listen to what God says and live according to His instructions, then we have listened and heard. A wise follower of Christ thinks carefully before talking. People are looking at Christians to see if Jesus really makes a difference in their lives. Because of this, idle, cruel, or hurtful words don't belong in a Christian's vocabulary. What does your speech reveal about your Christian commitment? For most of us, anger does happen. But we, as Christians, must be in control of our anger rather than letting anger overpower us. When anger is out of control, our lives do not honor Christ. As we mature and deepen our faith relationship, the things James advised Christians to do should become a way of life.



**IT IS THE SELF-INFLICTED
WOUNDS OF LIFE THAT
DRAW THE GREATEST
BLOOD.**

By Alan Ruth
Farmington Hills, Michigan

ADDICTED TO AUTHORITY

**by June Narber
Raleigh, North Carolina**

It is a difficult concept to accept in that people can become addicted to authority. However, it is possible looking at the example of the countless thousands of people who could not leave a church that changed the majority of its long held doctrinal stances, including the validity and authority of the Seventh Day Sabbath and the nature of the Godhead. Although several of the members of this church did accept the changes doctrinally, several hundred did not. Why did they not take a stand as did thousands of their spiritual brothers and sisters? These that took a stand left this religious organization, joining others, starting new ones, or choosing to fellowship in home fellowships in order to have the freedom to keep what they believe to be the truth of God. While looking at the original church, and subsequent splinter churches that evolved, we can see a reoccurring pattern in much of the membership. That problem is literally an addiction to authority. Both those in the position of authority and those under authority can become addicted to its power.

When people are under a strict hierarchy type of government for a long period of time, the ability to judge things for oneself and think independently becomes a difficult thing to do. Humans that are used to looking to a physical leader develop dependence upon that leader and spiritual organizational style, that to stray from it seems like a type of sin. Some of these kinds of churches prey upon the emotionalism of its lay people that bind them to that particular government structure. The reason for this includes the lust for money (tithing money and offerings) as well as the power trip involved for the leaders that control the entire "structure". While in such a system, followers, those addicted to this type of government structure/authority in their lives often cannot verbally equate any fault to their leaders. If any one presents facts that would cast even the slightest shadow on the integrity, actions or personal leaders involved, the follower will defend them over any fact presented. Friendships and families have been

broken up over loyalty to a physical man in charge. This reminds me of the Israelites we read about back in the time of Saul. They begged God to give them a physical leader. In so doing, they rejected God as their king and leader. There is a real danger in valuing any human leader to too much of a degree. In lifting up a man, the same man becomes an icon to the person who "lifts them up". Most people in the faith who do this may not fully realize they do it. In many cases, these souls are actually falsely misled by the religious associations they are involved with to believe such things that the given leader is 1) anointed by God 2) has a special calling from God, making him the final word on all earthly matters pertaining to the Church 3) is actually a prophet of God or 4) Is the only "true" leader/minister of Jesus Christ left on earth at this present time.

In the most severe cases, the bubble will eventually burst. Such leaders that elevate themselves and encourage the lay people to do the same will eventually make human error. The most common of these include making false prophecies that do not come to pass, immediately pointing out that they do not have any "special insight" from God, or perhaps they will be caught in some scandal involving misuse of church money or some sexual exploit. Money and power go hand in hand.

What kind of people are most vulnerable to such situations? Anyone that allows a man to become more important of an authority in their spiritual life than Jesus Christ is. People are especially vulnerable to charismatic leaders during times of crisis in their lives or major life changes. Any one that believes only "they have the truth" have a potential of becoming a man follower, addicted to the authority over them.

What kind of churches are prone to have this kind of problem? Any church that promotes one primary man as THE leader or THE person we should look to. In churches where the ministry are set way up on a pedestal and given special privilege and respect by the lay people, more than the norm. There is a huge vacuum of power and equality in such churches and religious affiliations: the minister and a handful of men are at the top of the pyramid structure of the hierarchy system; followed by elders, and other "offices" and finally down to the

weak lay person who is only encouraged to pay and pray. In such systems, the ministry often deny that lay people can have gifts of the holy spirit, be it something as simple as wisdom, insight, or healing abilities. There is discouragement to read other churches' publications or to attend fellowship with other sabbatarian groups. The whole issue can be boiled down to "power" over the personal actions of the lay people. The authority in a Christian's life should be Jesus Christ and God the father and the word of God as found in the Holy Scriptures. Churches cannot act as a police force, or worse, as a dictatorship "lording over the people of God". Without freedom of choice, how can people truly be free moral agencies? Part of the Christian growth process is growing in the character of God through trial and error, repentance and overcoming of faults. When one is addicted to authority, there is often more fear of being marked by their church leader or even being blackballed and put "out" of the church. This is still a common practice in many churches in order to keep the independent thinkers from getting the rest of the sheep worked up and thinking about issues in front of them. If people became unhappy with the given leadership, they might stop paying money in to them and quit following them. The result of this is the decrease of power and privilege among the leaders. This is probably among their worse nightmares.

How can you tell if a leader is a threat to the spiritual growth of the brethren?

First, he or she will react violently or negatively if given any kind of criticism especially from a lay person. A truly converted servant of Jesus Christ is going to have deep humility and will welcome correction so that they might also individually grow. Second, they will be concerned about the individual welfare of each of the brethren in the church. They will personally get involved to help people when they see a real need, even the simplest of jobs like raking leaves, repairing a roof, grocery shopping or visiting someone in need. No job is beneath them; they seek out ways they can serve. Third, they will not accept an outrageous salary, realizing that this money is God's money and better spent in promoting the gospel locally or elsewhere in the world or giving to the

poor who truly have serious personal needs. It is not fair to set a maximum salary for a minister; but if someone is busy seven days a week, visiting the sick, doing church programs, bible studies, youth programs, single seminars, writing and delivering sermons, and serving in the community, they should receive a salary equivalent to a middle class salary. On average this can range from \$32,000 to \$40,000 a year in a larger city; perhaps less in a rural area where duties are less demanding. Many independent churches of God have a revolutionary idea in that their ministers receive NO salary; they give of their time on the Sabbath and work full time jobs during the week to support their own families. This idea has a lot of potential. However, such outrageous salaries can be found among almost any television evangelist (non-Sabbath keepers). These salaries often range from 100,000 clear up to a million dollars. How can these kind of salaries be justified when poor widows often give money to such churches out of their social security checks?

We must realize that God is in control; no minister has the power to condemn anyone to the Lake of Fire, the Tribulation, or even having the ability to judge the human heart. True fear of God would make a leader a very service oriented individual. All leaders in every kind of position must guard themselves against the corruption of power.

What can we do if we are addicted to authority? People who give themselves over to authoritarian leaders and groups later become disillusioned and end up mistrusting themselves. The first step is to realize that they have hero worshipped or elevated a man to a position that was wrong. Until they make this personal realization, it is impossible for a change to take place. Challenging individuals who are addicted to authority or authority figures is not always a good idea. The best hope is to ask pointed questions that might stir to action their reasoning skills. But if such a person is brainwashed, perse, to the point that they believe their leader can do no wrong, it will take a drastic awakening to bring them around. God will do this in his own good time. In the mean time the best we can do for them is to fast and pray that God will help them.

Why should we be concerned? True spiritual growth can only occur when

individuals are able to think rationally and take responsibility for what they believe and what they do. In my former religious association, I recall often telling outsiders the reasons I could not do various things, and it was always along the lines, "My church won't let me".

While this was wrong, it was also very true. My church said I could not date non-baptized members; could not wear makeup; could not lead a band; could not seek to become an effective leader because of my gender; and so on. In my heart, I did not think these things were wrong, but felt that since the church was "god's true church" they must know something I did not know. Years later I learned the difference between church policy and doctrine. Doctrine can be backed up with the word of God. Policy is another issue altogether. It is often labeled the "church's" decisions on issues that the Bible is not clear on, but are based upon similar themes the Bible is clear on. In the end, God judges me (and you) for what we do based upon what we understand and are committed of. Just because I did not do something because the church said so did not make me righteous in the eyes of God and Jesus Christ. However, the current time period is a new beginning. I make my decisions based upon my understanding of how God is working in this present time; what the Bible says; and what I believe is correct based upon this understanding of God's law. I may make a lot of mistakes before I die; however I will also have learned many important lessons in not only the legal issues involved in being a Christian, but in the love and power of God's grace and infinite kindness. Human authority is like a ball and chain, preventing spiritual and physical growth of those people who are mentally bound to this way of thinking. I have come up with a list of steps that might help people to be "UN-addicted to Authority".

1. Realizing that God is working out a calling and work IN YOU individually.
2. Forgiveness of those in power who abused you; and also forgiveness of yourself for following a man instead of God.
3. Repentance before God of your faults; asking for strength and development of your discernment, wisdom, talents, and a place to use these talents.
4. More personal meditation; note taking from personal bible study and focus

on developing YOUR talents, spiritual gifts, personal evangelism and acts of service to family, church, community and world.

5. Ask God for daily guidance; write a list of goals and traits you would like to develop in yourself to become a better christian, leader, and good decision maker.
6. Focus on extracurricular reading; world events; self-help books; and especially skills involving public speaking and writing. What better way to be unaddicted to authority by realizing that YOU have authority over your own life. God can only work IN your life as YOU allow him to. Recall the scriptures that say "Choose this day blessing or cursing, life or death.
7. Realize that often we choose to wrestle against flesh and blood, Ephesians 6:12.
8. No one has authority or power over you unless you allow them to. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, unworthy, or just plain awkward, realize they might be in error and not you. Test the spirits; judge people and circumstance by their fruits. If there is no spiritual growth, realize that the leader is probably making some bad decisions and they are affecting the mentality, spirituality, and growth of the entire congregation.
9. Don't be afraid to fellowship with different Sabbath keeping groups, even if they are just from your own "church branch" of the Sabbatarian community.
10. Make an affirmation to change your life and decide what needs to be changed.
11. Make up a call to action plan of how you plan to change the things you decided needed changing.
12. Finally, make God and Christ your partners and step forth to put your plan to change into action. Rejoice that you have taken the courage to be responsible for your own actions. Be happy when you fall or make mistakes, realizing that through these YOU are able to grow.



PREPARATION FOR RIGHTEOUS RULERSHIP

by Norman Edwards
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The Feast of Tabernacles is a vital time to learn important lessons about the way God deals with man. The Scriptures give a lot of important points to the meaning of this Feast that we should keep in mind:

➤ You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always (Deut 14:22-23).

Notice that the stated purposes of the Feast of Tabernacles is to **"eat before the Lord your God"** and to **"learn to fear the Lord your God always"**. We will see a lot more about that in future scriptures. But we might ask the question, "When does one learn to trust God more, when one has little and needs God or when one has lots of money to spend?" The Bible mentions the term "tithe" (10%) many times, giving several different uses for it-but never mentions the terms "first tithe, second tithe or third tithe". It is the understanding of this writer that the Israelites were not commanded to consume an entire 10% of their increase of animals and crops during the Feast days-as they would have to gorge themselves-but that they were to use their tithe for a variety of purposes. They certainly were to plan to have enough to enjoy the feast and to take care of any others who might not be so fortunate.

➤ "But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart

desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household" (Deut 14:24-26).

Notice that the only reason to turn an agricultural tithe into money was when the place was "too far from you". When they arrived at the Feast, they were to turn their money back into food. Hopefully, there would be enough people at the Feast with extra food, that would be willing to sell the food to them. Those coming to the Feast with money should be an exception condition, not the majority.

The Bible mentions many different trades: clothiers, blacksmiths, builders, innkeepers, etc. What should they do if the way is **not** "too far from" them? Should they take their money to the Feast and buy food there? Or should they take their money and buy food in advance and take the food to the Feast? While the Bible does not spell this out in detail, the reason it gives for taking money to the Feast is if the journey is too long or the way is too far. If everyone is to keep the Feast, including shopkeepers and the poor, it seems unlikely that there would be merchants working to serve huge numbers of people coming to the Feast with money and no food.

But lest anyone becomes too worried, the purpose of this article is not to convince you that the only way to keep the Feast of Tabernacles is to pack a trailer full of live animals, grains and vegetables, and drive off to the Feast prepared to butcher, bake and boil. Nor is it the message that one must pack 24 sack lunches and suffer through it. The point is that the feasting, both physical and spiritual is the central focus of the Feast. Spending a lot of money and having others serve you is not a lesson or command about the Feast.

Deuteronomy 14 continues on with instruction on how to help others with the tithe:

➤ You shall not forsake the Levite who is **within your gates**, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and **store it up within your gates**. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are **within your gates**,

may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do. At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts" (Deut 14:27-15:1).

It is not clear to this writer whether this is talking about observing the Feast of tabernacles "within your gates" in the "third year" or if it is talking about storing up food that the poor can eat when they are in need. Since the very next chapter is about releasing the debts of the poor in the seventh year, is the "third year" tithe a benefit to those who are in debt and still four years away from being released from those debts? On the other hand, there is some logic to observing the Feast locally for those who could not otherwise travel. The expression "within your gates" refers to the gates of a city. The following verses show the need to help the poor of our own localities, but indicate that they are to go to the "place which the Lord chooses."

➤ "And you shall remember that **you were a slave in Egypt**, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, **your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates**. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God **in the place which the LORD chooses**, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice (Deut 16:12-15).

The only place that God mentions choosing for the Feast in the Bible is "Jerusalem" and "Shiloh". Yet there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that He will not choose, by His Spirit, other places today-which could be either regional or local sites. The above verses again emphasizes the need for everyone to rejoice at the Feast. There is to be no "servant class" or "working class" of people who must "slave away" during the Feast so that others may enjoy it. God shows that they were all slaves in Egypt once, and that they are to come out of that. The use of "tabernacles" ("tents",

"huts", "sheds") at the feast is to remind us of God protecting the children of Israel in the desert after they left Egypt.

Purpose of the Feast: God's Protection After Leaving Egypt

➤ "You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, **that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God**" (Lev 23:41-43).

The above scriptures shows that the purpose of the Feast, that is to be taught throughout generations is how God made Israel dwell in shelters-how he sheltered them-when coming out of Egypt. Nearly every Christian has heard the story of the "rebellious Israelites", how they failed to obey God and how they were made to wander for 40 years and only their children were allowed to go into the "promised land". God Himself denounced them for their lack of faith and obedience:

➤ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but **who disobeyed me and tested me ten times**-not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it (Num 14:21-24).

Other verses show that Joshua (son of Nun) was also faithful and allowed to go into the promised land. Most Christians generally assume that through the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit, they have the faith that the Israelites lacked back in the wilderness. We somehow know that if we were there, we would trust God and not do what those Israelites did. So let us think about observing the Feast of Tabernacles, and review those ten instances when Israel disappointed God and see how we would do. The scriptures

will be summarized rather than quoted, but you are encouraged to read the whole thing.

As you read these points, please realize that there is a difference between faith and foolishness. For example, a person who disobeys a human law to obey a clear law of God might expect God to deliver him or to be with him while he pays the penalty. But a person who breaks a law simply for his own convenience and then boasts that "God will protect me" may find that God does not. Also, a person who lives by an obscure doctrine which he has read into the Bible may find that God does not protect him from the consequences of his own doing. For the Ancient Israelites, God and Moses were there telling them exactly what to do and God's will was not in question. But today, if someone shows you by putting 69 obscure scriptures together that Christ is coming in two months and that you need to sell all of your possessions and give it to their work so they can announce his coming, you may wisely choose to wait and see. Having faith in God's Word, and having faith in a man's compilation of 69 obscure scriptures are two very different things.

Ten Trials in the Wilderness

1. **Threat of attacking military force** (Ex 14:5-12). After the Israelites left Egypt, the Pharaoh changed his mind and sent 600 chariots after the Israelites. We might think of this as the superior military force of the day, and then think of military forces of our day. If we believed that God wanted us to go to the Feast, but we had to pass a hostile military force with machine guns and tanks, would we go to the Feast anyway, or would we stay home in fear? Does even the relatively low chance of plane hijackings or danger on our freeways keep some of us away from the Feast?
2. **Going without a water source for three days** (Ex 15:22-25). The Israelites had no fresh water for three days so the people complained. As in most crowds, some people probably were carrying enough water, and others probably had been out for a couple days and were getting very uncomfortably thirsty. Some probably shared their water with those in greatest need (pregnant and nursing

moms), others may have fought over the remaining water. But rather than trust God, ask God or ask Moses for water, they complained. It does not make sense to plan a Feast site today with no water. But if the water at a Feast site was cut off for some reason for a few days, would we complain about an awful Feast, or would we trust God to take care of us as needed?

3. **Having a lack of food** (Ex 16:1-4). After being out of Egypt for one month the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron and wished they could go back to Egypt where they had food regularly. The Bible does not record any instance of anyone dying of hunger or thirst, but the people complained. Does anyone ever skip going to the Feast because he or she thinks we will not have enough to eat there? And if they do go in faith, are they content with how God might take care of them-maybe sharing a tent and a bowl of cooked grains every morning?
4. **Disobeying clear instructions from God** (Ex 16:19-20). God told the Israelites not to try to keep manna overnight on the first five days. Nevertheless, some of them did and it stank. Are there clear instructions about the Feast that God has given that we could follow but do not?
5. **Not learning from a previous disobedience** (Ex 16:22-28). The Israelites were told to gather twice as much manna on the sixth day and keep it till the seventh. Even after the previous failure from disobeying God, some of them went out to gather it on the seventh day, anyway. This is like the child who knows not to throw rocks at his siblings, has to be chastised for throwing rocks at his brother, and then has to be chastised again the next day for throwing rocks at his sister. Do we ever fail to follow God's instructions, reap the consequences of it, then do a very similar thing right afterward?
6. **Complaining about the same problem, even worse than before** (Ex 17:1-13). There was no water at the camp, so the people complained even more strongly against Moses than they did before (see item 2). They again demanded to go back to

Egypt and even questioned if God was among them at all. Have you ever had a difficulty at the Feast (not caused by your own sin), but God delivered you out of it, and then you said, "I'll never let that happen again!" We need to realize that sometimes, even though we pass a test one time, God tests us in the same way again, and we must trust in God again.

7. **Looking to a human leader rather than God** (Ex 32). When Moses was gone up to Mt. Sinai for a long time, some of the people began to think he was dead and wanted Aaron to make a golden calf. They apparently attributed all of God's works to Moses and when Moses was gone, they were willing to forget about God and asked Aaron to lead them back to the religion and land of Egypt. Have we ever greatly changed our religious practices because a religious leader died or because we left his group? Did we make our changes based upon our understanding of the Scriptures, or did we simply do whatever seemed easiest to us?
8. **Complaining about other stuff** (Num 11:1-3). The Bible does not say what the people complained about when they were encamped at Taberah, but God caused a fire to come and kill some of them. The previous chapter is about frequent moving and setting up camp, so maybe it was the moving-maybe it was even their housing that they complained about. This writer has heard many stories of people who survived great disasters traveling to or at the Feast-including floods, tornadoes, robberies, collisions, etc. Some have thanked God for deliverance and are ready to go again, others are angry at God and fearful it might happen again.
9. **Complaining about the menu** (Num 11:4-34). While they were encamped at Kibroth Hattaavah, some of the people complained about always eating manna-remembering the variety of food that they had in Egypt. Moses became so upset with them that he asked God to kill him rather than have to continue to work with them. "So the LORD said to Moses: `Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers

over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone'" (Num 11:16-17). While these 70 leaders helped Moses rule, it should be important to note that God has never again worked powerfully through a man like Moses, the only exception being Jesus. When we go to the Feast, what do we hear more about, what God is doing there, or complaints about the food?

10. **Rejecting the way God has made as too difficult.** (Num 13:25-14:20). When the twelve spies returned with their report on the land of Canaan, which Israel was preparing to enter, only two out of 10 (Joshua and Caleb) had confidence that God was able to help them defeat the superior military forces of that land and give it to them. The people grumbled and wanted to go back to Egypt again. God was so angry at the people that He considered wiping them out and making a new nation from Moses, but Moses talked him out of it.

We Need to Come Out of Our Own Egypt

If we keep reading past the end of point 10, above (Num 13:25-14:20), we come right back to Number 14:21-23, which is what launched us on the study of the ten times that Israel disappointed and disobeyed God. It was just so easy for them to see the human, physical reality of Egypt, rather than the reality of God-even though they received miracles and blessings at His hand.

I would have to be honest and say that this has affected me. Even though God has supplied every significant need at the Feasts we have sponsored, I have still seriously considered not sponsoring a Feast some years. Let me acknowledge some of what God has done:

- My first year working independently, 1995, I had neither money to go to the Feast, nor confidence to organize one. An independent site in Florida was cancelled a couple of days before due to a hurricane, so I offered the use of our services building in Springdale,

Arkansas-about half of the people came. God put me into Feast planning before I had time to think about it.

- God caused someone to give me some sound equipment that I did not know I needed until later-but have used it extensively.
- Every year, someone has come to the Feast who was able to run the sound system.
- During the last two years, God sent people to help purchase and prepare the Feast meals.
- In the year 2000, Danny Smith told me he was coming to the Feast site more than two days early. I told him that I would not be able to be there that early and wondered what he would do. As it turned out, Danny was busy doing important things the whole time.
- I have always had enough money to make the needed deposits and cover the needed expenses at the Feast. One year I paid for two family's motel rooms so they could come and did not receive enough money to cover it. But a man who did not even come to that Feast found out about it and paid for it.
- God has also sent speakers, children's teachers, musicians and others needed to make a better Feast of Tabernacles.

These and other points that show that God has taken care of our needs at the Feast do not mean that we should not plan or that we can plan carelessly. But they do show that if we try to serve God and do the best that we can, that he will take care of us. **We do not have to be ashamed that we live by the grace of God, rather than by man's brilliance, man's strength and man's money.**

It is important that all of us think about the degree to which we live "in Egypt". Egypt provided the Israelites with homes and a stable supply of food. However, they were not free to worship God as they wanted. The wealth produced by their hard work went to advance the cause of Egyptian religion and government. The people had little control over their own destiny or that of their children.

Today, in most western nations, everyone has a place to live and something to eat. However, most people are not free to openly worship God or use biblical principles in their work, in their schools or in government. Over 50% of the wealth produced is consumed by the secular state to further its secular-

humanist agenda. People's concept of "right and wrong" tends to be formed by what the state does or does not punish-not what God says. False ideas enter children's minds through schools and mass-media, whether parents want it or not. Some Christian parents are afraid to physically punish their children as the Bible instructs, lest the state take them away.

While most people reading this article probably have more freedoms than the Israelites did in Egypt, slavery-like conditions are encroaching upon us. Human-promised physical security just seems to reach out and tempt us, and say "it is smarter to trust me than it is to trust God". Certainly, the "sins of Egypt" are all about us.

Feast of Tabernacles observance should be an oasis in this "wilderness of sin". It should be a shining light of what God's people can do using His principles to enjoy feasting together, praising Him, talking together entertaining each other, and looking out for the needs of everyone there. In summary, it should be an example of righteous, enjoyable life among the people of God.

Prepare for the Promised Land

Since the purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles was to remind us of how the Israelites lived in "tabernacles" after they left Egypt (Ex 23:42), we must realize that God was hoping to train the Israelites for an important purpose-just as he is hoping to train us for an important purpose when we keep the Feast, now.

We previously quoted God's instruction on keeping the Feast from Deuteronomy 16:12-15. Additional Feast instruction follows:

➤ "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you" (Deut 16:16-17).

God wants people to learn to thank Him for their blessings, and to share them. This message has been preached extensively by many groups, so we will not dwell on it here, except to say that the Hebrew **does** mean "three times a year"

(**not** "three seasons a year" or "seven times a year", as some groups teach in order to collect more offerings).

The next instructions are very much a part of the lesson of the Feasts:

➤ "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).

This is a clear command to all of the people to set up righteous local governments. "In all your gates" is a reference to all the cities that God gave them "according to your tribes". There is no extensive government plan or group of laws here, but the principle is very clear: the officials were to do what is right, as opposed to what is best for their own economic gain. Today, most government officials seem to believe that they can do whatever they want to benefit themselves as long as they do not get prosecuted for violating any of the hundreds of thousands of "laws" on our books. If they can avoid prosecution due to a "legal technicality", then it is "all right" in the eyes of most people. Yet God clearly shows that righteous judgment is necessary "that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

God was doing a wonderful thing for the Israelites. He was defying the typical human systems where the strong, wealthy and educated oppress the weak. God fairly divided the land among the people (Deut 33:54). He set up a system whereby debts would be forgiven, slaves would be freed, and lands would go back to their original owners, even if somebody misused their property (Lev 25, Deut 15). He told them to use silver for money (the Hebrew word for money is "silver") He commanded them to not even own the instruments for unjust business (Deut 25:13-16). It would have been very difficult for people to rise up and oppress others. God did not give them a human king, rather they demanded one later and God warned them that he would oppress them (1Sam 8).

The last two verses of Deuteronomy 16 give one more vital instruction needed to prepare a people for righteous rule: they were not to follow the religious practices of other people.

➤ Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God, and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the LORD your God hates (Deut 16:21-22).

God hoped to give the Israelites a year in the wilderness so they could just be with Him, away from the distractions and sins of other nations. He wanted them to learn to trust Him, and to get along with each other. When all but two men failed to trust in God, he gave them another 40 years in the wilderness to learn to trust Him. Only Joshua and Caleb from the original group of adults, and then also the younger generation went into the promised land.

Similarly, today, Christ is working with many believers, but only a small number of them will be ready to rule with Him (Matt 22:14; 25:1-13; Luke 12:42-48; Heb 11:35; Rev 3:21; 20:5-6). **The Feast of Tabernacles offers a time when we can draw away from the world to be sheltered in tabernacles by God-to learn his lessons, and then to be ready to help people into His Kingdom-to rule in righteousness and to avoid false religion.** Most of us do not have a year to be in the wilderness with God. But if we live 46 years as an adult (age 20 to 66), they will spend a total of 367 days at the Feast of Tabernacles, a year. If you like numbers, it took 46 years to build the temple at the time of Christ (John 2:20), and so our bodies are spiritual temples (1Cor 6:19) which may also take 46 years to build.

This article cannot cover all of the important details that we need to learn from the Bible to be ready to rule with Christ for 1000 years (Rev 20:6). In many ways, the job will be the same. The Bible makes it clear that the land of Israel will again be fairly distributed among the people (Ezk 47:13-48:35). The Israelites were sent in to destroy some evil people (Deut 7:1-5), but they were primarily intended to be a living, wonderful example of God's way to the other nations around them (Deut 4:1-7). Similarly, the Kingdom of God will include the defeat of evil forces, and an example of righteous living to others.

While there are additional spiritual lessons to be learned that are not covered in the instructions to the ancient Israelites, there is much that we as believers need to learn from what God has written in the Old Testament.

LETTERS SECTION--This section can contain letters to the editor, to the brethren, or from the editor. Please keep in mind while reading these letters, that just because we print them does not mean that we agree with everything people say in these letters. Letters many times are filled with opinion and emotion and sometimes factual and un-factual information. This section is interactive. If you agree or disagree with a letter or an article in this newsletter and want others to know, this is the section for you. Please, if you want your letter to be printed, clearly say so and send it to Newsletter-Only-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com We do not print all letters that we receive. If you state you want your letter printed, then we do consider it for inclusion. If we receive a letter that we feel would be of interest to others, generally we ask the writer for permission to print it.

08-18-2002
by Don Esposito
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Brethren;

Greetings in the name of Yahshua. I pray that all are well. I wanted to update everyone to an extreme important new door that has opened up to serve the truly poor brethren. David Swaim, a brother in Indiana has connected me with a group of over 500 Sabbath keeping brethren from Kenya that are in extreme dire need of support. I have spoken directly to one of their leaders, a man named Joseph who was here temporarily in the States. I also have had letter contact with another man from the same area, who also wrote us of

the needs in Kenya. Not only is the unemployment rate around 70%, but recent floods have killed about 70 people in the area. There are numerous Sabbath keeping congregations totally around 500 brethren. some do not even have food and the daily cares of survival.

I am extremely worried for the needy brethren in Kenya. Scripture says, when one suffers, we all suffer. We, in America, have been blessed so much, that we truly need to think about the needs of our fellow brethren worldwide.

What we plan on doing, is immediately start to send aid in the form of clothing, rain gear if possible, medical supplies, food, etc to start immediate aid. Then, Brother David Swaim has proposed two projects to help the Kenyans not only short term but long term. We are going to try (Yahweh willing) to open up a clinic for alternative medicine, where the health needs of the brethren can be met. Then, also we want to start an agricultural program, to help them produce and distribute seed for farming for the local brethren. David is going to try to work through several organizations for help including the Kenyan government, and maybe some US subsidies. I pray that you all keep this in your prayers, and if anyone feels led by Yahweh to help with this project that you mark Kenyan project with your donation. Petra and myself (Yah willing) plan on making a trip to the area possibly at the years end.

I also want to update you to a very serious situation that has arisen in Israel, and also with Messianic Congregations in the US. We see a very troubling trend, of brethren coming to the land of Israel, in awe of the Jewish culture, and religion, then in a short time, turning from belief in Yahshua as Messiah, and converting to Judaism. I think it is wonderful that so many Christians in this end time are coming back to their Hebraic roots. We support and teach this. But the problem is not with the Hebraic roots of our faith, but with the oral traditions of the Jews. They hold their oral law above the Torah, and one book they study out of called Cabala is nothing more than witchcraft. They are now teaching in Yeshiva schools that Satan is good and will be in Yahweh's Kingdom. They also proudly proclaim that they do not take the Torah literal, but only observe the Rabbi's interpretation of it. They absolutely hate Yahshua. I have personally had orthodox Jews spit in my

face, threaten to stone me, and one even kicked my wife. We were at a conference, a short time ago in Jerusalem, where over 300 to 400 anti-missionary Jews rioted outside the building, and around 100 stormed past police barriers and attacked the stage and security. It is no wonder why Yahshua told them "How vain you worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

B'Shem Yahshua,
Don

10-02-2002
by Ed & Nancy Oettel
Blaine, Washington

Hi Darwin and Laura,

We just got back from a wonderful feast at Salt Spring Island BC. It was held at the Cusheon Lake resort. Log cabins facing the lake amongst beautiful evergreen trees. We met in a Succoth, a three sided tent facing the lake. The weather was absolutely beautiful all 8 days. Each message was followed by interactive discussion, and kept with the theme of this festival season. There were 30 members attending. One family came all the way out here from Boston, another family from Oregon, others from California, and the largest group came up from Phoenix Arizona. One highlight of the feast was a work project. We took a ferry to Vancouver Island and drove north to the city of Ladysmith. There at the waterfront park we all worked to make a rock free path 25 feet wide to the low tide. Some rocks were nearly 3 feet across. We all worked as a team and finished that project in three hours. We then went up to the food bank building and we all scraped and painted it as it was in very poor condition. Work projects like this one is something the church could have been doing on a worldwide basis for the last 50 years. It was Christ that admonished us to do good for the people in this world, poor as well as the rich. Our waterfront project will provide a rock free entry for the many kyakers that go out in the Georgia Strait. Its not hard to come up with worthwhile projects, and we only allocated one day for this occasion. The music we all sang was praise and worship

and it was inspiring, when you include the beautiful setting we were at. We hope your feast was as inspiring as ours was. In Christian Love
ED and NANCY Oettel

10-05-2002
by Jeffrey Caldwell
Cupertino, California

This letter is in regard to the article "Intentional Deceptive Practices and Lying" by Laura Lee, Bismarck, North Dakota, which was printed in Issue #10 on page 21.

Dear Friends,

Some time ago -- in the last couple of years, I think, Ronald Dart noted that lying and deception are the root cause of confusion in the world and among the *ekklesia* -- a thought that rings profoundly true with me. The Evil One is the father of lying, and those under his sway mislead others through false, misleading "choices" -- lies. "The schemes of the wicked are deceit." (Proverbs 12:5b, **Tanakh**).

I am reminded of an old folk proverb: "Many are the tools of the devil -- a lie is the handle that fits them all!"

I write to commend a particularly weighty verse addressing lying and deception that is too little known among those called to be holy. There is a portion of Leviticus of direct instruction from YHWH about holiness -- especially Leviticus 19:2 to Leviticus 26:2. We often refer to Leviticus 23, but in general would do well to be much more familiar with this whole section of direct quotes from YHWH about fulfilling our calling "to be holy as He is holy" -- an essential Christian doctrine reiterated by Peter in the opening chapter of his first epistle (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Being honest is a significant aspect of the Holy One's teaching about appropriate conduct for those called to be holy. "You shall not steal, or deal falsely, or lie to one another." (Leviticus 19:11, **Amplified**). In this same chapter our God instructs: "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

"The first word of the book [of Leviticus] serves as its Hebrew title ...

[which, translated is] ... "and he called" (**The Book of Leviticus** by Gordon J. Wenham, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, page 3). Leviticus is a good place to learn about our calling to relate to God and those created in His image in accordance with the Way of holiness. Lies and deceit have no place in true holiness.

The author of Hebrews urges: "pursue that consecration and holiness without which no one will [ever] see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14, **Amplified**). Refraining from lying and deceiving is an aspect of the holiness He desires. All of His instruction and punishments are "for our certain good, that we may become sharers in His own holiness" (Hebrews 12:10, **Amplified**). That we may share in His holiness is a supremely important purpose for all that God does in dealing with us.

Lying and deceiving inevitably cuts us off from our God and from our brothers and sisters.
your brother,
Jeffrey Caldwell

EDITOR'S NOTE:

There is an example in the Bible where God shows that lying to save a life is okay. Read Joshua 2 the entire chapter, which clearly shows in detail how Rahab lied in order to save lives. Notice Joshua 6:17:

❖ And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

See also Joshua 6:23-25, Hebrews 11:31, James 2:25. Rahab is listed in the Faith Chapter for lying to save lives.

During World War II, there were people who hid the Jewish people and then lied in order to save the lives of the Jewish people they hid. There may come a time in our life time where we may have to do the same.

If a person is just lying to gather information or to keep others from knowing who they are, or to hurt other people, it is clearly wrong from God's point of view. Laura Lee

10-06-2002
by Tommy West
Wake Forest, North Carolina

This letter is in regard to the article "Who Is, or Is Not Free to Marry?" by Rhoda Foust, Williamsburg, Indiana, which was printed in Issue #11 on page 19.

Laura,

It is with much anticipation and interest on my part when I receive your welcome newsletters. I usually read all the high quality articles and find those by Rhoda Foust exceptional. In the September/October 2002-Issue No. 11, Ms. Foust authored an article entitled, "**WHO IS, OR IS NOT FREE TO MARRY?**" It is certainly a timely subject and she did a fine job overall, but let's look at her concluding sentence: "On the other hand, if the believer does not return to the non-believer, (becomes divorced) because their marriage was made when they were both "blind", he/she is free to marry." There is no scripture to support this assertion on its face. Quite the contrary. Ms. Foust earlier in her article said as much when she quoted Jesus who unequivocally stated in Matt.19:6:

✠ "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

There were **no** exceptions to this command in Jesus' day and there are **none** today. Marriage is for life. If problems arise, and they will, the couple can separate, work out their problem, forgive and get on with their marriage -- or stay single. That's not my opinion. That's Paul's opinion and that's what he clearly stated in 1 Cor. 7:10-11. Human nature hasn't changed since Paul's day. There were marriage problems then, including the heinous action of spousal abuse. Paul could not and did not countermand what Jesus said.

At the end of Ms. Foust's article, you commented, "**Once a spouse breaks a marriage contract by abusing their mate or children, the non-abusive mate is free to remarry after divorce no matter which one of them files for the divorce.**" Here again, the only recourse is to remarry the original mate or to stay single. Scripture allows for nothing

else.

Thank you for allowing me to offer these comments. Keep up the good work.
Tommy West

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The first thing I want to do, is thank Tommy for this letter. There are many people who interpret this subject the same way. There also are many people who see this particular line of thinking as having something wrong with it, but in most cases people can't seem to quite figure out what is wrong with this line of thinking. I will not ever say that I know everything on this subject, but the more I study it, the more I learn about it.

Tommy brings up some very valid points, so I am going to try to go over the ones he brings up.

6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh, What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 19:6)

Tommy concludes from this that marriage is for life, and I agree. God's intent from day one was that marriage be for life.

24. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Genesis 2:24.

I would have to then ask another question. **How does God join people together?** If God's way of joining people in marriage is via a minister, and a legal document called a marriage license, then that would have to mean that God joins homosexual and lesbian marriages also. Correct? I don't think so:

22. Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. (Leviticus 18:22)

13. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. (Leviticus 20:13)

So what measure does God use to bind a marriage together for life? What binds men and women together in marriage is God's law, not man's law. I'll show you what I mean.

Let's take a closer look at Matthew 19:6 and in context of what is being said before and after it.

3. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife

for every cause?

4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8. He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

Verse 3--The Pharisee's are asking Christ about the law (Torah). Please keep in mind that the Pharisee's in general liked to twist the law of God to suite themselves. This reference in verse 3 is to the law as stated in Deuteronomy 24:1, which says:

1. When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

Favour--Strong's Ref. # 2580

Romanized chen

Pronounced khane

from HSN2603; graciousness, i.e. subjective (kindness, favor) or objective (beauty):

KJV--favour, grace(-ious), pleasant, precious, [well-]favoured.

Uncleanness--Strong's Ref. # 6172

Romanized `ervah

Pronounced er-vaw'

from HSN6168; nudity, literally (especially the pudenda) or figuratively (disgrace, blemish):

KJV--nakedness, shame, unclean(-ness).

The word used for uncleanness in Deuteronomy 24:1 is "erwat" and is the same word used in Genesis 42:9 and Genesis 42:12, when speaking of "naked land", which backs up the following verse, showing that uncleanness also means something which is unholy. See also Ezekiel Chapters 22 and 23.

14. For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee. (Deuteronomy 23:14)

More than likely some people were interpreting Deuteronomy 24:1, which is part of the law of God, to mean that a man could divorce a woman if she was not pretty or for other petty offenses which were not against God's law.

Deuteronomy 24:1 shows several things: #1--This couple was married for awhile. #2--The wife lost favour in her husband's eyes due to unholiness of some kind. #3--The husband loosed her from the marriage by giving her a bill of divorcement.

Can a man or woman divorce for any reason?

The answer is no. Both people in a marriage are to abide by God's laws. There are only 2 ways of life--God's way and Satan's way. Even if a person does not believe God has laws, those laws still exist and those laws are in motion for every single person who has ever lived, is living today and will be born in the future. A partner within a marriage can fall out of favour if they are not following God's way. I am not talking about a person who makes a few mistakes and repents. I am speaking of a person who is unclean do to following a lifestyle of unholiness or immorality, a person who is following Satan's way.

Verse 4-6--These scriptures are pretty clear for the most part. **"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."** God joins people by His law and man separates people by following unholy lifestyles. All that word "asunder" means is to separate. Think about this. God's way is a way of love, which joins people. Satan's way is a way of hatred, which separates people. If a man or a woman in a marriage is following an unholy or immoral lifestyle, it

will eventually tear that marriage apart. For example a person who is having sex with his mate and one or more others besides, can bring home any number of sexually transmitted diseases which would put ones mate at risk. This type of immoral behavior does not show love for ones mate and so is in no way a part of God's law of love. God does not bind people together except by His law. Immorality is not and never has been a part of God's law.

Verse 7--This verse refers to the law as written in Deuteronomy 24:1-4:

1. When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.
2. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.
3. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;
4. Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

These verses show a man giving a bill of divorcement to his wife, because of her unholy, immoral lifestyle and clearly shows that when she is departed, she may go and be another man's wife. This clearly shows that no one is bound in this marriage once a bill of divorcement is given to the unholy, immoral person. A bill of divorcement just means that the marital contract is voided.

Divorcement--Strong's Ref. # 3748
Romanized kriythuwth
Pronounced ker-ee-thooth'

from HSN3772; a cutting (of the matrimonial bond), i.e. divorce:

KJV--divorce(-ment).

How do I derive at the principal that

both parties to a divorce are no longer bound and both are free to remarry? All people should be following God's law, however we know that is not happening at this time. The person in these scriptures represented by the man, who is following God's way, cannot be bound in the marriage if the unholy, immoral person who is represented by the wife, is free to go and remarry. See verse 2.

Take note here also, that if a person is following God's way and has divorced their mate due to an immoral lifestyle and later that same mate wants to come back to the former mate after having married, that the former mate is not to remarry that person for a second time, and if they do it is an abomination to God. See verses 3 and 4.

Verse 8--Again this law is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Hardness of heart is clearly a person who is not repentant, one who does not know the way of God. The word suffer just means to allow, and when the term "put away" is used, it means to free fully.

Hardness--Strong's Ref. # 4641
Romanized sklerokardia
Pronounced sklay-rok-ar-dee'-ah

feminine of a compound of GSN4642 and GSN2588; hard-heartedness, i.e. (specifically) destitution of (spiritual) perception:

KJV--hardness of heart.

Suffered--Strong's Ref. # 2010
Romanized epitrepo
Pronounced ep-ee-trep'-o

from GSN1909 and the base of GSN5157; to turn over (transfer), i.e. allow:

KJV--give leave (liberty, license), let, permit, suffer.

Put Away--Strong's Ref. # 630
Romanized apoluo
Pronounced ap-ol-oo'-o

from GSN0575 and GSN3089; to free fully, i.e. (literally) relieve, release, dismiss (reflexively, depart), or (figuratively) let die, pardon or (specially) divorce:

KJV--(let) depart, dismiss, divorce, forgive, let go, loose, put (send) away, release, set at liberty.

Verse 9--

Fornication--Strong's Ref. # 4202
Romanized porneia
Pronounced por-ni'-ah

from GSN4203; harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, **idolatry**:

KJV--fornication.

Strong's Ref. # 4203
Romanized porneuo
Pronounced porn-yoo'-o

from GSN4204; to act the harlot, i.e. (literally) indulge unlawful lust (of either sex), or (figuratively) **practice idolatry**:

KJV--commit (fornication).

Strong's Ref. # 4204
Romanized porne
Pronounced por'-nay

feminine of GSN4205; a strumpet; figuratively, **an idolater**:

KJV--harlot, whore.

Fornication as used throughout the Bible, in context has to do with idolatry, which would include any and all of the sins listed on the numerous sin lists. It can and does include sexual sin, but it includes a whole lot more and is in no way confined only to sexual sin.

The Complete Works of Josephus

(23) Let her, therefore, be obedient to him; **not so that he should abuse her**, but that she may acknowledge her duty to her husband; for God hath given the authority to the husband. A husband, therefore, is to lie only with his wife whom he hath married; but to have to do with another man's wife is a wicked thing, which, if any one ventures upon, death is inevitably his punishment: no more can he avoid the same who forces a virgin betrothed to another man, or entices another man's wife. The law, moreover, enjoins us to bring up all our offspring, and forbids women to cause abortion of what is begotten, or to destroy it

afterward; and if any woman appears to have so done, she will be a murderer of her child, by destroying a living creature, and diminishing human kind; **if any one, therefore, proceeds to such fornication or murder, he cannot be clean.**

What this verse 9 is saying, is that when you divorce your mate, it has to be because your mate is participating in a lifestyle which is unholy or immoral. What is it that separates God from man/man from God? Sin! What separates people in a marriage situation? Generally what separates people within a marriage, is when one mate is an alcoholic, an adulterer, an abuser or any number of other sinful lifestyles that affect and hurt the other members within the family involved. God does not bind people into sinful situations, and God does not have one law for men and another law for women. God does not have a different law for your mate than applies to your friends or other church members.

God's law is a law of love and has been since the beginning.

34. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. John 13:34-35

John 13:34-35 comes from the law and is found in Leviticus 19:18. **Who is your closest neighbour?** It would be your mate in marriage.

18. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but **thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:** I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:18

Is there one law for other people and a different law for your mate? No there is not.

16. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you. Numbers 15:16

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

10. And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11. But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

If one looks at 1 Corinthians, Chapter

7 in it's entirety, you will see a distinction being made between believers and non-believers. There is only one law for all people and the only reason a believer can divorce a mate is by the law of God. If a person does not divorce according to the law of God, they best not marry another person, but be reconciled or remain single. These scriptures still make it very clear that a person who is following God's way is not under any kind of bondage to an unbelieving mate who departs. Again all marriages are bound by the law of God, and his law is one of love.

15. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. 1 Corinthians 7:15

ABUSE

Many people, especially men, seem to feel that marriage is forever even when there is abuse involved. Again, let me remind everyone: God's way is love and Satan's way is hate. **Is Abuse considered love or hate?**

Here is what Jesus has to say in regard to both mental abuse and physical abuse.

25. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26. **But it shall not be so among you:** but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister (servant);

27. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Matthew 20:25-27

If we are not to exercise dominion over each other as the body of Christ, then why would it be right to exercise dominion over your mate or as they call it mental abuse of your closest neighbour by means of control.

48. But and if that **evil servant** shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49. And **shall begin to smite his fellow servants,** and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50. The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the

hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 24:48-51

Smite--Strong's Ref. # 5180

Romanized tupō

Pronounced toop'-to

a primary verb (in a strengthened form); to "thump", i.e. cudgel or pummel (properly, with a stick or bastinado), but in any case by **repeated blows**; thus differing from GSN3817 and GSN3960, which denote a [usually single] blow with the hand or any instrument, or GSN4141 with the fist [or a hammer], or GSN4474 with the palm; as well as from GSN5177, an accidental collision); by implication, to punish; figuratively, to offend (the conscience):

KJV--**beat**, smite, strike, wound.

It sure doesn't look to me like smiting your fellow servant is right according to God and remember your mate is a fellow servant. It clearly looks like it is totally against God's law and for those of you who are **promoting** it as part of God's law of love, notice how you will be appointed your portion with the hypocrites.

If there are other questions in regard to this, please ask. I will do the best I can to clearly answer them. If you feel I need correction on any part of this, please show me my errors. Laura Lee

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ON PAGE #2.

Laura Lee (Editor)

NEWSLETTER--BACK ISSUES [Snail Mail Only]

- _____ 1. January/February 2001--Issue No. 1
 - A. UCG Attendance Policy Raises More Questions (From Servant's News)
 - B. Humor--Public Service Announcement (From Servant's News)
 - C. Ending the Cycle of Abuse in the Church of God--by Laura Lee
- _____ 2. March/April 2001--Issue No.2
 - A. Humor--A Parable and Evolution
 - B. Is Disfellowshipping a Christian Practice?--by Arlan Weight
 - C. Just Judgment Important for Local Congregations--by Darwin Lee & Norman Edwards
 - D. Letter of Appeal--by Ned Dancuo
 - E. Go To Your Brother....--by Arlan Weight
- _____ 3. May/June 2001--Issue No. 3
 - A. Are You Busy?--by Turning Point Ranch Ministries
 - B. Letters Section--What is Anger? What is a Heart? What is Division? What is Individual Responsibility?
 - C. Passover--by Arlan Weight
 - D. Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage--by Laura Lee
- _____ 4. July/August 2001--Issue No. 4
 - A. The Titanic--Then and Now--by Myra McQueen
 - B. Woe....--by Tawanda Ray (Poem)
 - C. Testimony of Abuse Within the Church of God--by Tawanda Ray
 - D. Bear Witness--by Tawanda Ray (Poem)
 - E. God's Government--by Arlan Weight
 - F. Gifts of the Spirit--by Laura Lee
- _____ 5. September/October 2001--Issue No. 5
 - A. Where Are God's People?--by Laura Lee
 - B. They Sang As It Were A New Song Before The Throne--by Author Unknown
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 - D. Missing Mercy and Love Ingredients--Part #1--by Ted Saunders
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