



Shepherd's Voice[®]

M A G A Z I N E

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In this issue...

Active Waiting on the Day of the Lord

From the Fish's Mouth

Short Sighted

Children of God - Part 5 The Age of Awareness

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Greetings!

As a continuation of the article *Prophecy and the Thessalonians* (Summer 2012, SVM), we look closely at what the apostle Peter has to say in his second epistle in *Active Waiting on the Day of the Lord*. We use the term *Active* in regards to waiting on the Lord to turn our attention away from the thought that the time between now and the Lord's return as a period of idleness or holding, but rather as time of opportunity and continued growth. Opportunity is missed when there is endless analysis and auditing of God's program, which we are all tempted to do. Careful reading of 2 Peter in our discussion of *Active Waiting* gives us insight into how not to miss the opportunity and to connect with our prophesied future.

Also in this issue is Norm Edwards fifth installment on his series *Children of God—The Age of Awareness*. The transition period from the primary years to the preteen years we do find an increasing sense of self in children and Norm discusses the potential of over-parenting and the negative affects it may have on development during this period. It is an article for everyone as children at this age look beyond their family in observations and with questions. We have received positive feedback from readers on the *Children of God* series.

Those of us who have wondered about the account of Jonah, perhaps seeing him as a foolish and selfish prophet, with an almost comical relationship to God, may find fresh insight in the articles *Out of the Fish's Mouth* and *Further to the Matter of Jonah and the Fish*. Could it have been Jonah's miraculous resurrection was a sign that prompted Nineveh to repent, which saved over 120,000 people? Jesus Himself, while giving the account as a sign to unbelievers, gave Jonah's experience historical credibility, and these articles answer some of the modern skeptic claims that this was a symbolic story.

We hope that the content of Shepherd's Voice Magazine will continue to edify its readership. We are blessed to be working with several groups in co-operation in spreading the Gospel.

In Christ's Service
Jim Patterson

Active Waiting on the Day of the Lord

A Look at Readiness

Building upon the article of the last issue of *SVM, Prophecy and the Thessalonians* (Summer 2012), where we discussed misdirected attention from wrongly interpreting the purpose of prophecy, we want to give more focus now on our calling that connects us with the prophesied future.

The life of a believer in the Old Testament up until the times we live in now is much about waiting. Waiting on the Lord is a common thread in scripture, and that reality is perhaps more real now than it ever was.

Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait I say on the Lord!
(Psalm 27:14)

There may be a misconception in the minds of some that those who wait on the Lord have little to do with the outcome of the Lord's plans and the Lord's timing. Moreover, waiting in general can sound like a very stagnant thing to do, or is associated with unproductive period of time.

But waiting in the Christian sense is not a passive or idle thing. It is not about killing or passing time. Waiting on the Lord, which especially applies to us, is full of end time significance, and, as the scripture implies, even has an impact on the Lord's

timetable. Waiting on the Lord is full of anticipation, purposeful activity, and connected directly to the future. Since no calling is higher, we should consider the present possibilities to know we are being productive.

Biblical Direction

To be active in waiting we need direction. Without direction we will turn our wait into a passive wait, which leads to boredom and eventual disinterest, or at least a disinterest in the things that matter

I believe in the past the direction given for readiness was an inordinate amount of attention that Christ's return was imminent, resulting in chronic speculations on world events, even pointing to dates. "Watching" was a key word derived from a misinterpretation of Matthew 24:42, suggesting that Christ commanded that we should watch world events so that believers would be prepared.

This was successful to a degree it appears, but as time goes on, and our natural tendencies to become fickle or impatient will eventually win. Waiting uses up time and those who do not properly wait as the scriptures instructs may lose the battle on time.

We will discuss in this article the scriptural understanding of waiting on the Lord that produces results, and results that are sustainable.

To Stir You Up!

The apostle Peter seemed to recognize the tendency of a believer to settle into a lower energy state that is not conducive to progress. In his second epistle he twice states he wishes to "stir you up." In doing so he shows us how to wait on the Lord in a way that is sustainable. The second reference to stirring up his readers relates to the future:

Beloved I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by the way of reminder), that you may be be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:1-4).

What is strongly implied here is that the scoffers are believers, or becoming unbelievers. It was said to me recently that "everyone is in a state of conversion and un-conversion", a sobering statement that takes some thinking about. Peter giving us the direction we need so that we not stumble and head down the path of un-conversion.

What these scoffers don't understand is how their view of time is not the same as God's view of time. We all have a narrow sliver in our own existence in the flesh and our view of time is limited. The mistake that is occurring here is extrapolating time as we know it now, all the way into the past and all the way into the future. Their consciousness of history is extremely limited, and the scoffer will argue from this limited standpoint of time.

Peter recognized the need to deal with the matter of time, which is God's view versus man's view, and then deals with value of the physical:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

The value on the physical is that it is not worth much. "All flesh is grass" (1 Peter 1:24). We can see the value the Lord puts on the physical. We also see the contrast in the Lord's view on what is of value, and man's view of time versus the Lord's view on time.

What follows then, after Peter has brought into perspective the Lord's view of time and what value the Lord puts on the physical, is Peter's encouragement of what truly connects us with the Day of Lord from where we are now.

How to Wait

Therefore,

*since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, **looking for and hastening** the coming of the day of God,*

because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:11-13).

In the original Greek, the words translated here to holiness and godliness are both plural. It should be emphasized that these are not static states of being, but active states of being. They are productive, they are about varied activity. They have splendor (attract attention), they produce results.

Looking for and *hastening* are not passive words. These are activities that require our attention.

Jude wrote about "**looking for** the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ..." (Jude 21). This is much like asking "Who can I forgive, how can I expand my capacity to forgive?" A way of thinking that empties out into eternity.

Looking for the Lord in the Gospel sense is an advancing sense of self in the light of the Lord's character, which is holiness and godliness. *Holiness* (being set apart) is expressed in a number of ways by Peter. It means to get about our own sanctification (1 Peter 1:14-19), realizing your expression of love for the brethren (1 Peter 1:22), behaving lawfully under man's jurisdiction (1 Peter 2:13,14), willing to embrace suffering (1 Peter 4:1-6). *Godliness* is imparted to us as we nurture the work of His Holy Spirit. Peter mentions godliness in association with power (2 Peter 1:3).

What is striking in this scripture, is that it suggests our holiness and godliness hastens the Day. It is very curious that Peter would suggest somehow



we may be involved in speeding up the coming of the Lord. He is not repeating himself as this is not another way of saying "looking for." This may not seem possible, but consider the following.

The believer is part of the advancing Kingdom of God. The work that His servants are involved in is in cooperation with the work that the Father and the Son are actively engaged in (John 5:17). The ministry of man cooperates with God's program so that promised events take place.

Perhaps now we can put *looking for* and *hastening* the Day of the Lord together and understand how our present activity sustains our hold on the future. It is far superior than strategies offered up to watch world events and speculate to assign events as the "sign of the times." Those who are looking for and hastening the Day of the Lord look at their own conduct and transformation for assurance and connection for the future. The Day of the Lord is more than an event in time, it is salvation.

Are you co-operating with God's program? Co-operating with His program takes diligence,

*But also for this very reason, giving all **diligence**, add to your faith virtue,*

to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness, love (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble (2 Peter 1:10).

The suggestion is that diligent effort takes time and energy to grow the fruits of righteousness. Unfortunately, some have instead turned their energies in becoming auditors of the program, focused on the correcting efforts of some on the smallest things, analyzing the politics of the Church at large and other fruitless acts. We all need to take stock of our own activities and motivations in light of Peter's words.

Longsuffering is Opportunity

And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation (2 Peter 3:15).

It is as though Peter returns to the aspect of time, but what does this mean?

This is all about opportunity. The

longsuffering of our Lord is the goodness of God which leads to salvation. The longsuffering of our Lord is about opportunity. If we are impatient with longsuffering of the Lord, wishing the time was shorter, constantly looking for signs, we are not with His program of active waiting, but selfishly (perhaps dramatically) approaching the faith.

In light of this, we should understand that God's will is also creative. God makes adjustments where He sees fit, steps in where He decides to. Where there is lethargy or bad chemistry, God may make changes, and those changes may not be comfortable for some, and even resented. However, if we are obedient, we will recognize His activity and we will adjust with Him. Active minds in the Truth never get bored, nor are persuaded to doubt.

Who will be ready?

Jesus tells us plainly those who will be ready and found faithful at His coming He will "find so doing" (Matthew 24:46). What

does "doing" mean? I think it means actively waiting as we have discussed already.

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Peter 3:14).

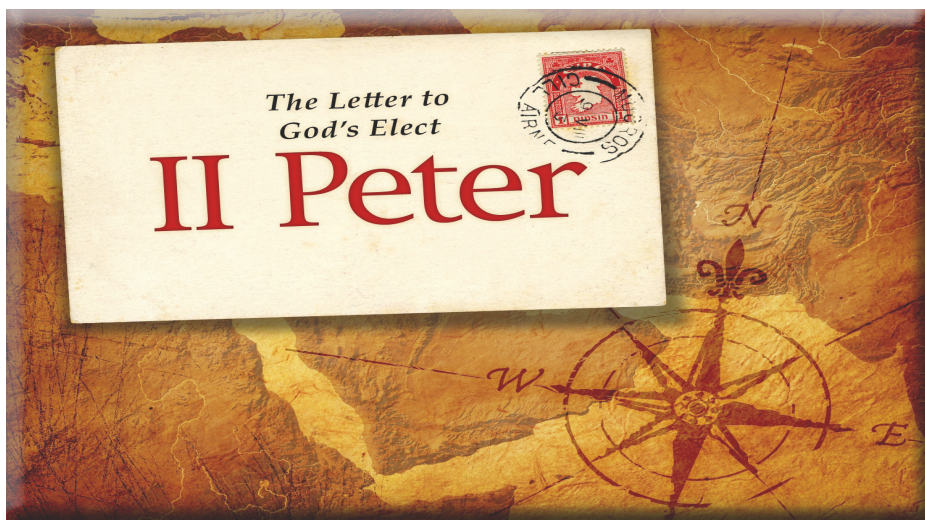
Here again is the proper direction we need to be motivated. Endless analyses of events and prophetic speculations, the claims that you have to be with the right group to be acceptable, among other types of misdirection, do not stand up to scripture.

My concluding thoughts are the powerful words of the apostle John.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world (1 John 4:17).

Love casts out fear and he who loves has no fear in judgment. These words of John can be understood by asking the simple question that John answers, "How does love judge love?" God is love, and He perfectly accepts those who are like Him, there is no need to be concerned with judgment.

If you as a reader are struggling to find certainty in your faith, navigating through all the claims and agendas of men and their institutional ideas of church and doctrine, then turn to the Lord who is the Author and Finisher of your faith, who can work with you in cultivating love, and He will show you His freedom to embrace. You will be free of fear and free to serve, which is your true opportunity to actively wait.



FROM THE FISH'S MOUTH



Many religions recognize the historical veracity of Jesus' life and His teachings, but do not regard Him as being anything more than a great prophet who died a natural death. A non-Christian religious man explained it to me: "He was not dead in His grave after the alleged crucifixion, but simply used the incident as a convenient opportunity to overcome charges of treason. If He were officially pronounced dead no charges could be laid again". This man claimed that Jesus was subtly informing the scribes and Pharisees about this idea when He gave them the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:40, "*so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" His conclusion was since (he thought) scripture teaches that Jonah was alive in the fish, Jesus' words as a truthful prophet were sound.

To give a responsible answer to this man's charge (apart from the abundance of historical/biblical evidence of the resurrection of Jesus) it must be explained why Jesus met the Scribes/ Pharisees with this sign. This requires knowing why they asked for a sign, a point our critic has failed to realize tailors Jesus' response.

What our critic also failed to understand is that Jesus' message was not popular. Even His own family stood apart from him (Mark 3:31-35). Even those who believed in Him believed as our critic—that He was just a teacher and a prophet.

Peter was the first to grasp who He really was. Old Testament prophecies were being studied and analyzed in this expectant time of a coming Messiah (Daniel 9:21-27). The Pharisees, along with others, were inflamed at Jesus' treason-like message and concluded His miracles swaying the people were the deceptive work of Satan (Matthew 12:24). Because Jesus dropped political statements (Matthew 12:6) the Scribes and Pharisees, who prided themselves in knowing the scripture, were offended.

When Jesus was requested a sign, He chose something that hit at the root of their Kingdom beliefs—something that would prove who He was. Amongst the fund of messianic prophecies Jesus reached out to the most important one, the situational parallel of Jonah that spoke to Him of His death and resurrection. The Scribes and Pharisees believed that Israel was to be bodily resurrected in the age to come and the redeemed temple worship would become universal, so this story would give them cause for thought.

The word resurrection does not occur in the Old Testament yet it was not an unknown concept or belief of the first century Jewish community. Indeed, the resurrection can be readily identified once one recognizes the language being used. Belief in resurrection formed the core distinction between Judaism and Paganism. N.T. Wright in his book *The Resurrection of the Son of God* discloses how abundant resurrection language is

within the Torah and other pre-70 A.D. Jewish literature. He points out what sign would have been most important, "the resurrection of Jesus was the sharp shocking fulfillment of the hope of Israel" (p. 219).

In Psalm 16:9-10, we come face to face with resurrection language, death and revival from it, "*Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in hell; neither will you suffer your holy one to see corruption.*" The Hebrew '*shachath*' meaning destruction or corruption, presupposes death. This corruption occurs when a dead body is left longer than three days in a grave. This Messianic prophecy describes a rescue from death just short of decay. This scripture came to life for the Scribes and Pharisees on the day Peter quoted it in recognition of Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:26-27). It disturbed the temple authorities and precipitated the arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:2). The scripturally literate Scribes and Pharisees would not have missed Psalm 16 in their studies, (nor would the educated prophet Jonah). Jesus emphasis of three days and three nights would have held deeper meaning for them apart from just the length of time, and on that Pentecost it came to life—the resurrection.

To understand the average Jews' comprehension of the resurrection read Martha's comment (she had no copy of

scripture) to Jesus regarding the death of Lazarus.... "I know He will rise in the last day" (John 11:24). Resurrection was a pre-flood understanding (Jude 14). Israel had educated its people in combat against Imperial cult worship theology. Even Herod Antipas was not declaring that Jesus was the ghost of John the Baptist, but rather John's actual physically resurrected body. After all they were familiar with such passages as 2 Kings 13:21.

Just as Jesus predicted, He became a sign to that wicked generation even as Jonah had become a sign to the wicked Ninevites (Luke 11:30). Making the connection to resurrection in Jesus' challenge to the Pharisees was missed by our critic and he has failed to make good sense out of the story of Jonah in spite of the fact it is central to the entire challenge put forth by Jesus.

Jesus verified the story of Jonah as being a genuine historical event, not a Jewish fable. The author/historian of the book sets the stage for the incredible account of a man being swallowed by a fish by laying out factual detail (Jonah 1:1-2:1) by relating only those facts that were established apart from Jonah's hidden experience. He was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights (1:17) and then he prayed (2:1). The author, does not jump to conclusions as to what point Jonah prays from within the fish, but rather allows Jonah to explain thus avoiding presumption and revision on actual happenings. These words of Jonah are most likely a residual part of the message he delivered to the Ninevites for we see in verse 8 a lesson being taught on the vanity of their idol worship.

Our critic should consider what Jonah was explaining in his experience. In tones of thanksgiving and gratefulness Jonah prays from out of the fish's belly (2:1) "I cried by reason of my affliction

and was heard." "Was heard" modifies the term "cried". What he cried out of the belly of death (she'ol) was "You heard my voice" (2:2). It is clear that Jonah cries out, and does so from within the fish. The reason is equally clear, for Jonah expresses he received an answer. (Unfortunately the construction of the sentence as it is rendered in most translations is fraught with some interpretive bias. This forces the rules of syntax to introduce conjunctions and punctuation to try to satisfy a desired meaning in a similar way that the placement of a comma in Luke 23:43 changes the meaning of the words "I say unto you, today" to that of "I say unto you today,"). We need to acknowledge the obvious. We discover what generated Jonah's joyful declaration in 2:3 "For you had thrown me into the deep" (past tense). Jonah describes his frightening ordeal after being cast overboard. The waves had rolled over him and his life threatened. He cries out to God saying "I am cast out of your sight; and yet I will look again towards your holy temple" (2:4). This reflects a realization of pending death, coupled with the Jewish hope of resurrection. In verse 6 Jonah makes a statement that clearly reflects the words of Psalm 49:14-15, (you have brought up my life from corruption 'shachath'). Coupling this verse with the dying man's prayer in verse 4 gives insight and clarification into the content of Jonah 2:2-3.

It is not surprising that a prophet of God engaged in future Kingdom of God eschatology would express under great duress the hope in resurrection. Paul did that in 2 Corinthians 1: 8-10 when in the throes of depression he found his only handhold, the hope of resurrection.

After this short prayer in verse 4, Jonah describes his descent to the bottom of the ocean where he blacks

out. "The earth with its bars closed behind me forever" (verse 6). He would have remained for about nine hours before floating up again (as all drowning victims do) were it not for a fish prepared to swallow him.

Had Shakespeare written this, no one would have escaped the scenario of a drowning man. Bias is most blinding when interpreting scripture. Jonah is not describing a fish swallowing, but rather the frightening experience of drowning to the point of losing consciousness. Amongst the many accounts available, past and present, no one who has ever been swallowed by, or partially swallowed by, a fish ever explains the experience as Jonah does. On 1/23/2007, Eric Nerhus, age 41, an Australian abalone diver who was partly swallowed by a three meter shark, still had the presence of mind to poke the fish in the eye, describing the incident as an attempted fish-swallowing not a drowning.

Our critic simply swallowed popular opinion and used it as a form of proof, failing to ask vital questions such as:

1. Why did the Pharisee ask for a sign?
2. Why did Jesus give them this particular sign?
3. Was that sign fulfilled and effective?

Jonah did not cry out "You have heard my voice" for no reason—it was in response to the sudden realization that he was conscious after blacking out. He knew his soul (life) had fainted within him. In addition he makes the O.T. resurrection language statement (pre-supposing death) of Psalm 16 and Acts 2 in Jonah 2:6: "yet you have brought up my life from corruption." It should have told our critic, that it speaks to the limitation put on the time Jesus would spend in the grave,

sufficient to prove death, but not long enough to see decay as Lazarus did.

Jesus' experience parallels Jonah's in a profoundly remarkable way. When Jesus read the words of this book it would have spoken to him even as other Messianic prophecies did, and so he chose an important part of its prophetic detail to serve as the sign for the Pharisees.

- Like Jonah He was sentenced to death.
- Like Jonah, Jesus was tossed and pummeled and taken down by a crowd of abusers.
- Like Jonah, a crown of weeds was wrapped around his head.
- Like Jonah, His soul fainted within Him and He sent a plea to God "*why has Thou forsaken me*".
- Like Jonah, He died and was placed in an awaiting tomb.
- Like Jonah, He laid 100% dead for three days and three nights, to await resurrection inside His tomb before His body would begin to decay.
- Like Jonah, Jesus rejoiced from within that tomb in prayerful thanksgiving to His most important and immediate contact, His loving and faithful Father in heaven.
- And like Jonah, who became a sign to Nineveh, Jesus became a sign to all who doubted His claim to being the true King and Messiah of Israel.

To our critic we say the profundity of Jesus' statement in Matthew 12 was brought to the fore in Acts 2 where the direct prophetic nature of resurrection language in the O.T. met with its dynamic fulfillment.

To our critic we say, you need to carefully and humbly read the scripture first, because when the living God says

"in like manner" He means it.

Our critic needs to learn that amongst the many religions of this world only the Jewish/Christian scripture reveals the ultimate power and miracle from the living God, that of bodily resurrection to judgment, some to eternal life some to destruction. Jesus was dead in His tomb, yet lives—an eternal merciful Messiah.



Further to the Matter of Jonah and the Fish

The story of Jonah has enchanted many. How could a man be swallowed by a fish and after three days and three nights still be alive! This story, however incredible, was given a stamp of approval by Christ Himself where He makes reference to Jonah's time in the specially prepared fish (Matthew 12:40). The reason why Christ selected this story as a sign to a wicked generation is in itself intriguing, as the entire city of Nineveh dropped to their knees in response to Jonah's preaching. What was there that was so commanding about Jonah that made his message something to be taken that seriously.

Not so well published or advertised is another view that in all fairness should be examined for it sheds light upon what may have startled the Ninevites into heeding God's warning. This view is the understanding that reveals Jonah had indeed drowned as he expected to, and was swallowed by a fish prepared to pick him up. After three days and nights of travel he was resurrected within the fish, prays to God and then is deposited on land. This view rests upon the process of analysis of critical realism, thus making good sense of the words of the account as given by the

author. Immediately observed is that the information given is of a factual nature, information that is realistic and quite detailed by the author. It presents us with the following:

1. Jonah didn't want to go, (possibly because to aid and abet the success of the enemy could have been read as treason) so he fled to Joppa.
2. His presence on board was known; when the ship began to flounder, he was sought out from below (Jonah 1:5) showing the ship had a few decks, a sizable craft, likely named and known in the commerce industry. Passengers likely had to register.
3. After the mariners desperate measure of dumping the cargo Jonah, as others, were carefully questioned. His nationality, his job, and his mission were disclosed along with the God he worshipped (Jonah 1:6-9). The crew prayed to Jonah's God (verse 14) establishing the truth among themselves with vows before Him (verse 16).
4. The fact he was supposed to go to Nineveh and didn't was a dual disclosure to sailors who now fought for their lives. They understood that

it made sense why they were caught in such an unusual tempest and how they were to escape. This knowledge became part of a shipping log that would justify their losses. Throwing the cargo overboard was a serious decision of accountability, one does not arrive in port with ship and crew intact and not the cargo. Men and/or companies awaited the ship's arrival and when goods fail to be delivered, debts are incurred. An accounting of events with some proof became essential as a charge of theft was possible.

5. Besides loss of cargo, their arrival at port would be minus one passenger. It was Jonah's suggestion to be tossed overboard. Drowning seemed a better option than going to wicked Nineveh, and then having their repentance turn God's heart from destroying them (4:1-2). It is amazing that Jonah cared even about the lives of the men on the ship.

6. Jonah was thrown into a boiling tempestuous sea wherein he went down and the sea became calm. The narrator tells us after the sea stopped its raging Jonah was swallowed by a divinely prepared fish (verse 17). For three days and three nights, Jonah was in its belly, then he prayed (verse 17, 2:1).

It is here that we must pause to analyze this last piece of information in the otherwise detailed and critical accounting of events, for it has three possible interpretations.

- A. Jonah was immediately swallowed alive but comatose in the fish for three days and nights then revived, prayed, and was vomited out.
- B. He was swallowed alive by the fish and spent three days and three nights praying and fixing meals, then was vomited out.
- C. He drowned uttering a dying

man's prayer, was swallowed by the fish and lay dead for three days and three nights. He was then resurrected inside the fish whereupon he prayed and was vomited out.

Only one best answers the questions raised by the text and other passages of scripture.

We gain insight when we go to folklore and fish stories, while there are many alleged accounts of men being swallowed by large fish, none ever describe drowning, they recount being swallowed, or attacked instead. The point we make here is quite simple and need not be disputed over as to whether or not the tales have truth; there is a difference between describing a drowning and that of being swallowed by a fish.

Reading the narrator's description of Jonah's recounting of his event, we see a striking difference. Jonah does not describe a fish swallowing him but rather describes drowning in a raging sea (Jonah 2:3-6). The narrator says he prayed from the fish's belly (Jonah 2:1) but does not designate that prayer to any fixed point in the three day period of time. The reader must put the pieces together.

Moving from the narrator's account to Jonah's words (Jonah 2:2) we see his reason for crying out was because he had been afflicted. "*Out of the belly of the grave he cried.*"

What then was this affliction? He explains, "*I was thrown into the deep.*" This describes a "drowning" not a "swallowing" by a fish. Jonah did not suffer the same trauma Eric Nerhus did.

A careful reading of Jonah's narrating exposes that he more likely drowned

and with no consciousness of the passing of time was resurrected and awakened in the fish after three days, whereupon he prays and is vomited out onto dry land. Though Jonah doesn't describe the swallowing, he knew he was in the belly of a fish when he prayed. Spending three days and three nights alive in a fish would be an experience so intense, it would have been worthy of commentary, but Jonah offers none.

Paul spent some time one on one with Jesus (2 Corinthians 12) and no doubt from this learning experience he was able to appeal to scripture and reference burial, three days dead, and a resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4). Unless one can find other references, it remains evident that these three elements Paul preached on were drawn from the Jonah account; understanding that Jonah had drowned, spent three days in the fish as his tomb, and then was resurrected therein, more than fairly satisfies this demand that Paul places upon the scripture.

When Jonah makes the statement (Jonah 2:6) "*The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet you have brought up my life from the pit,*" we are brought face to face with pictures of death and resurrection. Jonah's words are clearly reflective in nature, (answering verse 2) by describing what happened starting in verse 3 where he gives the reasons for crying out from the fish's belly "*for you cast me into the deep*". For Jonah to be alive in the fish does not satisfy the death and resurrection language used here. Neither does it account for how he may have witnessed the descent he so graphically describes (Jonah 2:3-6).

While insistent that Jonah was alive in the fish some have relegated this part of scripture to poetic and allegorical language, and in doing so have steered

clear of critical realism that would justify Paul's burden on scripture for proof.

The passing of three days and three nights is something Jonah would not have been able to reckon well from inside the fish, dead or alive, but rather quite noticeable to those outside. To be alive for three days and three nights that long in the fish would be the epitome of psychological and emotional torture—man, not God, deals in this realm. God is abundant in mercy and has power over life and death. To allow a man to die and then resurrect him is true mercy. It was not for Jonah's sake that he was kept in the fish for three days, but rather for the reason Christ makes plain, it was for the purpose of being a sign to a wicked generation. A wicked generation in the latter days will bring charges against God's two witnesses and the subsequent trial and charges will net them the death penalty, but just the same as it was with Christ, those charges will disappear the moment

they are resurrected.

Jesus used Jonah's story to relay a message to a wicked generation. Christ's words were *"just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the fish's belly, so (Greek. "Houto" ---'in this manner') would He be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"*. The manner in which Jesus was in His tomb would be the same as the manner in which Jonah was in the fish. Jonah became this sign, and Christ did as well (Luke 11:29-30). (The three days and nights have different significance in this simile).

The widow from Zarephath made a comment to Elijah when he resurrected her son that she did not make about the other miracles He did for her (I Kings 17:24). *"Now I know by this (the resurrection) you are a man of God and the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."* Similarly a wicked generation did not believe Jesus words until after He was resurrected. It was only then that the word in his mouth was proven

to be truth. A wicked generation at the time of the end refuses the words of God's two witnesses until the day they are resurrected (Revelation 11:3) which will prove that the word of the Lord in their mouths was truth.

The Ninevites responded to Jonah's preaching because, by some means, they knew that the word of the Lord in his mouth was truth. When Jesus made the statement, *"just as Jonah was in the fish for three days and three nights"* He was drawing upon a familiar story that was part of Israel's knowledge and heritage to point to His own death burial and resurrection.

What would have shocked the Ninevites would have been a resurrected Prophet! The lesson for us should be clear, the coming deception will be intense, so intense that if possible it would deceive even the elect, only death and resurrection will prove in whose mouth is the truth.



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SHORT SIGHTED



Have you ever watched a dog, which will do everything to stay out of the water? It reminds me of many of us who resist with all our might, trials and hardships and difficulties in this life. What are we afraid of? Did we not count the cost? I can not remember Jesus telling us the narrow path would be easy. I never read a story about anyone in the Bible who had an easy time. Yet, what did some of them have to say? Were the trials worth it?

These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth (Hebrews 11:13).

They were smart enough to know the difficulties were temporary and worthwhile.

We too, have been persuaded and we know we are to suffer in this life like our elder brother Jesus Christ did; so why do we drag our feet when we are faced with difficulties. Did we think we would just slither into the Kingdom on a soft-as-silk slide? We know suffering is what perfects us and makes us ready for the Kingdom. Look at what Christ had to endure.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand (Isaiah 53:10).

This human resistance to God's way reminds me of the story of Lot where the Lord found Gomorrah evil and was going to destroy it. Lot was told to leave yet

...while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city (Genesis 19:16).

Lot was told to leave for his own good by angels, yet he resisted. It was only God's mercy that saved him.

And look at Job. God loved Job (Job 1:8). Yet, He allowed him to suffer great loss and personal pain. This was necessary because Job did not get it. In the long poem at the center of the book of Job, we encounter a decidedly impatient Job, one who curses the day he was born, accuses God of treating him unfairly, and demands

an accounting from his Maker. Haven't we felt like that? Job finally learns the lesson through suffering.

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you (Job 42:5).

A light bulb moment! What if Job hadn't gone through that suffering? The ending of the story would have been tragically different. Job's life would have been for nothing. But God loved Job enough to let him go through suffering and major difficulties in order to produce the end result. A result God would be happy with and a result that Job was joyous about. God also allowed David to suffer much through his lifetime yet David praises God repeatedly in the Psalms. David had his eye on eternal life. We too do not always get it and if it wasn't for God's patience in giving us the ideal trial we would never get it. Doesn't that make you feel special and loved and grateful?

We are told that The Lord will chastise us as beloved sons (Hebrew 12:6-10).

Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nonetheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (v11).

We have to take seriously the words of James:

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy (James 1:2).

No matter how we look at that verse, no matter what version of the Bible it is hard to wrap our minds around it. But once we truly understand it we will jump for joy.

Jim Patterson wrote an article entitled *The Joy of Overcoming* (SVM, Summer

2010). It was only when I experienced a grievous trial and read this article and prayed and pondered the concept that I finally understood what the apostle James was trying to get across. I questioned it myself: How can I experience real joy in a trial? It seemed impossible. Jim Patterson explains this concept also in his book *Acts and the Epistles Bible: Study Questions & Commentary*.

Mr. Patterson writes “The only reason we can experience joy in our patience and longsuffering is by the power of God (Colossians 1:11,12). By having

ways,” (p. 179). And of course, our heart, being deceitful, will not allow us to realize this.

During my recent grievous trial God opened my eyes to a truth, something I could not see before and I experienced great joy. At this divine revelation I experienced a sense of great liberation, for once again, Jesus Christ had set me free from wrong thinking. But it took time...this is where we must experience patience and wait for Jesus’ response. Our wrong thinking is sometimes so deeply rooted there is no other way

All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant (Psalms 44:17).

We are tragically short sighted. Just like that little dog who resists the water that will refresh, cleanse, and energize him; likewise we sometimes need to be pulled kicking and screaming into the eternal life Christ has promised us. Why are we so reluctant to participate in the very event or circumstance that will help perfect and transform us? If we have financial, health, marital, family trials... they are what we need. Christ knows what we need. Patience and looking to Christ for guidance is a small price to pay for future glory.

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing (James 1:4).

Patience has a perfect work that unravels misconceptions and wrong assumptions about the life God wants us to have and how abundant life truly is. The perfect work of patience seeks to disconnect us with what we erroneously seek and believe and provides us with security and significance (SVM, Summer 2010, *The Joy of Overcoming*).



God’s power we are able to stand up and face the trials of life, and as we conquer them we are given inner joy, for we know that God is using them to teach us. We are to, therefore, be active, not passive” (p.118). Mr. Patterson writes, “The carnal self-will can be very strong. Our own will is often self-serving and self-preserving and is often overlooked during trials, and an underestimated factor in what brings us difficulty. The will of man is so often, in our own assessment, reasonable and worthy, but often has its roots in selfish motivation, and in seemingly innocent

to get rid of it but by trial. I have since changed my attitude toward these trials. My prayer now is to give me strength and courage to endure a trial, but especially to open my mind and perfect me and to help me be joyful and appreciative and thankful that God loves me enough to take the time to make sure I learn what needs to be done to transform me. And I know it will take a difficult trial. I have learned humans are slow to learn . I am a child of God and He loves me. What could be better than that? May we say with David:

The book of James reveals that we should look to Christ for approval; he explains that the trials of faith can be successfully overcome as we let go of the security of the world and lay hold of our security in God.

We need to remember we are loved.

We need to embrace our trials and difficulties as a ways and means to draw closer to Jesus Christ. We need to embrace trials with all our hearts and submit joyfully to Jesus Christ as we become one with Him.



Ask Norm!



Questions? asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Sept 27, 2012

Dear Norm,

Say, thanks for the work on the answers for the Ask Norm. I've noticed the Jewish "preachers" resent being called priests. They demand to be called "rabbis" (Matthew 23:6-8). Ditto the chief priest of the Catholics, Mr. Ratzinger, demands that he be called by a title that conflicts with Matthew 23:9 [father]. The Protestant ministers, verse 10 ["master" or "Mr."]. Also, verify Psalms 111:9 and Isaiah 42:8.

[Address change.] Thank you.

—Lee, Alabama

Dear Lee,

What a succinct summary of the titles that various groups tend to use. Of course, we have other titles used in the medical and legal professions. I remember being told as a young person that I needed to use these titles out of respect. The truth is we should respect people who are doing respectable things, but we should not use titles to do this.

The problem with titles is that once they are applied (when one graduates from an instruction program or is "ordained" by some religious group), then they usually stay until they are removed (which is rare). They do not reflect the ongoing activity or respectability of the individual. A person may diligently serve God all their life and never receive a title. Another person may receive a title and live out an unrespectable life,

reaping the rewards of the title, but only doing enough to maintain it. This is an acknowledged problem with ministers and teachers. Until we receive an incorruptible spirit body (1 Corinthians 15:52), we should not have a title. The only person on earth who ever deserved a title was Christ:

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am (John 13:13).

The scriptures emphasize the work over the position. When Paul wrote Timothy on the qualities of an elder, he prefaced it with *This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop (overseer), he desires a good work (1 Timothy 3:1).*

Oct 13, 2012

I have a question. I been studying the scriptures on your Sabbath which I already believe but I wanted to read your article anyways. I came across this years ago in [the] world wide [church], but there is so many times in the Bible of worshipping God on the new moons as well as the Sabbath and Holidays. Do you do that?

— Jessica, Texas.

Dear Jessica,

I have numerous Bible-believing friends who observe the new moons in various ways, but I do not do that myself. New moons are not included in Leviticus 23, where our Father says "These are My Feasts". While there are many verses that talk about worship occurring on the new

moons (Numbers 10:10; 1 Chronicles 23:31, 2 Chronicles 8:13; Isaiah 66:23, Ezekiel 46:1-3, etc.), there is not a specific Scripture commanding everyone to observe the new moons in a specific manner. Numbers 28 and 29, which list all of the offerings for each Feast Days, do command an offering on the new moons (Number 29:11-15), but do not say it is a "sacred assembly". There is no Scripture that says the new moon is a Sabbath or is to be kept like a Sabbath, but at times in ancient Israel, there were no sales on that day (Amos 8:5).

My best understanding of new moons is that they were a festival kept by many ancient peoples to mark the beginning of months—which were an essential part of their calendar. If people did not clearly note the first day of a month, they would be in disagreement as to the day number of the month. It appears that the Eternal gave Israel ways to worship Him on those days, rather than let them drift into the new-moon practices of the pagans around them.

The Bible contains no clear definition of a "month" or a "new moon". Exodus 12:2 says "*This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you*" but there is still no definition of what a month is. Some people have speculated that since they were just coming out of Egypt, we should use the same calendar system that the Egyptians were using at the time. But historians disagree as to what that was, and even if we did know, the Bible does **not** say Israel was using the

Egyptian calendar.

The Bible is not deficient. If our Father had a precise calendar that He intended for all believers to use, he could have made that clear in scripture. But instead, we have what He intended: No specific definition of when to start a new month (“new moon”) or when to start a new year, but commands to observe festivals on certain days of the months and years (Leviticus 23) and commands to **proclaim** those Feasts (Leviticus 23:2, 4, 37). When the Eternal’s Feasts are proclaimed to the people, they can gather to assemble and observe them, regardless of how the calendar may be calculated. When God’s people were being ruled by other nations, it is clear that they used the dating systems of other (Ezra 1:1; 4:24; 6:15; 7:7; Neh 2:1; Esther 2:16; Jeremiah 52:4, 5, 12; Daniel 7:1; 8:1; 9:1, 10:1, Luke 3:1, etc.).

There is no similar command in scripture to “proclaim” the “new moon.” Numbers 10:8-10 requires the priests, the sons of Aaron, to blow trumpets when the nation goes to war and over their Feast and new moon offerings. Psalm 81:3-4 part of repeats that command, saying: *“Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob.”* This is not a new law for the priests being added hundreds of years after Moses, but a reference to the seventh month, the Feast of Trumpets (a new moon), and at the full moon (the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles). Now that the priesthood is gone, there is no ongoing command to blow trumpets on new moons. Whereas, the commands to proclaim the Feasts are to all the children of Israel (Leviticus 23:2-4), which apply to all children of faith (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:7).

Because the Bible does not

specifically command people to keep new moons, because our society today does not make use of a lunar calendar for business or cultural appointments, because the Bible does not clearly tell us how to determine when a new moon day exists, and because there are so many different opinions as to how the new moon should be determined, I choose not to observe them. Sure, we base our keeping of Feast days on the first day of the first and seventh month, but I simply use the Jewish calendar, as it specifies the days that most people observe, and provides the best way to keep the commandment to assemble with other believers on those days.

If God ever clearly reveals a better way to me, I am ready to change.

Editor’s note: refer also to *Don’t be Mooned by the Lunar Sabbath*, Scribe’s Square, SVM 2010 Winter Edition.

Dear Norm,

In your excellent article on Christians keeping OT Holy Days you quote Colossians 2:16-17 from an inaccurate translation. It inserts the word “is,” which is not in the Greek and that changes the meaning! There are only a few translations that do not embrace this error. I like The Scriptures version: Colossians 2:16: “Let no one therefore judge you in eating or in drinking, or in respect of a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths – ¹⁷ which are a shadow of what is to come – but the Body of the Messiah.”

The correct translation makes the central issue of your article easy to understand. We are to allow the Body of the Messiah to make the judgments about eating, drinking, Sabbath keeping, and Holy Day observance. What is “the Body of the Messiah?” That answer is found in the

near context (v. 19) and even clearer in the previous chapter in the same book (Colossians 1:18). It is the congregation!

Colossians 1:18: “And He is the Head of the body, the assembly, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that He might become the One who is first in all.”

I get a picture of the congregation gathering together and discussing these issues in light of scripture and coming to agreement as to what most of the members feel is most correct. That becomes the standard of what we eat and how, when we observe the Sabbath and Holy days and how. Next year we can discuss it again and we may change.

The point of the exercise is that love and shalom in Yahushua’s congregation is more important than details of doctrine. Yahushua makes that love the deciding factor for identifying the true congregation of Yahushua.

John 13:34: “A renewed [or new] command I give to you: that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all know that you are My taught ones, if you have love for one another.”

Yahushua’s congregation is not identified by a doctrine that some individual may believe is correct. It IS identified by the loving, humble attitudes that decide things together in that congregation

I would much rather observe something *continued on page 26*

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Children of God

Part 5 —

The Age of Awareness

In the primary years, parents largely tell their children what is right, what is wrong, where they should go and what they should do. But when the preteen years arrive, the young person becomes aware that he or she is a separate individual. Each has his or her own likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, skills and struggles, etc. The exact age of awareness varies from one child to the next, but for a round number, let us say age 10.

When a parent tries to force a child to do the right thing for so long that they don't know how to do anything else, the red line to the right illustrates the result: the child does not learn to take responsibility for himself, even when he should be old enough to do so.

This writer has witnessed this on a number of occasions. Children may live at home into their 40s and 50s. Some move out but never marry, never learn to support themselves, and never have their own relationship with God. Some are always sick with something or remain dependent upon their parents for some critical aspect of life. These difficulties tend to run in families, though some parents recognize the problem part way through, change it, and their later children do not suffer the same problems. Also, there are times when parents or even their children clearly recognize the problem,

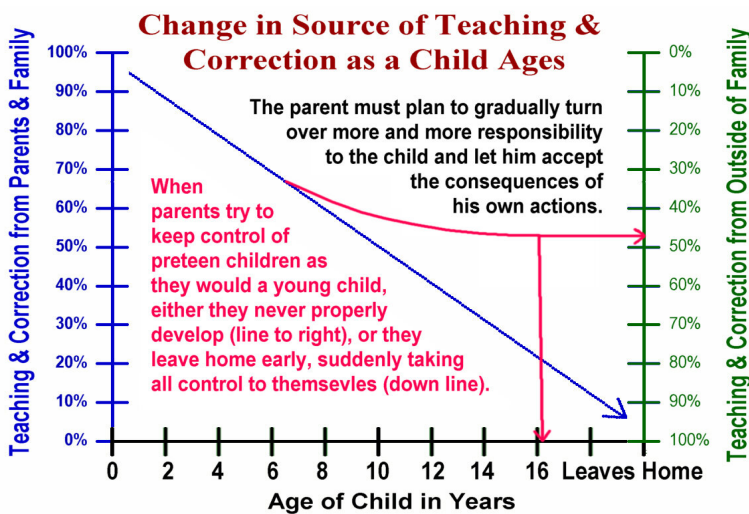
To which this writer replies, "What about you? Did you do everything the right way to begin with because your parents taught you? Or did you make some mistakes and learn from them?" Most of us realize that some of our best learning came from things we actually experienced—some were good things, some were mistakes. The goal of the parent is gradually turn control of their lives of to their children while they are still home, not so they will avoid all mistakes, but so they will avoid disastrous mistakes and learn from the little ones that they make.

Everyone Needs This Article

Even if you do not have children, some pre-teens are probably learning from you, whether you know it or not. They notice what you wear, how you talk, how you work, how you drive and how you spend your money. During this Age of Awareness, they begin to seek for answers outside of their immediate family. Some may ask you direct questions. You need to represent God to them.

Suppose a child has been told not to use profanity, but you do. What does that child think when he hears you use it? How much more impact does it have if you are a family member, teacher or a member of the child's congregation? The same is true for good things. Suppose that a child grows up in a messy house, and always hears his parents say that they don't have time to keep it clean. What would the child think if he knew you were a busy person, but you managed to keep a neat house? What would a child think if her parents told her that preaching the gospel was not something they could do, but then she talked to you about a mission trip you go on every summer?

These things are not lost on children. I can clearly remember going to friends' houses in my preteen years, and being amazed at how simple things varied—even simple things like eating a meal. Some gathered everyone together, sat down, prayed, made sure that everyone received what was being served, and then took care of the dishes after it was over. In other homes, people started helping themselves to whatever food they wanted—maybe even before it was fully prepared. There was no serious effort to make sure that



For a successful second decade of child rearing, each parent must also become aware--aware that they are helping unique individuals to learn to run their own lives, and to be responsible to God for their actions. Unfortunately, many parents, even dedicated, loving, well-meaning religious parents, do not make this transition.

We reprint the graphic from Part 2 to remind all parents of their responsibility to continually turn over decision making to their children. We have added the red line to show what happens if parents do not do this.

determine to rectify it, and by the grace of God are able to change their lives and overcome their negative past.

The more likely result of over-parenting—trying to force older children to do what is right—is rebellion. This is represented by the red line that goes straight down. These children either move out or completely stop listening to parents and do whatever they want. The gradual turn-over of responsibility to never happens. But some parents will argue: "My child is not yet ready. I can't let them make mistakes that will hurt them."

everyone was served and dirty dishes were left all over the house. While I found a few family's practices too rigid, I was amazed to see that their children all seemed happy in spite of their rules. I was sure that I did not want to learn the chaotic messy practice of some of my friends' houses.

This trivial example of food is easy to understand, but every topic discussed in this article applies to everyone who comes in contact with preteens. We are all part of their experience about how the world works. Our attitudes toward God, the Bible, truthfulness, sexuality, etc. are witnesses to them of what "some people do". If a pre-teen child is surrounded by good influences that either reinforce or exceed the teaching he has received at home, it will be a great blessing to him. If the influence of others is bad, it makes the job of the child and his parents so much more difficult.

Questions

The parent will know when the "age of awareness" has arrived for a given child by the new and different questions, requests and refusals they receive. Physical maturity also comes at nearly the same time.. This article cannot possibly answer all the questions that will be asked. Instead, we seek to present how to deal with the questions—in a way that will be best for both adults and children. Here we go:

1. **Do not ridicule any serious question.** (Sometimes young people are jokesters and ask ridiculous things just to see how others react. So if a child asks if he can bring home a polar bear for a pet, it is reasonable to tell him he can keep it in the freezer so the family can feed him their leftover dinners when they go to get ice cream.) But other times preteens seriously ask far-out questions that parents should take seriously. A ten-year old may ask to use the family car, or to travel across the country on his own. Do not dismiss this as ridiculous, but ask them real questions in return. Do they know what the laws are? Do they know what the costs are? Do they have enough money?
2. Use "not yet" instead "no" **when possible.** Instead of a "no" answer to the above questions, say "you can use the family car when you are 16, finished driver training and have proven yourself responsible," and "you will be able to travel on your own when you have demonstrated that you can save and budget your money, and when you have shown that you choose good friends and know how to stay away from trouble." These kinds of answers cause the child to see the parent as their helper to growing up. When the parent just says "no", that leads the child to see the parent as an obstacle to growing up. Sure, the parent's reaction may be: "my child is no where near ready for these things—he can't even find his socks in the morning—why should I even talk or think about them?" Because the child is thinking about them, the parent needs to think with them.
3. **Use a child's questions to teach important lessons.** To continue the previous example, the parent might tell the child who wants to travel by himself that he will need to learn to keep his clothes organized if he is going to travel. When a child wants something from his or her parents, they will often listen to a lots of teaching and even make changes in their life if it helps them achieve their goals. Parents should seize on this opportunity to teach. The answer "because I said so" is sometimes appropriate for primary children, but preteens and teens need explanations so they can begin making decisions themselves. A short explanation is better than none. If a child wants to argue—to rehash the same points over and over, simply tell them you will not argue and you can talk about the subject again later.
4. **Set intermediate goals.** Yes, will probably be difficult to convince a 10-year old to keep his clothes in order now so that he will be ready to travel on his own five to seven years from now. But there should be some intermediate milestones before a child is allowed to do such a thing. A starting place might be traveling with a friend or staying over night with a friend. If a child is told that she will be allowed to spend a night at a friend's house if she keeps her room in order for some number of days, she may jump at the chance.
5. **Be Truthful in answering.** Suppose a child asks, "Mom, do you have enough money to buy something for me that costs \$70 dollars?" Don't say "no", and then take him with you to the store and buy things totaling more than \$70. The child may conclude you are untruthful. It would be better to say, "The money I have is already budgeted for important things for the family. I have \$70, but I will not spend it on your request now. Would you like a job so you can earn \$70?" In an effort to be protective, some parents also tell a lot of untruths: "If Jane doesn't wear her coat to school, she will get sick." "If your friend keeps drinking alcohol at that bad family's house, they will all go to jail." While those consequences often occur, they also often do not occur. The child will certainly encounter someone who rarely ever seems to have a coat and rarely gets sick, which will cause distrust of parents. Telling a child that people without coats in cold weather are more likely to get sick is probably true. It is also good to bring out real life examples of poor choices and their consequences when such things occur in local newspapers or among a child's friends. The Bible is a great source of truth. If a child is asking about immorality, you can show by examples how it does not work, or you can show where the Bible commands us to avoid it. Where there is a question of good versus evil, it is good for a parent to use more than their own authority ("because I said so"). The Bible, life experience, good studies, etc are better authorities. Your child can continue to use these to make decisions long after he or she has left home.
6. **Don't be afraid to say you don't know.** If a child asks a current events, human physiology, biblical or other question to which you do not know the answer, do not guess and speak authoritatively. That will only drive your child away

when they eventually find out that you really did not know. Do not be afraid to admit your uncertainty and if an answer is important to your child, work on a plan to get the answer. Maybe the child can help; the Internet or a library will certainly help.

7. **Ask the child questions.** This shows that you are interested in them and in the development of their own thinking process. Ask them what sparked their question. Ask them where they got their information. Ask them if they know where to get more information. Dialog and relationship become more and more difficult to maintain as children grow. Answering and asking questions is a great way to keep talking.

Don't-Want-Tos

Along with their questions, children will bring a slate of things that they no longer want to do:

1. Go to bed at a certain time.
2. Work, watch videos, play games or do other things with younger siblings. (Anything the young ones can do is not grown up enough for them.)
3. Follow parents' requests when and where they want things done.
4. Wear old clothes. (New and trendy clothes may be wanted.)
5. Go anywhere outside the home unless they are dressed up.
6. Do work associated with the opposite sex. (Boys don't want to help with laundry or dishes; girls don't want to help outside, etc.)
7. Eat with the family, talk to parents, go to school or other things that even most preteens would consider "normal" to do.
8. These represent just a few of the changes that might occur—every child is different. Some are rather trivial, some represent serious problems. For example, the girl who wants to be dressed up if she is going to leave home could simply be allowed to do it—provided she takes care of her clothes and get ready in a timely fashion. The child who has the issues in the last point, above, needs help. The parents

need to try to find out the real reason why—enlisting the help of school officials, ministry, counselors, etc

These "don't-want-tos" are signs of growing up and children wanting to manage their own lives. They should all be considered, and some should be granted. Letting a child prove they can do it is key. For example, a 12-year old might be allowed to go to sleep whenever they want if they are always able to get themselves up in the morning and perform their tasks without being too tired. If the child fails at first, he can be given a bed time again for a while and then allowed to try it again. Compromising also works: The child who does not want to work or play with younger siblings can be allowed to do things apart from them at some times, and required to be with them other times. The setting of intermediate goals from the last section also applies. The child who does not want to wear old clothes may agree to have certain clothes replaced at certain times, and may also agree to work to help buy the latest styles.

Do-Want-Tos

Most teens have new things they "do-want-to" do. For some, the list is nearly endless: Place to go, people to meet, sights to see, music to hear, things to buy, experiences to absorb, etc. This desire must not be squashed, but directed. Emphasis must be placed on what the child can do to bring about his own desires.

This writer remembers a child who always wanted to play video games and would neglect other family responsibilities. His reason to his parents: he was going to be a video game designer when he grew up. Rather than just say "no", or let the child just play video games for most of his waking hours, the parents were encouraged to require their child to download a video game creation program and to start designing his own game. If he did not do this, he would be judged insincere about becoming a video game author and his playing time would be limited.

Of course, there will always be far out requests that cannot be granted, like the child who asks for \$1,000,000. There is nothing wrong with telling a child that these requests cannot

be done and to encourage him to ask his friends if they think his request is reasonable. It may be best to simply defer difficult requests till a later time.

Some "do-want-tos" might be reasonable for one family but not for another family. The child who wants to learn to ride a motorcycle or play the violin may be able to do this in a family where a parent already does it, or where they can pay for lessons. In the family where there is neither skill nor funds for an unusual request, a creative solution may be sought. Is there a friend whose parents can bring that skill to a child? Is there some kind of assistance available for children who cannot afford it? Is there a way to work and save money for it?

Even with all of these warnings, there will be parents who will say "No, my child is too young to do that" (whatever it is). Or maybe, "God wants me to protect my young child". Remember, when Jesus was only 12 years old, He was traveling away from his parents for several days (Luke 2:42-49).

In the pre-teen age, parents should be even more aware of the many differences between one child and the next. They all have different strengths and weaknesses. They may demonstrate great skill or great aversion to one or more of the following areas: art, music, dance, sports, drama, math, science, reading, writing, speaking, social skills, mechanical skills, etc. Children should be encouraged to excel at their gifts, while at least trying to meet minimum requirements in areas where they struggle. Providing a place where a child can excel does much for their self-confidence and overall ability. It is much easier and more productive than only trying to keep them out of trouble.

Sexuality

The realization that "I am no longer just a child, I am a young man" (or young woman) will certainly come. Parents, family and friends can make this a wonderful healthy process or a painful process. A parent does not want to "play catch-up" in this task. Today, nearly all of our media are full of messages about sex. It is the standard fare of entertainment and marketing. If children do not learn about it directly from the media, they will learn from some of their friends.



There is no specific age that is best to teach a child about sex, but parents must strive to “beat the street”—to teach their child before they receive a massive amount of skewed information from someone who may have few moral values. Any child that has questions—even if they are “silly” or “naughty”—should certainly be answered and taught. If schools, scouts or some other program start teaching at a young age, the parent should get ahead of the game. Indeed, parents have to start teaching usually before their child is really interested or even physically capable of sexual activity. That is our world, today.

The best place to start is with the issue of “Where do babies come from?” Never give fake answers to this question (babies come from storks or hospitals). Explain that whether for humans or animals, they grow inside the female for a period of time, and then come out through a place in their bodies designed for that function. It is ideal to take children to visit a pregnant woman, and then visit again after she has the baby. Children will start with the miracle of birth and later associate sex with that. This is so much better than children learning the mechanics of foreplay and intercourse, and having a postscript added: “you need to use protection to avoid a disease or a baby.” If there is one single little-taught fact this article can teach, is that birth control, as practiced, does not work. No matter what claims may be made about the percent effectiveness of any particular product, the truth is that 2 million unwanted babies are conceived in the USA every year. A million of those are killed, and the other million are raised by somebody. Even if birth control

could become 10 times more effective (which nobody really expects), the number of unwanted children born every year would still be staggering.

By the way, if you do take your children to visit a new mother, take a meal or do some work for her while you are there. The mother will appreciate it and your children will learn that raising babies requires a lot of work—but it is some of the most rewarding work in the universe.

With the foundation of how babies come out, it is much easier to answer the question, “How does the baby get in to begin with?” A biblical understanding that sex is the wonderful gift from God to fulfill his command to populate the earth with His children” is essential. Yes, He made it feel good as well, but He told us that ultimate fulfillment would only come in a good marriage. Anything less produces mostly heartache. Much good Christian literature is available to help the parent.

This writer has a number of free articles available on the Internet: <http://www.cbtm.info/marriage/index.html>. The 38 page article, *Love that Lasts: Why Sexual desire is Best Fulfilled in Marriage*, is an in-depth treatment of the subject.

“But My Friend Does It”

Parents must expect to be continually challenged with the real and imagined practices of their children’s friends. They will want to do what their friends do. At whatever time you ask your child to go to bed, they will know a friend who is allowed to stay up later. Whatever clothing you tell your child

they cannot wear, they will know somebody who wears it. The list goes on and on.

The simple teaching that “We parents expect you to adhere to the standards of this family” will be effective at times, but ultimately they will need something more definite: a command from Scripture, a personal conviction or a standard they accept from their community of friends. This is the process of growing up: a child reconciling his parents’ teaching with what his peers are doing and his own understanding of what God expects of him. When a young person must explain to others why he does what he does, he usually wants to say more than simply “mom said.”

When a child wants to do something because a friend is doing it, following these steps may help:

1. Find out if the friend is really doing what he says he is doing. Young people frequently boast about doing things that they really are not able or permitted to do. This may take a phone call or a visit to the friend’s family, but it is probably worth it. Most such communication attempts will end before they get started—the child or friend will not want to have to prove their inflated claims.
2. For friends that are doing what they claim, how is that freedom working for them? Does the child who is allowed to “stay up as late as they want” miss a lot of school? Are they tired all the time? Is their house an unbelievable mess? This writer still has a vivid memory being nine years old and briefly visiting the home of a friend who seemed to have parents that “let him do whatever he wanted.” It was a chaotic place full of dirty dishes, dirty messes and dirty children. This writer left that house feeling glad that kind of “freedom” was not in his own house.
3. For children that still want to follow a friend’s example in the face of their parents’ better judgment, think about letting them “test out” their request in some way. For example, for the child who wants to wear clothing that the parent deems inappropriate, is there a “safe” place where the child can wear it one time, and then talk to their parents about what it did for them? Did *continued on page 22*



Scribe's Square

Is there a scriptural age of accountability? Is there an age at which a person now becomes accountable to God and below which sin is not imputed? Is there an age one must reach before one may accept the Lord Jesus Christ as one's savior, be baptized and cleansed from unrighteousness, receive God's Holy Spirit, and become a follower of Christ? Some people teach that the age is twelve. Others believe that the age is twenty. In fact, some churches have a rule not to baptize any person under the age of twenty.

There is no statement explicitly establishing a minimum age for baptism and Christian discipleship. This fact, however, is not dispositive of the matter. While there are some who would baptize a 4-year-old and make him a bishop, God does show a pattern of assigning various liabilities, responsibilities, and duties based upon age and maturity.

Twelve was the age at which Jesus sat in the Temple among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions to the amazement of all who heard him, and later told his mother Mary that he had been "about my Father's business" (Luke 2:40-52). But

this might have more to do with the brilliance of the young boy from Nazareth named Yeshua than with instructing us about an age at which one is capable of choosing to serve God.

In ancient Israel, Yahweh seemed to adopt 20 as the age of adulthood and occasionally used it as the threshold age at which He held people accountable for certain sins. The cut-off age to be counted in the census was age twenty (Numbers 1:3). The atonement offering was assessed beginning at the age of twenty (Exodus 30:14). A person was legally considered worthy to serve in the temple at the age of twenty (Ezra 3:8, Leviticus 27:3). At 20, a man was old enough to fight in the military (Numbers 26:2). As punishment for Israel's lack of faith in the wilderness after their exodus from Egyptian slavery, Yahweh proclaimed that all adult Israelites except Joshua and Caleb would be excluded from the promised land. Yahweh, however, allowed all those under the age of 20 to enter the promised land after the previous generation had died out (Numbers 32:11).

Because Yahweh did not sentence those Israelites under twenty to perish in the wilderness and because of the other aforementioned thresholds,

Age of Accountability?

some Christians believe that twenty is the scriptural age of accountability. But are these examples proof conclusive that Yahweh does not punish persons under age 20 for sins? No. Under the Mosaic law, whoever cursed his father or mother was supposed to be put to death. There is no language in his law exempting children under age 20. (Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:19). When the prophet Elisha was intimidated by a mob of young men (Hebrews, naar), two she-bears came out from the woods and mangled forty-two of these lads. And while "lad" or "young men" is probably a better translation of the Hebrew word naar than "little children" as found in the King James Version, there is nothing in this account to indicate that these condemned young men were all over the age of twenty. Concerning marriage and relationships, there is no evidence in scripture that Ancient Israelites younger than twenty were somehow exempt from keeping the marriage and chastity laws. Such an exemption would have severely frustrated the purpose of these laws. And while age twenty was the legal floor at which God permitted Israelites to serve in certain capacities, He made exceptions for Joseph, Samuel, David, and Jesus, who ably served God in various secular, religious, and military capacities (Genesis 37; 1

Samuel 1:25-28; 1 Samuel 17:31-37; Luke 2:40-52).

If there is no specific age of accountability, then should children be baptized? Not necessarily. Jesus on multiple occasions stated the importance and severity of one's decision to follow Him. He once said that those who do not prioritize following Him above their own fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, or even their own lives, are not worthy of Him. Analogizing discipleship to human undertakings, He rhetorically asked who would build a tower without first sitting down and counting the cost and what king would set out to fight a battle against a rival king without first sitting down to deliberate whether he can prevail with his current number of troops (Luke 14:26-33).

In His famous parable about the sower, seed, and soils, He explained that one of the reasons why those who hear the word of God do not persevere is because they do not truly understand God's word (Matthew 13:1-23). His servant Peter stated on the Day of Pentecost that baptism and the acquisition of the Holy Spirit must first be preceded by repentance (Acts 2:38). To truly repent means to turn in the sense of remorsefully and humbly turning from one's sinful lifestyle and toward God. (2 Corinthians 7:10-11).

In his second letter, Peter warns that it would be better if one had not known the Way of righteousness than to have known it and then turned one's back on it. (2 Peter 2:21). The importance and severity of a commitment to follow Jesus, therefore, should serve as an admonition against baptizing infants and very young children.

Children are imitators. At an early age, their actions are often a function



of what they have observed others doing rather than what they really want to do. And while rearing a child in the nurture and admonition of God is commanded, commitment to God and culpability for sin are individual matters. (Ephesians 6:4; Ezekiel 28:1-22). Although the New Testament evangelist Timothy certainly benefited from being trained by his mother and grandmother who had faith in Christ, his mentor Paul observed that faith was also present in Timothy himself (2 Timothy 1:5). God has many children, but he has no grand-children. One must keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ for one's own self.

Because baptism and the laying on of hands does not necessarily save a person, a child baptized before fully understanding repentance and the cost of discipleship or the gospel of Jesus Christ may not really be converted and may become very confused. Conversely, it is also quite possible that while a church is waiting for a young person who has truly repented, believed in Jesus Christ and accepted

Him as Savior to reach a certain age of accountability, God could go ahead and give that person His Holy Spirit anyway.

Believe it or not, there are some matters for which God does not issue a single law applicable to all humans in every situation. The question of an age of accountability appears to be one of those matters. Concerning accountability for sins, the scriptures state that it is sin for "whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it" (James 4:17).

Yahweh is an all knowing, all-wise judge. Without setting up an age of accountability, He knows how to judge righteously. His judgments are unsearchable; His methods are inscrutable (Romans 11:33). This should serve as a warning to those who might try to intentionally disobey God and hide behind their youth or lack of understanding; and it should also serve as comfort to those concerned about the eternal destiny of those who have not yet come into the Way of righteousness.



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it do nothing? (Then, who needs it?) Did it attract bad attention? (Is that what she wants?) A parent's prayer for a child to learn from these tests can accomplish much.

4. Some practices may seem too dangerous to let children "test out" even though their friends might be doing them. For example, maybe some are riding bicycles on a dangerous, busy highway. The parent may address this by agreeing with the child to watch their practice for some number of weeks or months and see if anything bad happens. If the child loses interest before that time, this danger is averted. If some problem occurs, the child will understand why he/she is not permitted to do it. If there are no problems, maybe the parents need to adjust their views.

Finally, there are some practices that other children may be involved in, but are provably too dangerous: smoking, illegal drugs, premarital sex, etc. While books, statistics, and lectures will do a certain amount of convincing, there is nothing like talking to someone who has lived the lifestyle that your child or his friends are seeking. Recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous exist in nearly every city and can put you in contact with someone who has lived a dangerous life style who is willing to talk about it. While seeking out a former addict may seem like an extreme way to teach children, it is much better than hours of argument that lead no where.

Even so, dealing with "My Friend Does It" can be a complicated and difficult part of life. That is why Part 4 of this series ended with the all important Healthy Home and Community section. It is even more important in the pre-teen years. If parents cannot demonstrate a good marriage, a spiritually healthy family, time for their children, and a community at least somewhat in agreement with their values, their children will almost certainly reject the parent's values at some point

As children make more decisions on their own, the surrounding community becomes increasingly important. The "community" in this case is people with whom children

have regular contact: family, neighbors, school, church, social organizations and work. Children rarely make some master plan for where they will make friends—they make friends from those they encounter. If the parents realize their children's friends are negatively influencing them, the parents are better off to change schools, change churches or move to another area if it will prevent severe negative influence. The pre-teen and early teen years are the time to make such a move. Children in their upper-teens may refuse to move with their parents—and parents are often shocked to find there is little they can legally do about it.

Prayer

We cannot overemphasize the importance of prayer as children grow older. God generally does not do for us what we can do for ourselves. When our children are little, we can do a lot. But as they grow older and make more of their own decisions, it sometimes takes the power of God to deal with them. A parent can do a lot of teaching, but when a child refers to learn from that, the he or she often needs to learn by experience—sometimes a bad experience—but hopefully not a destructive experience. We can ask for our children what Jeremiah asked for himself:

O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing (Jeremiah 10:24)..

Hebrews 12:5-11 explains how human fathers correct their sons and how God corrects us. When we realize that it is not our mission to force them to do good, but to teach them to want to choose good. Asking God to work with their hearts often seems to be the best course of action. We can be sure that it is God's will for us to teach our children to live godly, safe, loving lives.

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:14).

Where Do I Find the Time?

After reading this article, it may seem like it prescribes an impossible amount of patient, difficult work for every parent. Indeed, a parent with fulltime job and numerous other responsibilities

may feel totally unable to do even part of what is required. Most parents do! We all only have so much time and preteen children will certainly demand more than we have. The parent needs to explain that he or she is a person, too, like the child, and he or she has limitation, just like the child. It is often during this age of awareness that a child goes from bored and wondering what to do, to a life filled with activity—busy till the day they die in some cases.

But beside saying "no" or "go slow", there are other solutions to the time dilemma. So whether the children are asking for a trip to the store, help with homework, the answer to a complicated question or an upgrade to the family home, you might consider these resources:

1. Can the child do all or some of the request themselves? Can they clearly write down their exact request and its cost (if any)? The Internet makes such things much more possible. If a child needs something for school, they can probably find three online sources and prices for it.

2. Can the child do something for you so you can fulfill their request for them? For example, if a preteen child wants a ride to a distant friend's house, a parent might say, "I was planning to rake up the front yard leaves after I come home today. If you have them raked up when I get home, I will take you to your friend's house."

3. Would your spouse, another family member, or a trusted friend want to do it?

4. Is this something a grandparent, or other relative would enjoy fulfilling request?

5. Can the entire request be shared with someone else somehow? For example, if a child wants to join an athletic team requiring frequent rides to practice, maybe those rides could be shared with a nearby neighbor who also goes. Or if a lengthy question has been asked, maybe other children want to hear the answer at the same time.

Whatever our time constraints may *continued on page 27*

FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2012



Feast in Penticton Renews Friendships and Lifts Up Hearts

Members of God's church from numerous organizations joined together once again in beautiful British Columbia for the Feast of Tabernacles 2012. In this second year of the festival in Penticton, it was really wonderful to see brethren renew warm relationships established in 2011 and continuing these friendships through the family connections in the Spirit of God. Indeed, names over the doors of the various churches should not be used to divide, as brethren came together to celebrate our common bond of faith.

We certainly did celebrate as we continued to develop festivities and excursions that involve the many. Moreover, the presence of God's Spirit helped us to achieve an atmosphere of praise and worship reminiscent of Acts 4:32— with *“one in heart and one mind.”* The environment in Penticton with its lakes, mountains and quality of life certainly enhances the fellowship experience. This whole festival was conducive to sharing, learning and mutual encouragement.

The feast was simulcast on the web, and those interested in viewing the messages and special music can go to <http://www.youtube.com/user/cogwebcast?feature=watch> and find them in the featured playlists.

Alex Kennedy

A Blessed Feast in Eastern Canada

The 2012 Feast of Tabernacles in Collingwood, Ontario, Canada, hosted by the Canadian Church of God in conjunction with the CGOM was a blessed success.

John Shavers of the Church of God, New Mexico in Albuquerque gave a Bible Study concerning the ten times the Israelites tempted their God Yahweh in the wilderness as well as sermons about effectual fervent prayer and humanity being created in the image of God. Lawrence Gregory of the Church of God in Tulsa, OK, gave a message answering the decades-long question “Why are We Here?” and another sermon about the majesty and splendor of God's Kingdom. Edward Malone spoke about the importance of being straight in a crooked world and about being single-minded in our journey toward eternal life even in the face of opposition or attempts to deceive us.

The hosts of the Feast in Collingwood have embraced the distribution of the Shepherd's Voice Magazine since its inception. Several of the Eastern Canadian brothers and sisters are on the magazine's mailing list and thoroughly discuss its contents with one another.

Edward Malone



Edward Malone, (Our Scribe of SVM) and festival co-coordinator Leonard Labunetz, together at the Collingwood, Canadian Church of God Feast.



In Court Over Good Works

While PABC continues to extend its service to the people of the local community, it is in court defending a criminal offense—having chickens! (Keep reading!)

On November 21, 2012 a family of six came to PABC with children ages 7 through 12, bringing our total to 41 people: 13 men, 11 women and 17 children. Since that date, nine of our guests have found housing on their own. All of this is being accomplished without any government funds or grants—through the dedicated work of the PABC members, about 70 financial supporters, and an ever-increasing amount of help from local churches and believers in Michigan’s “thumb” region.

Both the work of PABC and the trials it suffers are on a much smaller scale than that of the church under the apostles. Nevertheless, the principles are similar and we believe they provide guidance for us today. The religious leaders in New Testament times (Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees) were opposed to the apostles teaching that Jesus was the Messiah. But what bothered them the most, was the fact that the apostles were not trained by them and their schools, and that they

were attracting so much attention for undeniable good works:

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they **were uneducated and untrained men**, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name” (Acts 4:15-17).*

I was invited to speak about the Port Austin Bible Campus in a board meeting of the Village of Port Austin on Monday, June 11, 2012. While PABC is outside the Village limits, in the jurisdiction known as the Port Austin Township, the Village board asked us to come because we are very close by and many of the PABC Guests walk into the Village for jobs, shopping and

various services. Their clear message was that they did not want homeless people, especially those with criminal records, to be anywhere near their Village. They were not concerned with where they might go or whether their families would stay together, as long as it was somewhere else. The Port Austin Township Supervisor (who does have authority in our township) was also present at the meeting. Here is a summary of her comments in the official Village minutes:

*Darcie Finan commented that Edwards **is not educated or qualified** to be doing what he is doing and there may be **other avenues** to go through. [emphasis added]*

Nine days after this meeting, The Township Zoning Inspector sent a certified letter to us telling us our property was not zoned for “farm animals” and gave us 48 hours to remove them. The approximately 45 chickens we have are fed largely from leftovers and spoiled donated food. They provide a wonderful source of fresh eggs. Some of the homeless Guests help care for the chickens; all the Guests are required to separate usable food from other trash. It is a good lesson for all: when one does not have a job, one should use one’s time to save money. We have had chickens in the same location for the last seven years—and have never had complaints about noise from anyone. Was this letter one of the “other avenues” mentioned above?

This writer knew of other instances where governments had effectively tried to destroy a ministry by enforcement of numerous zoning regulations. It is very likely that our older buildings could be found technically in violation of other zoning ordinances. This case of the chickens appears to be a good one in which to

pursue the legal issues, if the Township was serious enough to stay with it. On October 10th, a criminal citation was issued, and Huron County 73B District Court case 12-1982-ON began. The original case was filed against Norman Scott Edwards, personally, but at the pretrial conference the prosecution agreed to change the name of the defendant to Norman Scott Edwards, Trustee of Port Austin Sabbatarian Church Community Sacred Purpose Trust, as the chickens belonged to the church ministry as a whole and were used for that purpose. Even so, if found guilty, the Trust could be fined \$100, or its Trustee (me) could be sentenced to 90 days in jail—or both—for each day that chickens have been on the property.

While some well-meaning Christians would say “get rid of the chickens and stay out of court”, we find numerous examples in the New Testament where the apostles stood up for their rights to be judged in the courts that God commanded us to create (Duet 16:18-20). When the apostles were commanded not to teach in Christ’s name for no legal reason, Peter’s reply was, “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). When Paul and his companions were beaten illegally, he demanded that the town officials come to let them out, rather than just send a messenger to release them (Acts 16:37). Paul used his citizenship to prevent a beating in Acts 22:25-29. When people high in government tried to have Paul transferred from Caesarea to Jerusalem so they could kill him along the way, Paul exercised his right to be heard by Caesar:

So Paul said, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know”. (Acts 25:10).

The Bible teaches that we should use mankind’s existing courts and appellate systems, and that they are responsible to be just (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:18-20, 17:8-13). The highest court was given the power of the death penalty over those who would not heed the court. But if these systems are unjust, then the Judge of the Earth (Gen 18:25) will step in to do justice (1 Samuel 24:15; Psalm 12:5; 43:1; 140:2 Proverbs 22:23; 23:11; Romans 12:19

Fortunately, many of the people who founded our legal system were Bible-reading, God-fearing men who instituted a lot of protection for religion.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” (Federal Constitution of the United States of America, First Amendment).

“Every person shall be at liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience” (Michigan Constitution of 1963 Article 1, Section 4).

“Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged” (Michigan Constitution of 1963 Article 8, Section 1).

(a) Substantial burdens (42 USC 2000cc, The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act)

(1) General rule

No government shall impose or implement a land use regulation in a manner that imposes a substantial

burden on the religious exercise of a person, including a religious assembly or institution, unless the government demonstrates that imposition of the burden on that person, assembly, or institution—

(A) is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest; and

(B) is the least restrictive means of furthering that compelling governmental interest

These foundational principles show that governments should encourage religion and not arbitrarily impact the functioning of a religion. Through the process of legal discovery, I obtained statements from both the Township Supervisor and the Zoning Inspector that there were no complaints associated with our chickens, but they simply became aware of their existence and felt it was their duty to enforce the zoning ordinance. There is no compelling governmental interest—there is no legitimate interest whatever.

I am taking the position that The Port Austin Township Zoning Ordinance itself and certainly its enforcement section does not apply to property used by unincorporated churches. The entire long Title and Preamble to the Zoning Ordinance says nothing about regulating churches or religious land use, nor about protecting the rights of churches or religions. Section 201 has 111 definitions of various terms used in the ordinance and there is no definition of “church” or for anything religious. The definition of “person” in Section 200.7 is as follows:

The word “person” includes an individual, a corporation, a partnership, an incorporated association, or any other similar entity.

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be, realize that very few parents ever end up resenting the time that they spend with their children. The reverse is almost universal—parents wish they had spent more time with their children—during all ages. There is nothing else like raising our own children. After all, it is the same job God has, he is raising us, as children of God!

How God Treats “Pre-Teen” Christians

Finally, let us learn some lessons about ourselves. How does God treat believers who are “pre-teen” Christians? This is the time when we are past spiritual childhood and begin to be aware of our spiritual gifts. We should not be surprised if we have trials. We should focus more on what He is teaching us than on about simply escaping the trials themselves.

This table gives us a few ideas comparing the new, pre-teen and adult Christian:

The New Christian...	The “Preteen, Aware” Christian...	The “Adult, Mature” Christian...
Calls for the elders of the congregations when a need for healing arises	Begins to pray for others when they are in need of healing.	Lays hands on any who come to him who are in need of healing.
Answers few questions from others about his beliefs.	Answers some significant, serious questions from others about his beliefs	Becomes the main teacher to one or more new believers.
Learns mostly what others teach about the Bible, checking the teachings in the Scriptures	Reads the Bible himself and occasionally finds understandings or questions that he has not read elsewhere.	Knows how to demonstrate all of his beliefs and teachings from the Bible.
Receives protection from all demonic activity.	Witnesses occasional demonic activity, but through prayer is unaffected by it.	Casts out of demons in the name of Christ

In part 6 of this series we begin the ultimate challenge to all parents—raising teenagers!



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in a way I think is in error in a loving congregation than to see some arrogant ‘leader’ impose a way I believe is correct but destroying the love and unity Yahushua commands. I would hope to present the case for the ‘right’ doctrine to everyone more understandably next year.

When Yahushua divides the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25:31, he does not even mention doctrine. He decides based on their love

What do you think, brother Norm?

Love in the Messiah,
Brother Tom Schattke, Missouri

Dear Tom,

I agree on all counts. There are numerous times in the Scripture when Yahshua (Jesus) and his apostles were impressed with the faith and love of Gentiles who clearly did not have

right doctrine—or right knowledge. Knowledge is only one of the many spiritual gifts listed in the Scriptures (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 28-31; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Peter 4:8-11).

Unfortunately, those who have biblical knowledge tend to reject other believers with many spiritual gifts, simply because they do not have as much knowledge. I have often been saddened to hear someone say, “I cannot work with them any more because they have this doctrinal error”—and a good Christian work is divided. This is why Paul said, “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Corinthians 8:1, NIV). Those gifted with knowledge may benefit from it, but they seem quick to think of themselves as superior and may reject others. Those gifted with love tend to accept others—whether they do or don’t have a similar amount of love or

knowledge.

I agree with your explanation of Colossians 2:16-17, but decided not to teach it in the article simply keep the article’s focus. Even the common translation of the verse explained my point well enough. As one grows in both grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), it becomes evident that one cannot teach all one knows about a subject in every situation. Christ even had this problem with His apostles: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

We must all recognize that there was a time when we knew a lot less truth than we do now, but still considered ourselves a believer. We also must recognize that we have more to learn. We can be confident that our Messiah will judge us fairly (John 5:30).



Baptism News!

The members of the Chicagoland Church of God recently celebrated the baptism of Daniel VanHecke.

Daniel has been attending with his wife Amy (pictured here also) who was also baptized last year. The VanHecke family has been a wonderful addition to the local congregation, and we are all blessed by their commitment to the work.



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Neither a free church, created via declaration of its members, nor a religious trust, created by a private individual correspond to any of the above words. They are not even close enough to be a “similar entity”. Indeed, most church groups today are organized as non-profit corporations—in asking the state government to create a corporation, a perpetual “artificial person” with limited liability; they are also asking to be regulated by the state. We have deliberately chosen to forego those benefits, to trust God instead, and to avoid regulation by the secular state. The few references to Churches within the main body of the Zoning

Ordinance must be references to Church corporations which are included in the above definition.

Furthermore, the zoning code has no mention, whatever, of church communities, such as we find in Acts 2:42-47; 4:33-35. These communities, in addition to being residential and agricultural, might also take on business and industrial endeavors. In the Scripture, Lydia was a fabric merchant, but also had believers staying in her house (Acts 16:14-15, 40); Paul once lived and worked

together with another tent-maker (Acts 18:2-3). The Bible teaches us to bring the poor into our houses (Isaiah 58:7; Luke 14:13; Hebrews 13:2-3).

We are not asking the Township to create a church community zoning for us, but stating that it was the intent of the legislature and those who wrote the Title and Preamble to the Zoning Ordinance that Townships should not apply zoning regulations to religious land use

The Zoning Ordinance clearly states that only a “person” can be guilty of a misdemeanor. Using the Ordinance’s definition of “person”, above, that does not apply to a church, a ministry, a trust or its trustees.

Any person violating any of the provisions of this Ordinance shall be guilty of a misdemeanor... (Section 2700).

This writer has not been a stranger to litigation on these kinds of matters. In 2005, our property tax exemption was denied because the local assessor had never read the law. He had only had training classes, which only taught him to make churches tax exempt if

they were recognized by the IRS as tax exempt under section 501(c) (3). It was not until 2007 that we received a hearing in court, but when we did, it took the judge only about half an hour to decide that we were tax exempt.

The upcoming dates for my motion to dismiss the case on the grounds of religious freedom, and then the trial that will follow if the case is not dismissed, are currently set for late December and early January, but they will likely be extended. We would appreciate the prayers of interested believers.

It was a blessing that there was less ministry going during the years when the early litigation was in process. Presently, it is very difficult to keep up with the daily ministry needs, facilities management, fund raising, article writing and new litigation as well. However, we realize that our Father in heaven knows exactly what we can do and what He wants to do through us. If He wants this ministry to continue, He will make a way to do it. If not, we will gladly serve in whatever other work He has for us.



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