

INTERDEPENDENT-INTERACTIVE, CHURCH OF GOD, SABBATH SERVICES,
BIBLE STUDIES, AND OPEN FELLOWSHIP, PLUS THIS NEWSLETTER

March/April 2003-Issue No. 14

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, April 4, 2003
Friday, May 16, 2003
Friday, June 27, 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 May/June 2003 Newsletter is April 15, 2003. Thank You. Laura Lee (Editor)

E-MAIL & SNAIL MAIL:

Prayer-Requests-Darwin-Laura@juno.com Send your prayer requests here. They will go out via email.

Newsletter-Only-Darwin-Laura@juno.com The deadline for Issue #15--May/June 2003 is April 15, 2003.

Answer-Me-Darwin-Laura@juno.com If you want us to answer your email, send it here.

Darwin-Laura@juno.com If you want us to read it, and delete it, send it here.

FAX--Our Fax number is: (775) 239-2119.

SNAIL MAIL--Our snail mail address is Darwin & Laura Lee, PO Box 2333, Bismarck, ND 58502.

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.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSER:

We do not charge for the services that we provide to the brethren. We also do not take any wages from the gift donations we are sent. The services we provide do however cost us money. In 2001 expenses for services provided were **-\$4537.29**. We received **+\$1368.00** in gift donations for 2001, leaving us with a balance of **-\$3169.29**. In 2002 expenses for services provided were **-\$4066.37**. We received **+\$1737.00** in gift donations for 2002, leaving us with a balance of **-\$2329.37**.

Donations for 2003 total **+\$350.00**. Expenses for 2003 are as follows: Postage **-\$193.79**, Telephone **-\$4.26**, Internet Services **-\$29.95**, Printing Charges **-\$249.84**, and Local Services **-\$3.40**. Total balance for 2003 is: **-\$131.24**.

We truly appreciate the help we receive in helping others. Thank you Darwin & Laura Lee.

CAL-PRESS LITERATURE

Free sample packet and "Literature List 101". Our literature is Bible info. i.e. prophecy, health, fellowship, kingdom of God, church of God versus churches of men, etc.

Write: Al Van Dyk, PO Box 1035, Bella Vista, CA 96008---<http://www.deathversuslife.com>

GOD'S LITTLE LIBRARY

This is a non-denominational Christian library, located in Southern Wisconsin. The primary purpose of it is to prove the existence and attributes of God by proving the truthfulness of the Holy Bible. The services of the library are free, except there would be a small amount of postage necessary to return the borrowed items. If anyone reading this has weakness of faith or other difficulties in the areas of creation by the Lord Jesus Christ, Earth ages, lack of inspiration, attack by the occultic realm, confusion about scripture, poor health or related difficulties; make contact: God's Little Library, 801 Hamilton Dr., Mt. Horeb, WI 53573 or call 608-437-5699; or e-mail garycwitte@hotmail.com

Service To the Brethren Opportunities in Bismarck, North Dakota

WANTED INDIVIDUALS OR FAMILIES TO BE HOSTS FOR SABBATH DAY SERVICES & FELLOWSHIP

We understand that not everyone sees or believes everything exactly the same way, however should we let this stop us from fellowshiping with others or from learning how others see or believe? There are things which as Sabbath Keepers we all have in common and there are also many things we can maybe learn from each other. The main point here is for us as God's people to love each other, and that includes showing respect for all even when asking questions or holding discussions. We want everyone to feel comfortable in attending here, so we are offering everyone the opportunity to Host services here. The only requirements are that you sign up at least 7 days before you want to host and that you do not host 2 Saturdays in a row--let others have a chance. For Saturday Sabbath Services, #1, #2, and #3 below are the responsibility of the Host. For Bible Studies only #1 and #3 below would apply as a Host's responsibilities. If you have questions, please feel free to ask us either by telephone: (701) 258-7172 (Leave a message, your call will be returned.) or E-mail us at Answer-Me-Darwin-Laura@Juno.com

The Host sign up sheet will be posted on the dining room side of our refrigerator. You may sign up by phone or email, by letting us know what date you want. We will notify you as to whether the date you have chosen is open or if someone else already has signed up for that date. The very first date available for sign up is January 18, 2003 and beyond.

This is a great opportunity for all to run Sabbath Services the way they think they should be run. Please sign up soon.

WHAT IS A HOST RESPONSIBLE FOR?

1. The Opening and Closing Prayer----A. If the host wants a person other than himself to give an opening or closing prayer, the Host must be sure to arrange with another person ahead of time, to give either the opening or closing prayer.
2. The Song Service (Including Special Music)----A. We are able to provide cassette tape, CD disk, or record playing facilities for your selections.----B. Host can bring and play their own musical instruments.----C. We do have song books here to make your selections from.----D. If you use your own music, please bring at least 10 copies of each song or at least 10 song books, so we have enough for everyone who attends.----E. In a pinch we do have an on premises copy machine.----F. We have no piano or musical instruments of any kind here.
3. The Sabbath Message (Can include phone hookup, cassette tape, CD, video VCR or DVD, Scripture Reading, Presentation or Sermon etc.)----A. We are able to provide facilities for the above listed options. We also have a couple of different microphones here as well as a speaker system which goes throughout the house.----B. All presentations given, whether given by the host personally or by whatever of the above options the Host chooses, there will be interactive discussion and/or question and answer sessions afterwards.

In general the host or host family is responsible to run the entire Sabbath Experience for the week they have signed up for. Darwin will always run our equipment, so he is the one the host must see to give videos, tapes, DVDs etc. to and inform him what to expect as far as how these things fit into the Host's presentations. Laura will have coffee ready and anyone may bring treats to share. We have no children here, so we have no toys here. We do have crayons and coloring and written projects children may do quietly during presentations. Parents are encouraged to also bring things for their own children to do while they are here. All children should be supervised by parents at all times.

SATAN'S FATE

What do you think will be the ultimate fate of the devil? Some people believe Satan will be jailed in a dark wilderness once God has no more use for him. Others say Satan now is a ruler, a king (or will become one sometime in the future) presiding over a burning underworld filled with the lost souls of all humanity. Notice that both of these traditional teachings allow Satan continuance of life. However, that is not how God works. Life is a reward for righteousness and for evil there will be eternal death.

Were you aware that the Bible actually foretells the devil's ultimate fate, and rather clearly at that! If you have always wondered about the ultimate fate of the devil, maybe you even believe the devil will eventually be destroyed but could not prove it, then this booklet is for you. Its title is: *Satan Dies*, and it is free for the asking.

The story of Satan begins with Lucifer a beautiful cherub made by God before the Earth was created. It was Lucifer's task to stand next to God's throne. The Bible calls Lucifer "the anointed cherub that covered", but he rebelled to become The Adversary of God and mankind.

The booklet *Satan Dies* reviews the available scriptures by putting them in chronological order as a story. It contains no guess work nor personal assumptions by the author. There is no ranting or raving. Just scriptural facts. *Satan Dies* is free. There is no join a group. There will be no follow up asking for donations. Mail your request to:

Ministry Publications
P.O. Box 715 - Cottonwood, AZ 86326

SABBATH SERVICES--CHURCH OF GOD AT MT. PLEASANT, TEXAS

If some of the brethren may "have" to be traveling through northeast Texas on the Sabbath they are welcome to stop by and worship with us. We are so conveniently located at the intersection of Interstate 30 & Highway 271 N., in the meeting room of Luigi's Restaurant from 12 noon till 3:30PM everyone is welcome, good food, and fellowship (pastor Ian Hufton). The last Sabbath in the month we have Children's Sabbath at New Boston's community room at 11:30AM. Contact: suec@lcii.net

We are now listed in the yellow pages of the local Bismarck, North Dakota phone directory, under "Churches-Non-Denominational". Our listing reads **In Home Saturday Fellowship-Church of God Bismarck 258-7172**.

We decided to do this in an effort to reach out to our local community, as well as to those who might just be passing through town and in need of Sabbath Fellowship. Our area code is 701 and if the county phone directory picks up this listing in July 2003 it will go out to the entire state of North Dakota. Laura Lee

PASSOVER IN BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

We will observe Passover here at 320 N. Griffin St., on the evening of Wednesday, April 16, 2003, at Sunset. We will serve a meal. Because we are serving a meal, we do need to know ahead of time whether you are coming or not, because we will need for anyone who attends to also supply some of the food which is served and we need to know so we can have enough tables and chairs set up for those in attendance. Please bring your own tub and towel if you plan to participate in the foot washing observance. The next day, Thursday, April 17, 2003, on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, we will have services at 1:00PM. The door will be open at 12:00 noon for fellowship. At 5:00PM for anyone who would like to join us, we will meet for a meal and fellowship at the "Royal Fork Buffet Restaurant" in Bismarck. On Wednesday, April 23, 2003, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, we will have services at 1:00PM. The door will be open at 12:00 noon for fellowship. At 5:00PM for anyone who would like to join us, we will meet for a meal and fellowship at the "Bonanza Family Restaurant" in Mandan. We realize that not all people will be observing Passover or the Days of Unleavened Bread on the same days, so with this in mind, if you need a place to observe these days differently than we do, please contact us and if we can help you in anyway, we certainly will try.

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

BIBLES FOR OUR YOUTH

by Yann & Margaret Vidal
Bunnell, Florida

In Memory of Misty Green

To be free of Life's misery **Enchanted by the symmetry of a God filled challenge**

This life, such hypocrisy Honey melting in my eye

Of distant dreams and purple sky

Unity of family: Father, Brother, Mother.

I vividly in vision freedom; barefoot in the Sky From my thoughts to God's ears

Piercing infinity to infinity, wisdom, love, and grace filled tears

Hear nigh oh Lord, Father, Ruler, and King

Fill my thoughts and deepest of dreams Of a love so true, let freedom draw nigh

And meet me here on dawns filled emerald sky

A poem by Misty Green

This story is sent to you in loving memory of my daughter Misty Rachelle Green. Written January 26, 2001

**A Daughter's Baptism:
A Mother's Thoughts
by Margaret Vidal**

It was a beautiful, fall day as we drove into Tyler, Texas. One of those sunny, fall days, you can hear the birds singing and feel invigorated by the cool, fresh air. The fall leaves were gorgeous, all colors, scattered like carpet over the rolling hills. As we pulled into the church parking lot, I smiled to myself bubbling with excitement. I had every reason to be excited. My twenty one year old daughter, Misty, was meeting us for an eight-day

church festival. Misty was living in Dallas and attending Dallas Institute of Art. This church festival was exciting to me for many reasons: not only would I get to spend eight days with my daughter, but also Misty announced, just a few weeks prior, that she wanted to be baptized at this festival. Misty had planned her baptism so that my husband, Yann, and I could be present for this wonderful event. I was so proud of her.

When Misty was a little girl, I hoped and dreamed this day would come. I would watch her play and wondered what kind of young lady she would grow up to be. Now, here she stood: sweet, a little quiet, and sometimes a little shy, but still very independent and hard working with a strong sense of right and wrong. I wouldn't have asked for a better daughter. I often prayed and hoped that God would stand in the gap for me. I knew that I wasn't the perfect mother, and I hoped that God would cover all my mistakes and bring her up in the right direction. God did what I had asked and so much more. I kept thinking God is faithful. He keeps his promises. I was almost singing it over and over in my mind.

Misty was nervous when we finally met the minister. I couldn't help but notice what a beautiful daughter I had; her pretty brown hair emphasized her green hazel eyes, which complimented her slender frame. She asked the minister if I could be with her for counseling and he said, "That would be fine," with a broad smile across his face.

The minister was an older man, in his sixties, average height and build with gray hair. He had a very mellow personality and told some jokes as we talked. At the end, he asked a few serious questions. Misty answered them eagerly. The counseling was promptly over. Misty and I, realizing the importance of the moment, slowly started to have tears in our eyes. The minister didn't notice at first then quickly began to reassure us of his intentions. He encouraged Misty by telling her that he felt she was very sincere, and the baptism would take place on Saturday the last day of the festival. Misty and I both relaxed and started to breathe normally again.

The last day came very quickly, and the church service itself was beautiful. Now it was time for Misty's baptism. Yann, Misty and I met the minister at the baptismal area, and Misty and I

exchanged reassuring smiles as she climbed into the water. It was like we could read each other's mind. Misty felt, as I, that this service was a symbol of her promise to live a Christian life. She seemed fairly calm, no tears, I just noticed her hands shaking a little. I wish that I could have said the same, but thankfully no one had noticed me so far. The service was brief. After a few words, Misty was laid back into the warm water, and then she stepped out of the water with the help of the minister. A few minutes later, the minister requested that we touch Misty as he prayed God's blessings and protection over her. Tears started streaming down Misty's face as we prayed, and I couldn't hide my tears any longer.

This day was a wonderful day and one that I will always remember full of joy and faith, because I know God always keeps His promises. Sometimes I worry about Misty, going to school so far away, but I know that God loves her more than I do. God is faithful. In Jeremiah 29:11, God reveals His plan for us all, a plan for a future and hope. What better reassurance can we have than that?

**Bibles for Our Youth
In Loving Memory
of Misty Rachelle Green**

Misty was born on January 28, 1979; Misty was baptized on October 21, 2000 in Big Sandy, Texas on the Last Great Day of the Feast of Tabernacles; Misty died on January 2, 2003 just a few weeks prior to her 24th birthday. Misty loved to read her Bible. ***God's love for Misty and the words in Jeremiah 29:11 help us to have faith and look forward to a promising future for her.*** However, God has an awesome plan for all of us, a plan for a future and hope. When Misty was a young teen, we gave her a Life Application Bible. She read the entirety of the bible that first year. She was reading scripture in Daniel the day of her death. In Misty's honor and to honor our Father in heaven, we have started a Bible Fund for young teens. We would like every young teen in need of a Bible to have one. You can help us in this quest in a variety of ways: any teen or young adult ages 9 through 25 in need of a Bible please send us their name and address, as well as,

the type of Bible they desire. You can contribute to Bibles For Our Youth (all monies will be utilized for purchasing Bibles). If you have the same passion we have, you can start a Bible Fund in your area. May God bless you in your work. Please write us and let us know of your accomplishments.

Yann and Margaret Vidal
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QUESTIONS?
by Alan Ruth
Farmington Hills, Michigan

Below is a press release regarding The Bible Study Web Site at Biblestudy.org
*Alan Ruth
Founder/Webmaster of BibleStudy.org
Email: webmaster@biblestudy.org
January, 2003

Press Release

**BibleStudy.org Popularity
Increases 40% in 2002.
Hundreds of Questions
Submitted For Answers.
Farmington Hills, Mich.**

Visitors to The Bible Study Web Site at BibleStudy.org request 1,400,000 of its Web pages in 2002. This number represents a 40% INCREASE from the previous year and an increase of 89% from year 2000 figures.

Alan Ruth, sole Webmaster and owner of the Bible Study site, stated that one of the primary reasons for the increase was the unexpected success of a new section on the site. This new section, Mr. Ruth said, is called Personalized Answers to Bible Questions.

According to Alan, his site began to offer in late September, 2002 personalized answers to questions submitted by Internet visitors. Email questions submitted to the site are answered by one of fifteen church of God

You cannot get a virus this way. The people putting out these alerts always have some provocative Subject line like, "It Takes Guts to Say 'Jesus'". Fact is, if this kind of virus existed, the Subject line could be something simple and more apt to be opened like "Thank You" or "CNN News Report" or any innocent wording. Also, if these types of viruses did exist, there would be widespread destruction being reported among computer users and news media.

How to Identify a Hoax

There are several methods to identify virus hoaxes, but first consider what makes a successful hoax on the Internet. There are two known factors that make a successful virus hoax, they are:

- (1) technical sounding language, and
- (2) credibility by association.

If the warning uses the proper technical jargon, most individuals, including technologically savvy individuals, tend to believe the warning is real. For example, the Good Times hoax says that "...if the program is not stopped, the computer's processor will be placed in an nth-complexity infinite binary loop which can severely damage the processor...". The first time you read this, it sounds like it might be something real. With a little research, you find that there is no such thing as an nth-complexity infinite binary loop and that processors are designed to run loops for weeks at a time without damage.

When we say credibility by association we are referring to whom sent the warning. If the janitor at a large technological organization sends a warning to someone outside of that organization, people on the outside tend to believe the warning because the company should know about those things. Even though the person sending the warning may not have a clue what he is talking about, the prestige of the company backs the warning, making it appear real. If a manager at the company sends the warning, the message is doubly backed by the company's and the manager's reputations.

Individuals should also be especially alert if the warning urges you to pass it on to your friends. This should raise a red flag that the warning may be a hoax. Another flag to watch for is when the warning indicates that it is a Federal Communication Commission (FCC)

warning. According to the FCC, they have not and never will disseminate warnings on viruses. It is not part of their job.

Validate a Warning

The Computer Incident Advisory Capability (CIAC) recommends that you DO NOT circulate virus warnings without first checking with an authoritative source. Authoritative sources are your computer system security administrator or your computer incident advisory team. Real warnings about viruses and other network problems are issued by different response teams (CIAC, CERT, ASSIST, NASIRC, etc.) and are digitally signed by the sending team using PGP. PGP stands for Pretty Good Privacy. This is a public-key encryption tool that allows you to encrypt and sign e-mails and files.

If you download a warning from a teams web site or validate the PGP signature, you can usually be assured that the warning is real. Warnings without the name of the person sending the original notice, or warnings with names, addresses and phone numbers that do not actually exist are probably hoaxes. For more about PGP signatures go to this web site:

<http://www.pgp.net/pgpnet/pgp-faq/>

Another area of concern is Internet chain letters that may or may not be true. For more information on Internet chain letters reference:

<http://ciac.inl.gov/ciac/CIACChainLetters.html>

What to Do When You Receive a Warning

Contact that person to see if he/she really wrote the warning and if he/she really touched the virus. If he/she is passing on a rumor or if the address of the person does not exist or if there is any questions about the authenticity or the warning, do not circulate it to others. Instead, send the warning to your computer security manager or your incident response team and let them validate it. When in doubt, do not send it out to the world.

Sincerely,
Chris Cumming
Personal Correspondence
<http://www.garnertedarmstrong.ws>

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.

12-29-2002
by **Fred Brettell, Jr.**
Mingo Junction, Ohio

This letter refers back to another letter written by Fred Brettell which can be found in Issue #13 on page 9.

FRED WRITES:

Dear Laura Lee:

I am quoting what you wrote in your last letter. "Actually I see no clear scriptures which tell us absolutely that the Sabbath and Holy Days will or will not exist in eternity."

There-fore we both agree there is no clear Biblical answer to this dilemma.

EDITORS NOTE:

No, we do not agree on this "dilemma" as you put it. I gave you many very clear scriptures showing that we are to keep the Sabbath and Holy Days right now. Please read **Hebrews 5:9 "And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;"**. According to this,

we will not have to worry about eternity, if we do not obey now, because only those who obey will get eternal salvation. Laura Lee

FRED WRITES:

Since there is no proof I have to use human reasoning and human logic, hopefully guided by the Spirit of Christ.

EDITORS NOTE:

Isaiah 5:21 Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! If you are truly guided by the Spirit of Christ, you will be doing what Christ has instructed you to do in the Bible, and you will not be leaving issues in regard to your salvation up to your own human reasoning and logic. Laura Lee

FRED WRITES:

I have been taught that the Sabbath and Holy Days are spiritual laws of God and are eternal and cannot be done away with or broken or cease to exist. If this is true then we all will be keeping track of Friday sunset and Saturday sunset out in eternity for ever and ever, keeping the Passover for ever, counting 50 days every year to find what day to keep Pentecost, for ever keeping the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, for ever observing the Feast of Tabernacles.

EDITORS NOTE:

Luke 16:17 And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. It sounds like keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days would be a burden for you. Who is your Master? God or Satan? Who do you follow? God or Satan? Laura Lee

FRED WRITES:

Human reason and human logic tells me God is not subjected to time, chance and space like we are. Jesus is the Light of the world, no darkness, no night or minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years etc.

All things began to change when Jesus died for all our sins and was resurrected to life eternal. There are verses that indicate God's kingdom is future, there are verses revealing God's kingdom is present today, both are true.

When Jesus Christ literally returns to this earth and after a series of events He

will lead us out into eternity where all things, and all must mean all, will be totally new. We don't need a rerun of the world today.

EDITORS NOTE:

1. And I saw a **new heaven** and a **new earth**: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
2. And I John saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven**, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people**, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.
6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
8. But the fearful, and **unbelieving**, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, **shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.** (Revelation 21:1-8)

Please look at the evil world that you are living in today. The kingdom of God is yet future and will be right here on earth. Those who continue to break the law of God will not be in eternity. Laura Lee

FRED WRITES:

I willingly admit I might be wrong! But thank God Salvation does not depend on keeping the Sabbath Day or the Holy Days. Salvation is a free gift, however the Sabbath Day and the Holy Days may

have something to do with future rewards but that's another interesting subject.

EDITORS NOTE:

155. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes. (Psalms 119:155)

39. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.
40. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.
41. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a **statute** for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. (Leviticus 23:39-41)

❖ Romans 6:23. For the **wages of sin is death**; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

❖ Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, **we establish the law.**

Scripture clearly shows that eternal life is a gift, but this gift will not be given to those who do not keep the law of God. The Sabbath and Holy Days are clearly part of God's law. See Leviticus 23 the entire chapter. Laura Lee

FRED WRITES:

If you think my reply is worthy to be answered and printed you may do so.

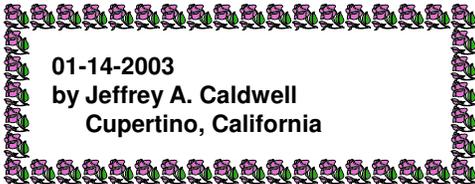
In Christian Love
Fred Brettell, Jr.

PS--The one and only spiritual law that is eternal and will exist out in eternity is love, love for God and love for neighbor. Please remember, "we don't need a rerun of the world today!"

EDITORS NOTE:

You are correct that we do not need a rerun of the world today, which is clearly why God will not let any law breakers have eternal life. Laura Lee

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.



01-14-2003
by Jeffrey A. Caldwell
Cupertino, California

Dear friends,

I was pleased to see the articles in the current issue of *The Good News* about James and the bone box that is probably his -- the most edifying treatment of the subject I've seen yet. They can be viewed as a pdf file online, see pages 20-24 in the January-February 2003 issue accessible from:

<http://ucg.org/articles/gn/index.html>

But there is one fact about James omitted from their profile of his faith, that, if included, would've made the witness of his faith even more persuasive and edifying.

In the oldest New Testament manuscripts the books are ordered differently from New Testaments today -- James, not Romans, follows Acts as the first of the epistles! In the oldest manuscripts the "general epistles" of James, Peter, John and Jude immediately follow Acts-- instead of Romans and Paul's other letters to Gentile churches, as in traditional Christian bibles. The book order of the New Testament was scrambled by the early Roman Catholic hierarchy to exalt Rome by making the epistle to Rome first among the epistles, followed by Paul's other epistles to Gentile congregations. This tradition of scrambling makes the New Testament harder to rightly understand in reading it through.

As Peter says, Paul's "letters contain some things that are hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16, **NIV**) -- so why does traditional Christianity put them before letters that come first in the oldest original manuscripts, are easier to understand, and address fundamentals -- the general epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude? I find Ernest L. Martin's thesis about the significance of the original manuscript order of the Old and New Testaments -- **Restoring the Original Bible** -- very

edifying. He argues that apostolic teaching is easier to rightly understand if the New Testament books are read in the order of the earliest manuscripts, instead of the revised order of Roman Catholicism, which became the traditional standard for Christianity. [Find information about Martin's book at:

<http://www.centuryone.com/5783-8.html>]

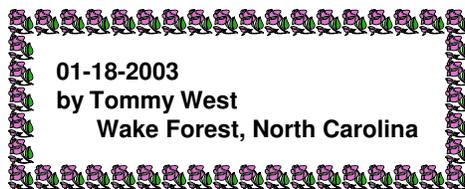
The Transparent English Version <http://www.centuryone.org/translation.html>

a translation in progress, promises to become the first rendition of Old Testament and New Testament books in English presented in their original manuscript order. It also includes several other innovations to make the original text more "visible" to English readers. As far as I know, there's no New Testament in English with its books arranged in the order of the oldest manuscripts! And there is only one Old Testament for Christians in English with its books arranged in the traditional order mentioned by Christ -- it is in the Complete Jewish Bible, a title picked up by few Christians! Sadly, its New Testament follows the traditional Roman Catholic book ordering -- an ordering reflecting prejudice against the Jews and the apostles to them by relegating their general epistles to an "appendix" position. [Find information about the Complete Jewish Bible at:

<http://www.innvista.com/scriptures/versions/cjb.htm>]

I consider The Original Bible Project <http://www.centuryone.org/obp.html>, which is generating the Transparent English Version translation, worthy of note and support.

best regards,
Jeffrey Caldwell



01-18-2003
by Tommy West
Wake Forest, North Carolina

This letter is in regard to the following articles: "Who Is, or Is Not Free to Marry?" by Rhoda Foust, Williamsburg, Indiana, which was

printed in Issue #11, another letter written by Tommy West, Wake Forest, North Carolina, which was printed in Issue #13 and starts on page 11.

TOMMY'S LETTER:

Darwin and Laura,

Many thanks for your last newsletter, **January/February 2003, Issue #13**. True to form, this issue was of the same high quality as the last 12 have been.

Thanks, too, for allowing me the unique opportunity to respond to what is becoming to your readers an on-going debate on the continual importance of **marriage, divorce and remarriage**. I feel that I must respond even once again to your rebuttals of my response to Rhoda Foust's recent article on the subject at hand as well as to my letter in **Issue #13** on the same subject.

In **Issue #13**, top of page, left column, first paragraph, second and third sentences we read: "*You have now written two letters to me, but neither one of them explains how people are joined by God in marriage. Is it by marriage license, contract, sex, or by some other means?*" Those are two very important questions which hit at the heart of the issue at hand. My opinion is irrelevant. Let's look at what Jesus says: **Matt. 19: 4-6** -- "**And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning *made them male and female*** [He quoted here part of *Gen 1:27* and *Gen. 5:2* both of which are part of God's law and Jewish law]. **V. 5 -- 'and said, *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*? V. 6 -- 'So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate'"** (NKJV throughout) This is the only definition of human marriage allowable by God. It should need no further explanation.

EDITORS NOTE:

You are only quoting part of the law in regard to the subject of marriage and divorce. What are you going to do with the rest of the scriptures in the law regarding this subject? Laura Lee

TOMMY'S LETTER:

Moving along, let's look at the bottom of page 13, left column, where in your

editor's note you assert that in both instances in **Matthew**; that is, **vs. 5:32** and **19:9**, where the phrase *except for fornication* is found, you challenge me to explain my reasoning as to what this phrase is. Then, in the very next paragraph, you answer the question.

EDITORS NOTE:

You seem to be misquoting me here from Issue #13. I did not answer this. Read it again. I asked you two questions. They are:

- ⇒ Explain what these exception clauses are which appear in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9?
- ⇒ What is the definition of fornication, according to the Bible?

I was asking you to explain these scriptures, and I believe a good teacher would have either answered these questions or simply said they did not know what the answer to either question was. You did neither. Laura Lee

TOMMY'S LETTER:

NOTE: If you believe verse 6, as quoted above, which is also quoted in Mark 10:7-8, where there is NO exception clause, then I leave it up to you to explain what the phrase [except for fornication] means. THE VERY FACT THAT JESUS MADE NO EXCEPTION TO MATT. 19:6 OR TO MARK 10:7-8 SHOULD ONCE AND FOR ALL RESOLVE THE ISSUE. UNFORTUNATELY, IT HAS NOT.

EDITORS NOTE:

Using trickery will not work. Your doctrine as being promoted by you will not work because you cannot seem to explain all the scriptures which pertain to your subject. You cannot explain how Matthew 5:32 or Matthew 19:9 fits into the marriage, divorce and remarriage issue, so you just throw them out as invalid. Just because the exception clauses are not exactly where you think they should be, does not mean they can be thrown out. Since Christ himself spoke those two exception clauses, I am sure he would not be happy that you invalidated them. Laura Lee

TOMMY'S LETTER:

In the last sentence of your **EDITOR'S NOTE**, you wrote, "God always held both the man and the woman responsible for

committing adultery. My advice on your point two would be, to be less concerned about Jewish law and more concerned about God's law." To that, I would refer you to Jesus' response to the woman at the well as related in **John 4:22** -- **"You worship what you do not know. we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."** Also see **Rom. 3:1-2** -- **"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."**

NOTE: When compared to the marvelous light and truth of the doctrines of Christianity, Judaic scriptures in some points have been observed to be erroneous, yet, AS A WHOLE, JEWISH LAW, THE TANACH, IS CORRECT AND TRUE AND IT IS STILL BINDING TODAY.

EDITORS NOTE:

If we are talking about the Holy Scriptures as God gave them to the Jewish people to preserve for him that is one thing. If we are talking about all the things the Jewish people added to the Law of God that is another thing.

In your last letter you are the one that brought Jewish Law in, and for what reason you did, is not at all clear as it does not pertain to the subject being discussed here and if it does, please explain how it does, because right now it only looks as if you bring in these side issues for no other purpose than to cause confusion. Laura Lee

TOMMY'S LETTER:

At the bottom of the center column of page 13, and following your **EDITOR'S NOTE**. Darwin writes: 'In regard to your statement: "(It might also be noted that most Bible scholars contend that Mark wrote his epistle from having heard the words directly from the apostle Peter)"' Then he remarks. "#1 --Mark's book is well known by most serious Bible Students as the Gospel of Mark, not an Epistle." **NOTE: Here is how Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary TENTH EDITION defines epistle 1. cap a: one of the letters adopted as books of the New Testament. (The word is from the Greek, epistole, and means letter). The book of Mark is indeed an epistle, BUT IS MORE IMPORTANTLY A**

GOSPEL since it depicts the life of Christ. Back to Darwin's comments: "#2 -- "Bible Scholars?" If that can be proven from scripture that Mark heard *the words* as you state here from Peter first, then we need clear scripture that proves that, other wise its just that, contend, which equals *scholars opinion*. I refer to **Matt. 10:1-4** and **Luke 6:12-16** where both sets of scripture **clearly** name the twelve apostles. Mark, the author of the second gospel, is **not** mentioned in either. That is because Mark was *not an apostle*. **NOTE: Since Mark was NOT an apostle and since his gospel account of our Saviour's life has been preserved as inspired writing, THE QUESTION BEGS, "WHERE DID HE GET HIS ACCOUNT?" The early church UNANIMOUSLY HELD THAT MARK WROTE THE SECOND GOSPEL AND THAT IT WAS THE PREACHING OF PETER. Here is what the NASB Study Bible says in it's INTRODUCTION to Mark: "Although there is no direct evidence of authorship, it is the unanimous testimony of the early church that this Gospel was written by John Mark." It goes on to say that "Mark was a close associate of Peter, from whom he received the tradition of the things said and done by the Lord." There are other references to support this claim, one of which is ZONDERVAN'S PICTORIAL BIBLE DICTIONARY.**

I still have not addressed all the central differences held on the original subject of **marriage, divorce and remarriage** but this letter is a bit long as it is. Perhaps you will allow me the privilege to respond next time.

Sincerely,
Tommy West

EDITORS NOTE:

Immediately following this note you will find Darwin's response in regard to this matter.

In regard to the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage. I am in no way saying that marriage is something that should be entered into lightly. What I am saying is that marriage, divorce and remarriage should always be done according to the Law of God.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was not explained by you. You also were not able to explain the exception clauses as stated

by Christ in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9. And of course, you as most people clearly are not able to explain what fornication is.

If you are going to teach a doctrine to anyone, you clearly should be able to fit all the scriptures together which pertain to that subject. A good teacher would also be able to answer questions or simply say that you do not know. You publicly failed on both counts.

Essentially what you had to do in order to create a doctrine based on one scripture, was to throw out any scriptures which did not fit into your doctrine, which was most of them.

I hope that if you want to continue in this conversation, that you will please explain your doctrine in light of all the scriptures pertaining to the subject. If you cannot do that, there is not much sense in your continuing to go over your one scripture doctrine, as I feel you have pretty much shown after three letters to us on this subject, that in order to make your doctrine work, you must invalidate many other scriptures which pertain to this subject. You also cannot answer questions and in an attempt to protect your private, made up doctrine you use trickery to deceive people into believing you (see the 3rd Editors Note in this letter).

If you have some new materials to present on the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage, great, if not I believe we can better use our print space for real doctrines which can be proven directly from the Bible. Doctrines which take all the scriptures into account.

In the article section of this newsletter, please read the article "**What is Fornication?**" Fornication can be explained from the Bible. Laura Lee

DARWIN'S RESPONSE:

Gospel of Mark verses "Epistle of Mark"? I apologize and am guilty of "vain disputing of words". I well understood what epistle meant, that of being a letter. However, you admit in your own response and I quote "The book of Mark is indeed an epistle, but more importantly a gospel". Perhaps that is why I stated in my original comment to you, "Mark's book is well known by most serious Bible students as the "gospel" of Mark. So I stand guilty of "vain disputing of words".

As per your comment of my original statement about "Bible scholars"? "If that can be proven from scripture that Mark heard "the words" as you state here, from Peter first, then we need clear scripture that proves that, other wise it's just that, contend, which equals "scholars opinion". Again, in your response on this issue, you supplied no scriptures proving that Mark heard "the words" first from Peter. Then you begin to make a number of points, one of Mark not having been an apostle. I do need to point out that I did not say that Mark was an apostle, however I did imply (indirectly) in my note to you that he (Mark) was a disciple of Jesus (as one of the twelve) and as you referred to Matt. 10:1-4 and Luke 6:12-16. Mark indeed is not listed as one of the twelve. Yes, Matt.10:2 and Luke 6:13 states that Jesus called them Apostles as well as disciples. Nevertheless, you continue on and say, "the question begs, where did he (Mark) get his account? The early church unanimously held that Mark wrote the second gospel and that it was the preaching of Peter". Then you go on to quote the NSAB Study Bible and mention Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary as another source proclaiming that Mark received all of what he wrote in his letter (known by most Bible students as "the gospel of Mark") directly from Peter. I ask this question of you. Are you absolutely sure that all that Mark wrote he got directly from Peter? There is also scholarly evidence that Mark at a younger age saw and heard Jesus speak in person even though he (Mark) was not an apostle and disciple as one of the twelve of Matt. 10 and Luke 6. Notice what Nelsons Study Bible has to say on this subject:

- The emphasis on Jesus' mighty and miraculous works makes this Gospel action-packed, fresh, and vivid. Mark constantly uses the present tense to create the impression of an eyewitness account--the kind presented by an on-the-spot reporter. And just like a reporter, he speaks directly to the reader. He uses rhetorical questions that readers would likely ask themselves, such as, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (4:41). Sometimes he even addresses his audience with Jesus' words, "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (13:37). Mark wants to transform believers with his report, not merely

inform them.

- Moreover, his eyewitness accounts provide considerable detail--the emotional responses of Jesus and others, the sizes and reactions of crowds, and the appearance of men and women. The account of the Gadarene demoniac is an example of Mark's attention to detail. He uses twenty verses to tell that story, while Luke uses fourteen and Matthew writes a mere seven. Yet Mark's Gospel is the most concise of all of the Gospels, because he omits Jesus' longer discourses. In general, Mark presents the miracle-working Jesus, not the teaching Jesus.

And---

- Mark is mentioned ten times in the New Testament. His Jewish name was John (Acts 13:5, 13), but his Roman name was Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37). He lived in Jerusalem and was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4.10). He might have been the youth wearing a linen cloth at Jesus' arrest (14:51, 52), because only his Gospel mentions this incident, which occurred after all the disciples had already fled. The fact that Peter announced his miraculous jail escape at the home of Mary, Mark's widowed mother (Acts 12:12), indicates Mark had significant contact with Peter and the other leaders of the Jerusalem church.

With all that said, I believe you missed my point I made to you about your letter, which basically was that I believe God inspired all His "writers" to write what He (God) wanted them to write down word for word. As I said at first to you, and say to you again, it matters little whether Mark only heard directly from Peter "the words" he wrote in his letter (known to most of us as the gospel of Mark), which you have not proven by scripture. You only have scholars opinion for your claim and I have scholars claim that Mark saw and heard Jesus in person. It really doesn't matter.

The point in all of this is that you wrote to the editor and said the editor did not make mention of Mark 10:1-12 when the editor responded to your letter or even in her original article and as you state it is a parallel account of Matt. 19:1-9. Have you not heard the term "harmony of the gospels"? I believe God inspired all four gospel writers to write what is written in them. Not all four gospels are exactly the same. If you believe God inspired Mark to

write what he wrote, do you also believe God inspired Matthew to write what he (Matthew) wrote? If so, then you are still failing to answer the question put to you previously, "if there is no exception clause (in the divorce and remarriage issue), then how do you explain Matthew 19 verse 9? Lets pretend that I am the student and you are the teacher. I have a legitimate question here, why won't you explain Matthew 19:9 to me, for I see that as an exception clause?

In your teaching you completely continue to ignore that verse 9 is even in the Bible. IF this verse is inspired by God also as other scripture, then I would like an explanation from you because you are teaching there is no exception clause. If you can't or won't answer the question, I won't be able to put much "stock" in what you teach in this matter or in much of what ever else you may attempt to teach in any matter as your student. Even though Mark does not mention an exception clause, Matthew 19:9 does as I read it in plain English.

Either I believe all scripture is inspired including Matthew 19:9 and allow it to be part of my understanding the subject matter, or I dismiss it as Matthew's own uninspired writing not to mention Matthew supposedly is quoting what Jesus Himself said, as if you can possibly believe that. Matthew was one of the twelve, who was taught by and was with Jesus and heard what Jesus said just as Peter was with and heard what Jesus said. Did he misquote Jesus? Did he add verse 9 in his writing knowing full well Jesus really never said that? Maybe Matthew didn't hear plainly what Jesus said and just thought that is what Jesus said and now we have verse 9 that some teachers don't like or just plain can't explain.

If we can't or won't explain something when our students have a question, maybe we should get a degree in some other field other than teaching? Tommy, your argument goes like this. Mark never heard "the words" directly from Jesus that he wrote in his letter, but by Peter only (again, Peter was with and heard Jesus in person just as Matthew did), therefore since Peter didn't tell Mark any thing about the exception clause, Marks writings are a more accurate portrayal of Jesus words than Matthew's writings even though he too was with Jesus just as Peter was. The question we have to ask then, did Peter hear something different

than Matthew heard, or perhaps Peter didn't like the exception clause idea and purposely didn't tell Mark about it? There are a lot of possibilities here once we start ignoring certain scripture we don't like or just plain can't explain. If you can't explain the obvious "exception clause", why would you want to continue further dialog on this matter with the editor? Matthew 5:32 is the first time the exception clause is presented. The same questions and points mentioned above apply to this verse as well. If Jesus didn't speak those words in Matthew 5 and 19, v.32&9 respectively, then we have a major problem. If He did speak them, then you must address them and not ignore them in your teaching.

02-09-2003
by Gary Witte
Mount Horeb, Wisconsin

This letter is in regard to an article written by Alex Nicholson, titled "The Truth About Chlorine and Fluoride", which can be found on page 18 of Issue #13.

Dear Darwin & Laura:

I just wanted to take a moment to comment on the very fine article by Mr. Alex Nicholson of Canada in the current newsletter. To the best of my knowledge, having been involved tangentially in natural foods for about 30 years his information concerning fluoride is quite correct.

I would like to add a footnote for an angle on fluoride that was not mentioned, and that concerns fluoridated toothpaste. Unfluoridated toothpaste is a bit more expensive than the type that one usually finds in the grocery stores, but then of course it is worth more. It can usually be found in health food stores or ordered through catalogs.

Praise the Lord for a competitive marketplace, and that it can be retained.
Gary C. Witte

PASSOVER--SEE PAGE #4

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

**WHAT IS FORNICATION?
PART #1**

by Laura Lee
Bismarck, North Dakota

In "Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language", College Edition, we find the definition of "Fornication" to be in our English language as follows: "voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried woman and a man, especially an unmarried man: it is generally forbidden by law". This is generally the definition used by most people, even among those within the Church of God, but is this truly what the Bible says?

In the same dictionary, the 2nd definition of the word "Fornication" is as follows: "in the Bible:

- ❖ a) any unlawful sexual intercourse, including adultery,
- ❖ b) worship of idols".

In the world that we live in today, most people don't even care about not doing the action as described in the 1st definition, so why would they even give the 2nd definition any consideration? Even many of those within the Church of God feel justified in telling people they will go to the lake of fire if they do not stay married for life, even though there is a multitude of abuse going on within some marriages, than to look at what the actual Bible definition of the word is and apply it

to their own disgusting behaviors. God gives no one the right to abuse another person and that includes within the relationship of marriage.

The Analogies

Most people understand the bride of Christ to be an analogy. When Christ returns to marry his bride, He is not returning to marry only one person. Most of us understand that "The Church of God" is the bride of Christ and that "The Church of God" consists of many members. An analogy is when one uses one thing which is similar in order to explain something else, so it is more easily understood. This is what is happening when the bride of Christ is likened to the church. What is really being said in this analogy of similarities between the bride and the church is that God wants His people to be clean (righteous), undefiled, chaste, or in other words without spot or blemish which means without sin. Our goal as Christians and in order to make ourselves ready as the bride of Christ is to strive for perfection and to become sin free so that we may have eternal life.

The bride of Christ is working toward perfection without sin and is striving to follow God. Most can understand the analogy between the bride and the church, but what about the flip side of this and why is it so hard to understand the analogy between Satan's way, which is in total opposition to God's way and that God uses an analogy to explain this wrong way of life to all of us. Instead of most looking at this analogy that God gives us and applying it to our own sins, many people even within the Church of God narrowly define certain words and then use their own superior knowledge and the fact that they have only had one mate to look down on others who have been married more than one time. There are many of you out there who may have only been married one time but are still guilty of committing adultery and fornication. There are also many out there who have been married more than once and will still be part of the bride of Christ. I do not know who any of you are, but for those who are still married to their original mates, if I were you, I would not act arrogantly in my thoughts, in thinking that you are more righteous than a divorced or widowed and then remarried person, because the Bible does not say that you

are better than anyone else and clearly even goes on to show that even a person of one mate can commit just as much fornication and adultery as anyone else can.

If you are a person who is not seeking after God and striving to do as God wants you to do, then you are committing fornication and adultery against your Husband Christ. As long as a person continues not to seek after God and His way, you are by default or intentionally seeking after Satan instead. Satan is a false god, so if you continue to follow Satan, you are choosing to commit idolatry, adultery, and fornication. If people marry and divorce within the confines of God's law as it is stated in the Bible, it is not sin.

4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**
5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.
6. Whosoever **abideth (Strong's Greek #3306)** in him sinneth not: **whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.** (1 John 3:4-6)

Strong's Greek #3306

Romanized meno
Pronounced men'-o

to stay, remain, live, dwell, abide; to be in a state that begins and continues, yet may or may not end or stop. **"To abide in Christ" is to follow his example of a life obedient to the will of God:**

KJV--abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry (for), X thine own.

"The Bride of Christ" is the analogy used throughout the Bible to show us God's Way of Life. "Fornication" is the analogy used throughout the Bible to show us Satan's Way of Death. God separates himself from sin as we are also to separate from sin. We are not to participate in sin nor are we ever to go along with the sins of others and that does include all relationships between us and others including within a marriage relationship.

What happens when we go along with the sin of others in marriage?

Example one is found in Genesis. In Genesis 2:15, you can read the account where God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of good and evil, for if he did the penalty would be death. This was a command, verse 16-17 to Adam alone. Then after this Eve was created, verse 21-22 and later we find that God or Adam must have instructed Eve not to eat of the tree of good and evil, because when Satan deceived her she told Satan she wasn't to eat of the tree of good and evil, verses 3:1-5, and then in verse 6 we see that Adam and Eve who were now married, are in the garden of Eden and Eve having been deceived by Satan looks at the fruit of the tree of good and evil and she ate the fruit and she gave the fruit also to her Husband Adam to also eat. Read the verse, it says Adam was **"with her"**. Satan did not deceive Adam, and yet Adam not only did not say anything to stop his wife from eating the fruit, but he also went along with his wife's sin and participated in the sin with her.

6. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband **with her**; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6)

Later we find God Confronting Adam and Eve with their sin, read the rest of Chapter 3. God put them both out of the Garden of Eden and later they both paid the penalty for their sin by dying.

Example two is found in Acts 5:

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,
2. And kept back part of the price, **his wife also being privy to it**, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.
3. But Peter said, Ananias, **why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land?
4. Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.
5. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and

great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.
7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.
9. Then Peter said unto her, **How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?** behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.
10. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.
11. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. (Acts 5:1-11)

Here is a case of a married couple who didn't even have a reason to lie about anything, because the land was theirs and any money from it was theirs, yet they lied. Both Ananias and Sapphira, not only lied, but they conspired together to lie. Could this have been a conspiracy conceived because they wanted to look good in the eyes of their fellow brethren for giving money? What a noble thing it would be to lead the brethren into thinking that they had given all their money to the apostles, but they would still have a good share of that money to spend on themselves. Of course we cannot know Ananias and Sapphira's intent in this lie they conceived together, however we can see that God did not take this lightly. Death hit quickly.

Example three is found in 1 Samuel 25. If you read the entire chapter, you will find how David helped to protect Nabal's men, but when David sent messengers with good tidings to Nabal later, Nabal repaid David with bad for David's good. David got ready to avenge Nabal's evil. In the mean time Abigail, Nabal's wife, heard of the things her husband had done. So Abigail got together some food and went out to meet David.

The point in all of this, was that Abigail could have gone along with the evil deeds of her husband Nabal, but she did not.

Instead she sought to find David in order to repay good for good and to help save lives. As you read through chapter 25, you will also find that Abigail sought to be honest with Nabal in what she had done, but finding him drunk first, she waited until morning and then told him. Nabal died 10 days later. It says in verse 38 "the Lord smote Nabal, that he died".

God smote Nabal that he died, and God took care of Abigail. David took Abigail to be his wife, so God took care of Abigail for doing the right thing and for not going along with or participating in the evil of her husband Nabal.

I am not sure why these two ways of life are so hard for even people within the Church of God to grasp or discern. God does not want his people to go along with or participate in evil deeds or anything which would be considered sin according to the law of God. Many of you continually go along with and participate in disfellowshipping or cutting people off from yourselves and mostly for things which aren't even sin, but then the same people will turn right around and tell a woman she has to stay married to a man who beats her. If she does not stay married because she can no longer take the abuse, and goes and gets a divorce, then you tell her she must remain unmarried for life or go back to the son of Satan (the person who is abusing her). My belief here, is that many are lacking logic and common sense. Disfellowshipping is absolutely no different than divorce. Both should never be done except according to the law of God. Both divorce and disfellowshipping are done for sin and for sin only. Many people are very guilty of fornication and adultery even many who are yet physical virgins.

Old Testament

Please notice from this Strong's definition that adultery and idolatry seem to run hand in hand and even the authors of Strong's understand the analogies that I gave earlier in this article.

Strong's Hebrew-Aramaic #2181

Romanized zana
Pronounced zaw-naw'

a primitive root [highly-fed and therefore wanton]; **to commit**

adultery (usually of the female, and less often of simple fornication, rarely of involuntary ravishment); figuratively, **to commit idolatry** (the Jewish people being regarded as the spouse of Jehovah):

KJV--(cause to) commit **fornication**, X continually, X great, (be an, play the) harlot, (cause to be, play the) whore, (commit, fall to) whoredom, (cause to) go a-whoring, whorish.

Translated as:

- ◆ **harlot** 18 Times (Gen. 34:31, 38:15, Lev. 21:14, Jos. 6:17, 6:25, Jdg. 11:1, 16:1, Pr. 7:10, Isa. 1:21, 23:15, 23:16, Eze. 16:31, 16:35, Joel 3:3, Am. 7:17, Mic. 1:7, 1:7, Na. 3:4)
- ◆ **go a whoring** 8 Times (Ex. 34:15, 34:16, Lev. 20:5, 20:6, Num. 15:39, Dt. 31:16, Ps. 73:27, Eze. 6:9)
- ◆ **played the harlot** 8 Times (Gen. 38:24, Jer. 3:1, 3:6, 3:8, Eze. 16:28, 23:5, 23:19, Hos. 2:5)
- ◆ **commit whoredom** 7 Times (Num. 25:1, Eze. 16:17, 20:30, 23:43, Hos. 4:10, 4:13, 4:14)
- ◆ **went a whoring** 5 Times (Jdg. 2:17, 8:27, 8:33, 1 Ch. 5:25, Ps. 106:39)
- ◆ **gone a whoring** 4 Times (Lev. 17:7, Eze. 23:30, Hos. 4:12, 9:1)
- ◆ **whore** 4 Times (Lev. 21:7, Dt. 23:18, Pr. 23:27, Isa. 57:3)
- ◆ **whorish** 3 Times (Pr. 6:26, Eze. 6:9, 16:30)
- ◆ **committed great whoredom** 1 Times (Hos. 1:2)
- ◆ **committed whoredom continually** 1 Times (Hos. 4:18)
- ◆ **committed whoredoms** 2 Times (Eze. 23:3, 23:3)
- ◆ **harlot's** 2 Times (Jos. 2:1, 6:22)
- ◆ **harlots** 2 Times (1 Ki. 3:16, Pr. 29:3)
- ◆ **play the harlot** 2 Times (Hos. 3:3, 4:15)
- ◆ **played the whore** 2 Times (Jdg. 19:2, Eze. 16:28)
- ◆ **playedst the harlot** 2 Times (Eze. 16:15, 16:16)
- ◆ **playing the harlot** 2 Times (Jer. 2:20, Eze. 16:41)
- ◆ **whores** 2 Times (Eze. 16:33, Hos. 4:14)
- ◆ **cause to be a whore** 1 Time (Lev.

- 19:29)
- ◆ **caused to commit fornication** 1 Time (2 Ch. 21:11)
 - ◆ **commit fornication** 1 Time (Isa. 23:17)
 - ◆ **commit whoredoms** 1 Time (Eze. 16:34)
 - ◆ **committed fornication** 1 Time (Eze. 16:26)
 - ◆ **committest whoredom** 1 Time (Hos. 5:3)
 - ◆ **fall to whoredom** 1 Time (Lev. 19:29)
 - ◆ **harlots'** 1 Time (Jer. 5:7)
 - ◆ **made to go a whoring** 1 Time (2 Ch. 21:13)
 - ◆ **make go a whoring** 1 Time (Ex. 34:16)
 - ◆ **play the whore** 1 Time (Dt. 22:21)
 - ◆ **playeth the harlot** 1 Time (Eze. 23:44)
 - ◆ **playing the whore** 1 Time (Lev. 21:9)
 - ◆ **whore's** 1 Time (Jer. 3:3)
 - ◆ **whoredoms** 1 Time (2 Ch. 21:13)
 - ◆ **whoredom** 1 Time (Lev. 20:5)

Most of the above scriptures you can look up and study yourself, and I encourage you to do that. I will only go over a few of them in this article.

Are you partaking of that which is sacrificed to other gods? And is it Fornication? Is Fornication Lust of sin?

14. For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:
15. Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they **go a whoring after their gods**, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou **eat of his sacrifice**;
16. And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters **go a whoring after their gods**, and make thy sons **go a whoring after their gods**. (Exodus 34:14-15)

If you are whoring after other gods, could you be lusting after sin? And if you are eating the sacrifices made to these other gods, could you be participating in the sins? When you participate in the bread and wine of Passover, most people understand that they are not truly eating Christ, but yet it symbolizes ingesting Christ. Why would we not understand then that eating what has been sacrificed to idols or other gods symbolizes those who are going Satan's way and are

participating in sin.

Is standing by and watching sin and not speaking up about it Fornication? What about teaching our children the ways of Satan, is that also Fornication?

1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
2. Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his **seed unto Molech**; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.
3. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath **given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name**.
4. **And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech**, and kill him not:
5. Then **I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech**, from among their people.
6. **And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them**, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.
7. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 20:1-7)

From this set of scriptures we can learn several things. First we are not to sacrifice our children to Satan (Molech). In other words, do not teach your children Satan's (Molech's) ways. Do not abort your children so you can continue in your own sins and lifestyles. Also it is very important to read verse 4 again, because if you see someone participating in sin and you say nothing, God sees it as you are participating in the sin yourself because you said nothing, and God even states the penalty in verse 5.

There are many within the Church of God today who still feel you should not say anything to a person that you know is sinning. When you see people who are caught up in a sin I encourage all of you

to use the instructions given in Matthew 18:15-17. Sometimes, even though it is not a pleasant thing to do, you may have to take the matter to the church. If the sin is one that is affecting many people and not just you alone and you have privately confronted your brother or sister with it and they would not listen to you, then there may come a point in time where you may have to tell those who will be affected by it. Please keep in mind that you may not get the popular vote for this action on your part, however, what is more important, what men think of you, or what God thinks of you? I can guarantee that if you know a certain sin is going to affect and hurt many people and you do not tell them, God will hold you responsible for what you knew and kept to yourself. Adam just stood there and let Eve eat the fruit. Adam said nothing and it affected us all and God made them both pay the penalty. You can read the entire story in Genesis Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

Strong's Hebrew-Aramaic #2233--Seed

Romanized zera`
Pronounced zeh'-rah

seed, semen, that which propagates a species; by extension; that which is propagated, child, offspring, descendant, line, race:

KJV--X carnally, child, fruitful, seed(-time), sowing- time.

Is not remembering God Fornication?

37. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
38. Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they **make them fringes** in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:
39. And it shall be unto you for a **fringe**, that ye may look upon it, and **remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them** and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:
40. **That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy**

unto your God.

41. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God. (Numbers 15:37-41)

God wants us all to remember Him and yet most forget all about God and go lusting after the sins of Satan. If we want to be holy unto God, we must remember God always and do all that He commands us to do. How many people in this world understand that?

Do bad things happen in this world because of the Fornications that people commit?

15. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

16. And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and **this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.**

17. Then **my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them;** so that they will say in that day, **Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?** (Deuteronomy 31:15-17)

If we sin against the True God, he will not protect us when troubles come. When people go whoring (lusting) after a multitude of sins, they have forgotten the True God. When people follow Satan, God generally with few exceptions just lets the evils and troubles befall them. God does not dwell among those who follow Satan. God dwells only among those who follow God and do his commandments.

One more point to remember here, is that when we do not keep our word through our deeds or doings, whatever contract or covenant we had with someone is no longer in effect, it is broken. See verse 16 above and the Strong's definition below. This would also apply to marriage as with anything else.

Strong's Hebrew-Aramaic #1285--Covenant

Romanized brit
Pronounced ber-eeth'

covenant, treaty, compact, agreement, an association between two parties with various responsibilities, benefits, and penalties; "to cut a covenant" is "make a covenant," a figure of the act of ceremonially cutting an animal into two parts, with an implication of serious consequences for not fulfilling the covenant:

KJV--confederacy, [con-]feder[ate], covenant, league.

I know there are many within the Church of God who believe that the person who files for a divorce is the person who is breaking the contract. I will not say that never happens, however it is generally not the case with many people. A person breaks any contract either by saying they want out or by abusing the other person in the covenant whether it is of marriage or some other kind of a contract. The Israelites are the ones who are penalized for breaking the covenant, and they did not file for the divorce.

Are the idols of Fornication always cute little statutes? Or can our sins be those things that we do?

39. Thus were they **defiled with their own works**, and went a **whoring with their own inventions.** (Psalms 106:39)

Strong's Hebrew-Aramaic #4611--Inventions

Romanized ma'alal
Pronounced mah-al-awl'

actions, practices, what is done:

KJV--doing, endeavour, invention, work.

As we can see from this, we can be defiled (unholy) do to our own actions. Idols are not always statutes. Our sins against God are Fornication.

Is Fornication Murder?

18. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

21. How is the faithful city become a harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

22. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

23. Thy princes are **rebellious**, and **companions of thieves**: every one loveth gifts, and **followeth after rewards**: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

24. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

25. And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

26. And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

27. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

28. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. (Isaiah 1:18-28)

Here we see a faithful city has become an harlot. This city has turned from God's righteousness to unfaithfulness to God and is now called a harlot. A city consists of many people. And look what they are doing that is against God. They are called murderers, companions of thieves, rebellious against God, and they water down merchandise and seek after rewards. They don't care about the fatherless or the widows.

Is a Whore's/Fornicator's forehead symbolic of Satan's way?

3. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and **thou hadst a whore's**

forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. (Jeremiah 3:3)

For those of you who are always trying to figure out the mark of the beast, this might be for you. Could the mark of the beast be not really a physical mark, but possibly symbolic for the mind of Satan? Certainly Satan is not ashamed and many people today are just not ashamed of their multiple sins.

Is adultery considered Fornication? And is adultery always only about sex?

8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding **Israel committed adultery** I had put her away, and **given her a bill of Divorce**; yet **her treacherous sister Judah feared not**, but went and **played the harlot** also. (Jeremiah 3:8)

Strong's Hebrew-Aramaic #5003 Adultery
Romanized na'ap
Pronounced naw-af'

to commit adultery, adulterer, adulteress; by extension; **to be unfaithful to God (by having illicit relations with other gods)**

KJV--adulterer(-ess), commit(-ing) adultery, woman that breaketh wedlock.

If one person in a marriage is following God's way, and the other person is following Satan's way and trying to entice us into Satan's way also, that marriage contract is broken. God did not stay bound to Israel after a point. God divorced her.

How do we know when a marriage contract is broken? We know by the fruits of the marriage. Anything that one person is doing within the marriage that is clearly sin and is clearly against the law of God and which when they are confronted with it, they do not want to give it up. Is one mate being physically abused? Is one mate being verbally abused on a regular basis? Are the children being physically abused? Is someone being sexually abused? Is one person breaking the laws of the land and expecting their mate to keep quiet? Is there a drug or alcohol problem? Is one mate having sex with

people other than their own mate? This list could go on and on.

I have heard the argument already that people are not allowed to divorce and remarry at a later time, and all I can say is, study your Bible more. You will find in the Torah Law Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where divorce is allowed by God for unholiness/fornication and even Christ backed this up with the exception clauses found in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9. In Numbers 30, the entire chapter, it is talking about vows/contracts, notice very closely verse 15 which says: "But if he shall **any ways** make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity." These things are in the law of God. Do we believe every verse of our Bible or do we throw out the verses we either don't understand or don't like?

Is Fornication Witchcraft?

4. Because of the multitude of the **whoredoms** of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of **witchcrafts**, that selleth nations through her **whoredoms**, and families through her **witchcrafts**. (Nahum 3:4)

Strong's Hebrew-Aramaic #3785 Witchcrafts
Romanized kesep
Pronounced keh'-shef

witchcraft, sorcery, **often with the associative meanings of rebellion and seduction into false religion**

KJV--sorcery, witchcraft.

Here we have nations and families being seduced by witchcrafts. Could it be that we are defining many words wrongly or far too narrowly? Yes, it means magic, but it also has a far deeper meaning that most do not look at. Fornication seems to also include an action of seduction from God's way to Satan's way, an action described in the King James Bible as witchcraft.

Is Satan good at seduction? You bet he is, read the account of Eve in Genesis 3:1-5, where Satan seduced her into believing his way was so much better than God's way. It's the same seduction Satan uses today, to entice us into sin. If sin looks good and feels good, then it can't really be that bad, can it? Is Satan

seducing you further and further from God's way? If you are going Satan's way rather than God's way, it's fornication.

In Conclusion

I am not able to cover all the scriptures in regard to the subject of fornication in this article. I have included all the scriptures I know of in regard to Strong's #2181, including the many I did not cover. I sincerely hope that if you are at all interested in this subject that you go over all or as many of the scriptures as possible, in order to clear up any questions you have in regard to the definition of fornication and I will cover some more on this same subject in the next newsletter.

PRESERVING THE SABBATH FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS

**by June Narber
Raleigh, North Carolina**

Through out the ages, there have been small pockets of Sabbath keeping and Bible fearing people throughout the world. At the current time in history, we have more people aware of the truth of scripture than at any time prior. Part of this is due to the explosion in world population; the popularity of mainstream "missions" that have been adopted by many Sabbath keeping churches and assemblies. In retrospect, do we need to be concerned that the Sabbath truth in particular will still be as widely known 100 years from now? Consider these facts:

- a. In the splinter groups of the former Worldwide Church of God, the majority of people who attend are over the age of 45
- b. all churches report losing their youth to popular cultures and
- c. not much innovative thinking is going into solving the current problem, except using conventional methods that have always been used.

In just thirty years, a good number of the current readers of this newsletter will be awaiting the resurrection of the dead. In fifty years, every minister that you can name will probably be deceased. If action is not taken now to:

- a. attract more young people to the Sabbath-keeping community and
- b. keep the ones we already have.

It is very likely there may come another time in history where the number of Sabbath keepers decrease to a level that another "great leader" can come on the scene to bring the Sabbath truth to light once more. While this may very well happen, I believe that we are wasting our talents and our current resources to ever allow such a lapse in Sabbath keeping truth to occur. We need not only to empower our youth but each other.

In my own Sabbath keeping family trunk of the "church tree", the current happenings are embarrassing to talk about. The leaders still have not learned that they are here to serve the brethren. Many honestly see themselves as some kind of dictator or "lord over the people". The brethren are so indoctrinated they believe that God has put such a man in power. Did the ancient Israelites believe God had put Saul in kingship over them? Did they forget that they begged and pleaded to God for a physical leader to "rule over them"? Do we in turn, look to a physical leader to tell us what to do more than we look to God and live in faith and make our own decisions for our well being through aid of the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and just plain common sense? Why do we tolerate leaders telling us we are sinful because we think for ourselves instead of bowing down to them?

What is worse is that the brethren who have left the former organization and joined what we call a splinter group are repeating the very same mistakes that have been made for the last forty years, and totally oblivious to this fact. The leaders (ministers, preachers, elders) are refusing to empower their brethren to do local evangelism, to think and study the scriptures on their own, apart from having one of themselves present for "scrutiny". This entire problem is based on the various organizational leaders' refusing to give up power for fear of losing tithe money. The lust of power and money are the vehicles by which the church is eating itself alive from within. Some people have seen these problems and started what we call independent fellowships. These seem to be doing more of the commission as seen in the pages of scriptures:

- a. love each other
- b. feed the sheep
- c. make disciples of all people.

Many of these groups are active in local evangelism.

How can we help correct the problems that exist in our current Sabbath keeping churches? First, look at your current church. Is the leader more feared than loved? Is He more concerned with keeping people in line and in accordance with your own church's select doctrines than looking into the Bible to learn more of what God has to say? Second, how do the brethren treat each other? Is the atmosphere in your congregation especially controlling or expectant of certain people to stay within certain behavior ranges? Do they limit the talent growth and talent expression of their members? Are there more sermons about women submitting and women's roles than focusing on Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation? Are there more sermons focused on such topics as church government and tithing than on the important topics such as preaching the truth to all people, keeping all of God's laws, loving each other, forgiving each other and so on? In these examples, you can see my focus: is the church more focused on issues centered around control and power than on things defined as development of character and putting on the whole person of Jesus Christ in our lives? This is a touchy subject. So many of us have been or still are, so indoctrinated by our churches we cannot see the simple words from God's own word.

We cannot hope to preserve the truth we have been given for another three generations or to attract or keep youth in our churches until we fix the very problems that drive them away in droves!

I conclude by offering some innovative ideas for your consideration to strengthen your assemblies and churches.

Methodology For Change

1. Allow an open forum once a month outside of the Sabbath for members, men AND women, old and young to come forth and publicly address any topic that concerns them. Have a moderator and give them ten minutes to express themselves.
2. LISTEN to what people are saying. Don't reprimand them for daring to voice their opinions. Be especially considerate of things women are trying to vocalize. Many may well be far more perceptive than men by gifts

given to them by God, and they are the most likely to be ignored or criticized for saying anything.

3. ENCOURAGE people to think of better ideas of how to make worship services more innovative; to take part in local evangelism; to think of what exactly their talents are and how they can be used. In my own church history, people have been criticized and kept under control by the element of fear. Fear of suggesting anything, and if they tried to do anything on their own in terms of adding something to church (without permission) or local evangelism they were disciplined in sometimes the most humiliating of ways, including being disfellowshipped for just trying to be more involved.
4. Get rid of the corporate mentality and control from the top down. Control should be from the bottom up because it is through the brethren the money comes into the church. If a minister is particularly corrupt, how is he corrected if he is lord over the congregation? Unity comes from mutual cooperation, not from authoritarian "keeping the people in line by fear and government implementation".
5. Investigate the concept of home fellowships in addition to what your current church attendance is. In these, free expression should be encouraged. Consider inviting outsiders new to the faith to these kinds of intimate atmospheres.
6. When problems arise, form a committee of twelve or so to listen to the issues. If a doctrinal situation (which nine out of ten there will be), let the man have fifteen minutes to preach his views, and then take an hour and discuss all aspects doctrinally. If agreement cannot be reached, tell the individual they can believe what they want, but there are limits to how far he will be allowed to go to indoctrinate the rest of the brethren. He can form his own group if he wants to. If so, well wish him on. Big rifts are caused when churches try to "hold" unto their tithe paying members. It is better to have an open door and allow people to come and go as they please. If God is working through your group, the size of it does not matter.

7. Build youth groups. If your church only has a small number of youth, network with other Sabbath observing churches in your area or state to have weekend gatherings, events, and seminar weekends to build relationships and mutual beliefs that you share. Church sponsor the youth to go to one of the many Sabbath keeping youth summer camps.
8. Do original things in your church atmosphere. Have wide selections of music. Encourage people to get involved in planning, organizing and implementing church events. DO NOT put the same people in charge each time because this is where the corporate power/big heads start coming to fruition. SHARE THE leadership and work opportunities alike. No man should be above cleaning the toilet, and no woman so unprepared or shy she cannot organize a small committee to accomplish a goal. If this is the case in your assembly, it is stealing growth opportunities from its members. Would you forfeit leadership in lieu of a general cleanup duty once in a while? If not, time to examine your attitude and perspective!
9. Develop a speaking club for both the men and women in your church to learn how to publicly present organized topics in the form of speeches on all kinds of topics from social to spiritual issues. These can be together or two separate clubs. This prepares both sexes for evangelism OUTSIDE of the church. Don't fear that this is teaching or encouraging the women to speak in church. What do you expect women to do when confronted with the opportunity to speak of the truth of God to someone outside of the faith? Should you call her minister or husband to come witness for her?
10. Get involved in the community. Have good drives for the local homeless shelter. Encourage your members to get involved in helping others, Jesus Christ did. Are we better than him in our self-righteous appraisals that we should be separate from the world? Let your light shine by helping the less fortunate in your community. Would Jesus Christ do any less?
11. Keep a written record of the history of your local fellowship church. Donate

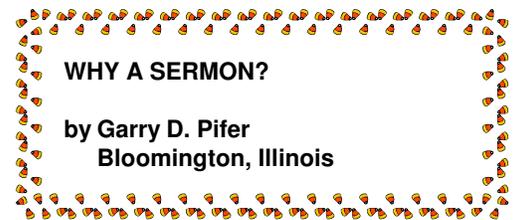
a duplicate of these records to the local library. You might be amazed at who will come into contact with information about the Sabbath as future generation peruse library history papers in search of genealogical records.

12. Fellowship is as important as worship with local brethren. Come up with new ideas for fellowship after Sabbath time; the worst thing is when local groups fall into ruts and they do the exact same thing over and over again.
13. Keep in mind the mental mind set of younger people. They have high levels of energy. Their minds are quite active and thirsting for new things and new adventures. Build upon these traits when you organize group activities for both them and the whole fellowship. Among my fondest memories of times past in the Sabbath community are: a) talent shows b) chili suppers c) hay wagon rides d) camp-outs e) canoe trips f) museum and field trips, as they were part of the whole experience.
14. We must all start focusing as much on relationship building as on doctrinal expounding. God commands us to love each other. We cannot effectively do this when we are judging others and expecting them to behave in the way we would expect someone of their age or gender to behave.
15. Understand that we are now in the 21st century. Many younger people may well be more educated and intelligent than many of us; and in fact, are probably among the smartest group of people God has ever called. Make sure you do not verbally knock education or any choice they make about future employment. You would be amazed at the damage verbal comments can make. Most of these comments are made in pure ignorance because the facts at hand go far beyond the reality the speaker can even imagine. So, as an individual, we must each be responsible for reading and keeping up with the news and the current trends so we can stay in communication with the younger generation. It is wrong to expect them to do things the way you or I did them. This is just a fact of life: things

CHANGE.

I challenge that the very mind set of many of our leaders are the very thing holding our churches growth back. Could it be our own reluctance to change and grow that is delaying the coming of the Messiah? While I hope not, deep down I believe this is true. As frightening as it is, it is hard to get people who have always been in control to allow change to take place. As Israel had to wander in the wilderness for forty years until the older generation that had been led out of Egypt died off, we may too, have to wonder for a long time until current leaders wake up and realize they are wrong about how they treat the brethren and in their mind sets about issues such as power, control, and government. These three are the enemies of the faith as far as I can see. So, our leaders must change or die of old age, then the work can finally be done, and the wonderful Kingdom can come to earth. Love is the government of God. Love is why we keep his laws and commandments. Love is why we worship and praise him.

Preserving the Sabbath truth for the next hundred years must start with us, changing our own mind sets and indoctrinations that are in error. We must grow beyond the limits of our imaginations and prejudices. We must reach out to others of all ages, social classes, gender, and cultures. When we do this, the love and power of God the Father and Christ the Messiah can flow into others' lives: healing, blessing, and bestowing life.



WHY A SERMON?

by Garry D. Pifer
Bloomington, Illinois

Over the years in the Church of God I have heard numerous individuals "put down" those who blindly accept the teachings of their church or group without ever questioning it. They have ridiculed or made light of those who observe Christmas or Easter without ever questioning their origins or without ever asking why they celebrate these holidays. And, yet we of the Church of God are just

as guilty of following the "traditions" of men, accepting without question the way we do things. I think the term for such is "hypocritical." I want to address one such "tradition" that we have accepted without question that has stifled spiritual growth within the Body of Christ for decades.

A major, and I would suggest, the primary stumbling block for most of us that has kept us from striving for spiritual maturity and growth and from developing relationships of helping and mentoring others is the format of our assemblies--particularly as it is presently focused around an event we call the "sermon". I dare say that few if any have ever asked, "Where did we get the idea we must have a 'sermon'?" Most have never realized that the "sermon" can't be found in the New Testament. My study has led me to conclude that the "sermon" as we know it is a Greek invention-coming to us from the Greek Philosophers and not from the New Testament.

If the Apostle Paul were to be raised to life and was to come into one of our meetings and saw only one man give an oration patterned after the Greek philosophers of his day, with absolutely no interaction with the individuals in the congregation, I feel certain he would demand to know "What is going on here?" This modern pattern we follow bears no resemblance to the New Testament pattern at all. The "sermon" is an unscriptural tradition, imported from Greco-Roman paganism. The concept of hearing a sermon has been so ingrained into us that many, if not most, of us have felt that we haven't attended "church" until we have sat through an hour or maybe an hour and a half sermon. But, by its very structure, the "sermon" given as a monologue fails to fully challenge people--it allows us to get our "religious fix" without any meaningful contribution on our part. Sadly, we sit through years of sermons and show very little spiritual growth. It can be said about many of us, as it was said to the Hebrews, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God;..." How much do we really gain by sitting on a hard folding chair in a drab hall or auditorium, staring at the back of someone's neck, and listening to a lecture presented by a "professional" who is often more interested in keeping us entertained than in truly teaching us?

What was the N. T. pattern? It appears clear that in the assemblies of the early Christians the communication was two-way. Let's look at a few scriptures. A very familiar passage is found in Acts 20:7-9. "And upon the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead." Our impression has been that the young man fell asleep due to Paul droning on and on. However, that was not the case, merely that it was getting quite late, it was midnight.

The Greek word translated "preached" and "preaching" is #1256 in Strong's, *dialogomai*. It is translated most often as "dispute, reason, and reason with." The lexicon defines it "to converse, discourse with one, argue, discuss" among others. It plainly means to have a dialogue or to carry on a conversation.

The same word is used in Acts 17:2. "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures," He was teaching them, giving them understanding, but it was a discussion. They had the opportunity to contribute and to ask questions. We see this again in Acts 18:4. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." Down in verse 18 it says he came to Ephesus and "reasoned with the Jews." Paul did not deliver what we would call a sermon. He spoke to them, he taught them, perhaps even "preached" to them BUT it was two-way communication. (As a side study you will find that when the N. T. speaks of "preaching" it generally means proclaiming the gospel to the unconverted. "Teaching" is what was done to those responding to the "preaching" and to those within the assemblies.)

In Acts 6:9 we find another Greek word used. There were, it says, certain individuals of the synagogue "disputing" with Stephen. This word is #4802 in Strong's, *suzeteo*. It is defined by the

lexicon "1.) To seek or examine together 2.) In the NT to discuss, dispute, question." Once again we find discussion, questions and answers, two-way communication taking place.

The Apostle Paul gives us some general guidelines for conducting our meetings in I Corinthians 14. He talks about "prophesying" or what we might call "inspired speaking." It makes it clear that it should be for "edification, and exhortation, and comfort." (Verse 3) It was to edify the church (verse 4). Verse 22 makes it clear that the "prophesying" was for the believers, not outsiders. In verses 26-28 he indicates there may be many speaking or singing but he emphasizes all must be done to edify. In verse 29 Paul says to let 2 or 3 "prophets" speak. And, if someone sitting by has something revealed to them, has something to add, Paul says "let the first hold his peace." (Verse 30) He was to give others the opportunity to contribute. Verse 31 clearly says that "all," everyone in the congregation, should be able to speak, one at a time, so "that all may learn, and all may be comforted." The bottom line is found in verse 40. Everything, all things, was to "be done decently and in order." We do not find evidence of the modern "sermon" here. There is no indication of one individual, the "pastor" or "chief elder," giving a lecture without participation from the entire congregation.

Then where did we get the practice and tradition we know as "the sermon"? I'd like to quote from an excellent article entitled "Problems and Limitations of the Traditional 'Sermon' Concept" by Mr. Darryl M. Erkel. "The very notion of a formal and professionalized 'sermon' comes not from the New Testament, but from Greek culture. With the rise of the Constantinian mass church (4th century A.D.), all sorts of paganistic and Greek ideas entered into Christian thought and practice. One of those practices brought into the church was that of Greek rhetoric. With the conversion of such men as Chrysostom, Ambrose, Tertullian, Cyprian, Arnobius, Lactantius, and Augustine - all of whom were trained in rhetoric and were quite popular as orators within the Greco-Roman culture of their day prior to their conversion - a new style of form of communication began to occur within Christian assemblies (it is interesting to note that Paul, in 1

Corinthians 1:17, 22 and 2:1-5, refused to allow the communication patterns of his pagan contemporaries to dictate the form or manner of his delivery).

"This new form of speech was marked by polished rhetoric, sophisticated grammar, and an undue emphasis on eloquence. Corporate teaching, within many congregations, was no longer delivered in normal or raw language, but began to take on an artistic form of expression. In some instances, the content of the teacher's message was less influenced by biblical truth and more by abstract Greek philosophy.

"Within time, corporate teaching became more of a form designed to entertain and display the speaker's oratorical skill or colorful wit, rather than instruct and equip the saints for ministry. Eventually, when the 'clergy-laity' division was solidified, only those who were officially 'ordained' and trained in the new forms of speech were allowed to address the assembly. This did much to render the saints inactive and helped to promote the idea that only the 'professionals' have anything worthy to say." (This article in its entirety can be found on the internet at: http://home.earthlink.net/~ddcerkel/sermon_cncept.html)

Sadly, without any thought being given to it, we have accepted this "tradition" of having a "sermon" and of not allowing any discussion, questioning of the presenter, and not allowing additional or different understanding being put forth. We have, at least in practice, placed the "ministry" in the position of "knowing all" and being the only ones able to teach and mentor others. I think we can agree with most of the reasons given by Mr. Erkel in his article as to why the "ministry" is reluctant to entertain questions or engage in dialogue. (The following quote is from the same article quoted above.)

"Unfortunately, many pastors will not allow it because they are threatened or intimidated by any form of return dialogue within a public setting. At least five reasons can account for this:

1. Return dialogue is offensive to the man who sees himself and his opinions as above the right of anyone to question, particularly coming from mere 'laymen';
2. Return dialogue may expose the speaker to the possibility of embarrassing questions that he may not be able to answer. It may reveal

that his studies and preparation were shallow. It may reveal that he is not necessarily the Bible 'authority' that he parades as;

3. Return dialogue removes the spotlight from one man and brings others into its realm, which can be very disconcerting to the man who has an ego to feed;
4. Return dialogue is offensive to the man who wants his congregation to be dependent upon him for all the 'answers.' If people are allowed to voice their disagreements or perhaps even articulate an answer better than he can, it tends to remove their dependence upon his wisdom for understanding the text of Scripture;
5. Allowing a Q&A period after the sermon poses structural or organizational problems for church leaders who have set their 'order of worship' in concrete, allowing exact time limits for everything with no flexibility or spontaneity within the corporate meeting."

Even though the N. T. pattern does not show the modern "sermon" some have carelessly assumed, or at least use as an excuse to continue the practice, that Nehemiah chapter 8 describes our "modern sermon". This is not the case. Let us look at it, read the context, and see what it says. Nehemiah 8:1-8 KJV "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that [was] before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that [was] before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people [were attentive] unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, [and] Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in

the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with [their] faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people [stood] in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [them] to understand the reading."

We are aware of the setting. Nehemiah had come back to Jerusalem with a number of the people to rebuild Jerusalem. In verse 1 of chapter 8 we find them on the Feast of Trumpets gathered together in the street. Ezra the priest was asked to bring the book of the law and read the law to them, which he did from morning until midday. He stood on a tower (the Hebrew word is translated tower 47 times but "pulpit" only this one time.) with 13 other individuals. Verses 7 and 8 have been explained as the "modern sermon". It says that the 13 people named, plus the Levites, "caused the people to understand" and "gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading". Was this a "sermon" as we know it? What was happening? The people had not heard the law read to them for some time. Ezra did this. (It was also a requirement that every 7th year the book of the law was to be read during the Feast of Tabernacles [Deut. 31:9-12]. Verse 18 of Neh. 8 shows this was done.) But what was happening with the 13 and the Levites (verses 7 and 8)? Let me quote from some recognized reference books. From the Companion Bible, "Neh. 8:8 So they read in the book of the law of God (i.e. the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch) distinctly (a distinct reading, i.e. [according to the Talmud] translating and interpreting it in the Chaldee paraphrase.) and gave the sense (i.e. divided the sentences, etc. according to sense) and caused them to understand the reading (i.e. gave the traditional pronunciation of the words [which were then without vowel points].) Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary on the Whole Bible, "7, 8, caused the people to understand the law... gave the sense-

Commentators are divided in opinion as to the import of this statement, some thinking that Ezra read the law in pure Hebrew, while the Levites, who assisted him, translated it sentence by sentence into Chaldee, the vernacular dialect which the exiles spoke in Babylon; while others maintain that the duty of these Levites consisted in explaining to the people, many of whom had become very ignorant, what Ezra had read."

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible, the Book of Nehemiah Chapter 8, "8:8 They-Ezra and his companions successively. Sense-The meaning of the Hebrew words, which they expounded in the common language. They gave-So they gave them both a translation of the Hebrew words into Chaldee, and an exposition of the things contained in them."

I believe it is very plain that this was NOT a "modern sermon." It was a reading of the law, translating it so the people could understand what was being read and with some explanation. In our "modern sermons" we would never have 13 or 26 or more people involved. And, seldom is it a reading of the law, but a monologue type lecture with much non-biblical material interspersed with "proof texts."

Not only is there no Biblical pattern for our modern "sermon," and there is evidence that it comes from Greek philosophy, it has caused disobedience to many of God's instructions and commands. We are told over and over to help one another, to mentor one another, to teach one another. Our format has kept us from fulfilling that God given responsibility. Again, let us look at a few Scriptures.

Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some [is]; but exhorting [one another]: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." We've often used this verse to say we need to be attending services. But, have we obeyed the last part of verse 25? "But exhorting one another?" I know that "one another" is not in the original but it is very definitely implied. Verse 24 does say "one another." In our tradition we leave all "provoking" and "exhorting" to one individual.

What does "exhorting" really mean? The Greek word, parakaleo (#3870 in

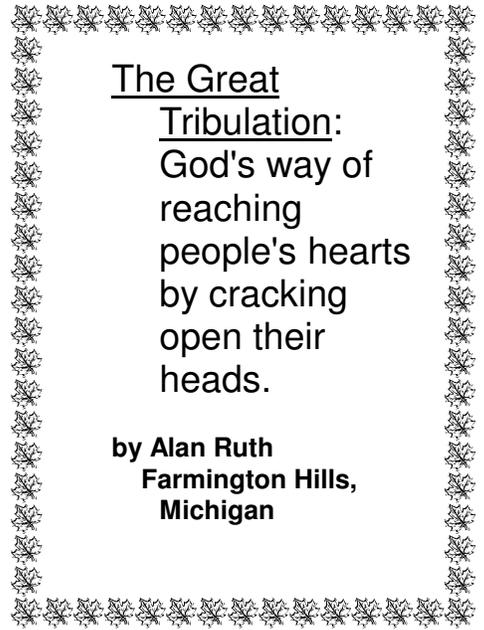
Strong's) can mean "to address, speak to, which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc." Other definitions are "to admonish, exhort, beg, entreat, beseech, to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort, to encourage, strengthen, to instruct, teach." And, again, notice "exhorting" is something EVERYONE is commanded to do. When we look at other passages we find this is not only on the Sabbath. Hebrews 3:13 "But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "One another" is definitely in this verse. How much exhorting, instructing, teaching, admonishing have we done, or been allowed to do? Virtually none. Our format does not permit it. We have left it all up to the "professional".

What is the conclusion? Should we NEVER have a "sermon?" Perhaps listening to a lecture from your favorite speaker in and by itself isn't a sin. But, having "sermons" as we have known them is not necessary. In fact, with our reduced chances for becoming dependant upon one man and our increased chances that we are able to "search the scriptures" for ourselves we may be much better off without the professional, trained orator. I know that some of the smaller independent/interdependent fellowships are instituting discussion periods after their presentations. A number are doing interactive studies regularly. But, I fear these are in the minority among God's people.

One well-known individual recently commented in his newsletter about interactive studies. He said, "For all those people who are enamored of interactive Bible studies...many people (I know this will come as a surprise to some) find interactive Bible studies as boring as other people find sermons." Perhaps he assumes it is boredom. I would suggest it isn't boredom but merely a reaction to the fact that many of us are, as Hebrews 5:13 says, "unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe." The "sermon" concept and our traditional "Greek philosophy" based service has left too many of us "as have need of milk, and not strong meat." (Verse 12)

Will we see any changes in the "traditional" service within the churches of God? Not likely! Some COG organizations have already made a point

of trying to maintain their "identity" by having the familiar and comfortable format established by decree. One individual has borrowed a label from C. S. Lewis and calls any change in format the "liturgical fidget." (One of the questions raised by this article is, "Where did we get this "liturgy?") What then shall we do? Each of us must take personal responsibility for our own spiritual growth. We may have to establish small, intimate, interactive, in-home Bible study groups. These do accomplish more in a short amount of time than years of traditional "sermons" ever will.



The Great
Tribulation:
God's way of
reaching
people's hearts
by cracking
open their
heads.

by Alan Ruth
Farmington Hills,
Michigan



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Laura Lee (Editor)

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_____ 2. Wiley & Suzanne Black (Another Case of Abuse) by Bernard Kelly (The Bible Expositor--Last Issue) 16 pages
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