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M A G A Z I N E

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**The Influence of Leadership**

**What Is Your Ministry Model?**

**Keep The Faith and Faithful Friends**

**2014 Feast of Tabernacle Reports**



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Front Cover: Black Faced sheep brave the cold weather as the sun tries to breakthrough heavy snow clouds on February 23, 2005, near Lesmahagow, Scotland.

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A photograph of a sunset over a field with bare trees. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and purple. The trees are silhouetted against the sky, and the ground appears to be covered in snow or frost.

Greetings!

A number of *SVM* readers have expressed interest in astronomical events and astronomy in general. The Creation is vast and full of many secrets, and is an expression of God's depth and glory. We thought that we would include in this issue an astronomical piece on the Blood Moon of 2014 that garnered some attention by a number of communities. In this Fall/Winter edition of *SVM* we have been given special permission by Jon Aros to publish his work along with a brief narrative on sequential exposures of the moon as it enters and leaves the center "Blood Moon" on the two page spread. The image is currently on display at the Purdue University, Calumet.

The need for properly trained leaders in the Church is a serious matter. Our brother James in his epistle makes it clear that it is not for many to be leaders in a teaching capacity, and we appreciate his candor. It takes training and experience to have the ability to teach in a capacity that meets Biblical expectations. There are a number of traps a teacher can and will fall into, and Biblical expectations are spiritual; often going beyond normal human abilities. In the article *The Influence of Leadership*, we touch on only a few areas where we can recognize spiritual development and expression of Biblical leadership.

In the article *What is Your Ministry Model*, we are asked to consider some questions that some face in their ministry and congregations. The models discussed also affect the learning and worship environment. Many

churches have had to overcome less than biblical ministry models - sometimes God Himself was motivated to intervene at times, as required to shake His people.

We have included these articles because of the influence leaders have on the worship environment. The worship environment is important for us. How we respond to situations has much to do with our worship environment, from our own personal worship to our group worship. We want the best for congregations of all sizes. When we look at how Solomon built a temple following God's direction, he built it with the best gold and precious jewels, and spared nothing. This was the house of God and the environment had to be suitable for both object of worship, our God, and the worshiper.

We understand that God is not so much worshiped in a place than He is worshiped in spirit and in truth. This can be extended to our environments that are around us if we are to project and cultivate an environment for both long-term believers and newcomers. Therefore, the environment must be appealing, relevant and flexible, and current to God's revelation. Change in approach, style and process should not be considered a bad or threatening thing.

We hope that the content of this issue will give inspiration to the readership.

In Christ's Service  
Jim Patterson

# The Influence of Leadership

## Straight Talk from the Apostle James – *The Need for Spirit Led Elders*

The role of teaching in a congregation presumes a leadership work in some capacity, and the role such a person assumes will have a kind of authority that will vary from one congregation to another. Teaching is a highly regarded work in scripture (Acts 13:1-3; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:17), and with proper training, a leader or a group of leaders can cultivate a progressing and fruitful environment for the brethren: those in their care can then carry that forward where their lives take them. The wisdom and Spirit led training of an elder is critical to the growth of any congregation.

For the purposes of this discussion, we are considering teachers, leaders and elders together. While there are subtle differences, their functions overlap and all provide leadership to the brethren. Leadership is a challenging subject and by no means can we cover it with extensive depth even in a series of articles. In this article we want to emphasize a few Biblical teachings on the Biblical expectations of effective elders that I believe have been under emphasized, but I have seen work in positive ways.

### Straight Talk from James

The message of James chapter 3 is for all of us, however the emphasis is to those who are in or desire to be in a teaching capacity. We will

We hope you will find this article helpful whether you are a seasoned church leader, new believer or somewhere in between. We think it will help you understand what kind of leader you should be, either now or in the future, and it will help you wisely decide which congregational leaders you will look to as mentors in Christ.

use James Chapter 3 as guide and structure for our discussion.



The writings of James are one of the more explicit theological presentations of the gospel in the New Testament. It addresses universal issues of social ethics in specificity: speech, conduct of teachers, dealing with poverty, war and peace. Much of its teaching is aimed directly at believers. We want to take advantage

of his straight talk on teachers to make our own investigation into a few key Biblical expectations of leaders.

### James Chapter 3

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body (James 3:1,2).*

In this segment of his epistle we are given his admonition to those who are considering being teachers. It is evident to him that first off few should consider it, as opposed to opening up any false encouragement to become one. Teachers come under stricter judgment by God, but as experience has taught us, by brethren also. Whether or not James had the judgment of the brethren in mind I am not sure, but I feel comfortable extending the application of his concern here.

The reason is that we all (being inclusive) stumble in many things (3:2), particularly in what is said in speech. Uncontrolled speech is not human error, but a deadly form of evil generated by the fires of hell (3:6). Just a small amount of it can set an entire forest ablaze (3:5). We may wonder how that is, but words

that incite, often political, can be words that resonate with the carnal mind. When ideas resonate they take a life of their own. The language that resonates with carnal thinking is evident in contentious words or writings that become divisive. Prime examples are words of condemnation of those who do not agree with the various approaches to conducting church, or those who do not agree with specific doctrines not directly relating to salvation. We may hear words that create an *Us-versus-Them* syndrome which is contrary to the message of Jesus Christ. They fuel our self-centeredness and are designed to proclaim one's own righteousness. Confusion is usually the end result.

The Lord recognizes the greater impact the approach to teaching and leadership of an elder will have on others, and will intervene sooner and to correct those who are erring. This process can be grievous, and the proper response is necessary by the individual to please the Lord, and bring about the proper outcome. This from my assessment is the most difficult. James would suggest to us some may have knowledge, but the maturity to interpret and use it correctly is not common. Authority, even self-perceived authority, sometimes tempts us to make contemptible exclamations both in speech and print regarding others who are not co-operating with sound teachings and Church programs, or who do not measure up.

Today, the use of publications, broadly distributed emails and websites and social media make it easy. Cursing others (deserved or not) is inconsistent with blessing God (3:9), slandering will be judged by God (4:11-12). Angry speech does not advance the righteousness of God (1:19,20). It appears from James' overall assessment, it is only

the spiritual wisdom from above that can control speech. Deep receptivity to the implanted Word will keep us from filthy and useless wrangling and save our souls, and others, from destruction (1:21).

### Wisdom from Above

Teaching and leadership is not a one-dimensional work. It is multifaceted, requiring the need to serve and respond suitably for the circumstances, the affected individuals, and being able to account for other dynamics. This is also implied by our Lord's vision of a good scribe:

*"Therefore, every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a house holder who brings out of his treasure things new and old"* (Matthew 13:52).

The studied teacher of the scriptures, and properly internalized life experiences, will present the Kingdom in a full and applicable way as is necessary, drawing from the treasures of understanding he has. The Lord's description of a good scribe: one who has more than academic learning, but has a wisdom that presents that which is old, in new and useful ways, for his own edification and the edification of others.

### Wise and Understanding

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there* (James 3:13-16).

Those who are wise and have understanding are evidently James' favored individuals who can manage most successfully in a teaching capacity. He contrasts the unlearned and unwise with those who are wise and learned by their type of motivation.

Before looking at his words in detail, we should step back a little to recognize current experience. I believe an honest evaluation of common approaches taught and practiced in church leadership have been a mixture of secular and biblical wisdom. A mixture of these should not be interpreted as necessarily un-biblical, but history has shown that one system of wisdom will swallow up another in some but not all cases. Secular wisdom has been used by church leaders with some success, but in many cases with less than desirable results. Therefore understanding the source of the wisdom is perhaps a kind of wisdom itself.

Stephen in his discourse to the high priest and others actually defended the Egyptian wisdom learned by Moses, implying the understanding of it made for its effective use in his work to free God's people from Egypt:

*"And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds"* (Acts 7:22).

We see secular wisdom is not inherently evil as to be rejected, and may be used effectively for God's purpose. It is not innocuous however, much in the same way as money.

Secular wisdom has positive attributes, but has evidenced to produce bad results. Embedded somehow in it there is also the danger of cultivating the need for control, the need for efficiency, and other

ideas not sensitive to the real needs of brethren. Secular wisdom often manifests the needs for physical power and control to maintain authority, versus faith in God upon which a biblical leader should trust to uphold his leadership. James is more to the point as to the actual nature that dependency on secular wisdom cultivates: bitter envy and self-seeking hearts (3:14). James argues that these are a kind of wisdom of their own, (3:15), which is born out of sensual and even demonic origins, which are powerful. The result is that the leader can cultivate an environment that is contentious, confusing, and dysfunctional.

An observation that I and others have shared is that a number of church leaders have corporate business backgrounds, and thus have been fully exposed to the wisdom of these secular worlds. I have worked in industry for 20 years and I have observed the various strengths of those who have been most successful. Certain ideas on motivating and training people, the need for structure, communicating vision, discerning profits over losses and navigating politics are a few that come to mind. There is also the ability to make mental disconnects so as not to be affected in making or supporting difficult decisions that can be to the detriment of others. The survival of the institution often overlooks other needs. Attrition is just part of the job.

The above is not an indictment; it has its place in the affairs of business. It is therefore critical that a leader with this background make the additional disconnect that somehow separates their spiritual leadership from certain corporate

ideologies. God's ideas of growth, motivation and what is real gain may be considered backwards and useless by worldly standards. Without properly discerning the limitations of worldly wisdom in light of the wisdom that comes from above, there can be a broad range of impact on the leader and the group over which he has influence, from the innocuous to total apostasy. I have learned to recognize when secular strategies are utilized in an effort to promote the desired results of peace, growth and learning. The results are often at best mixed.

*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:21).*

*For God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).*

Yes, even the admirable tenants of wisdom in society are subject to shame before God.

The wisdom from above makes for a dramatically different story:

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy (James 3:17).*

What James writes sounds good to just about everyone, but it does not come

naturally. The actual experiential awareness and practice of it is an extraordinary thing, and all descriptors James uses to characterize the wisdom from above are worthy of discussion. For the purposes of this article we will focus on Gentle, Willing to Yield, Full of Mercy and Without Partiality and Without Hypocrisy. Let us see how what their actual practice is to their fullest degree.

### ***Gentle, Willing to Yield – Take the Hit***

The word used by James (*epieikes*) is translated “gentle” in the King James Version, but the word is not so straightforwardly translated into English. It has been translated forbearance, reasonableness, and courtesy among others. It means there is something more than mere justice, as to be gracious.

There is something more here in the wisdom from above that takes us from beyond black and white theology and black and white justice. Perhaps a few examples may help us ascertain here the meaning better.

If there is a challenging measure that leaders have to learn it is the willingness to take the hit. What, that is, is to truly be gentle, willing to yield, not to be stubborn or hard, not having a need to assert one's own rights on others.

We first note Paul's testimony when he was in custody in Rome.

*Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: the former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; .... What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in*

*this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice* (Philippians 1:15,16).

Paul's concern was not for himself, but for the Gospel. Retribution was not his agenda though the gospel is preached at his expense.

When Peter was confronted regarding the question of his Teacher paying the temple tax, Jesus used the occasion to teach Peter and all of us a lesson:

*“What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?” Peter said to Him, “From strangers”. Jesus said to him, “then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you”* (Matthew 17:25-27).

Though Jesus was not obligated by virtue of Who He was to pay the temple tax, He was willing to pay it anyway. Jesus did not come to assert His own rights on others, but to carry out His Father's will. We should meditate on this and see where we have asserted ourselves unnecessarily on others.

Christ Himself took the hit for us all though He could have escaped at any time by calling the legions of angels who were ready at a moment's notice to intervene if He asked (Matthew 27:53).

The application of this in leadership is taking responsibility even for dissent for which the leader had

little or no responsibility. He rises to the occasion and recognizes the weaknesses and immaturity of others and can take the blame in such a way to dissolve tensions, and use the occasion to promote peace and goodwill. Yes, this actually works in many arenas.

**Full of Mercy —  
Be Affected to be Effective**

To have mercy one must be affected by others and by those over which they have influence or authority. An indifferent, detached ministry which operates solely on principles without regard to human frailties and follies will not last, at least hopefully not.

Consider the message from Paul, Silas and Timothy to the Thessalonians:

*So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us* (1 Thessalonians 2:8).

We see that all three; Paul, Silas, and Timothy, imparted not only the Gospel of God to them, but also gave them their own souls.

“A gospel messenger who stands detached from his audience has not yet been touched by the very gospel he proclaims.” – Michael D. Martin

In essence, the elder belongs to those over who he has oversight (1 Corinthians 3:22).

We need to connect mercy with “without partiality.” It is easier to have pity on a saint. It is not as easy

to have pity on the sinner, or those who have not been supportive, or on those who do not fit our social norms. Mercy is truly expressed when the undeserving and ungrateful are involved. Congregations are full of people like these.



In some of the Lord's final words to Peter, He explains that a teacher who loves Him will feed His sheep and subject himself to the calling--not his own will.

*Simon Peter, son of Jonah, do you love me?*

*...Feed My lambs  
...Tend My sheep  
... Feed My Sheep*

(John 21:15-17).

Peter's service of subjecting himself to the Lord and to His flock, will cost him his life (John 21:18). Preaching that does not cost the preacher has little value.

It is contrary to worldly wisdom to offer one's own soul for others. Worldly wisdom puts restrictions on service and self-sacrifice.

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### ***Without Hypocrisy – For Whose Sake Does One Preach?***

It is evident that hypocrisy can debilitate and discredit any ministry. Much can be said for the seriousness regarding the behavior of teachers. It is therefore critical that leaders can self evaluate the motivation behind their own ministry first. Motivation helps to define the character of the individual in ministry. Consider again Paul, Timothy and Silas in their message to the Thessalonians:

*For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power; and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you **for your sake** (1 Thessalonians 1:5).*

They were men of conviction, and conviction is contagious. The manner of these men encompassed many things, but the totality of their conviction or passion in the gospel inspired those who learned from them. Consider those you look to for your teaching today. Is your conviction affected by their conviction? If we are not affected, are we becoming indifferent?

Let us face the fact that Christians and non-Christians are always watching. They can recognize those who deliver a message that they themselves follow. Paul, Silas, and Timothy all were examples to them. This exemplary behavior is for the brethren's sake in Thessalonica, although not to be considered the sole reason.

Yes, we can be inspired by the faithfulness of other brethren that the Lord sends to us. The Thessalonians have received a letter from all three of their elders that had begotten (taught) them, Paul, Silas and Timothy. This was meaningful to the Church in Thessalonica.

All of this has a reciprocal effect on the ministry. Considering further the words of Paul in Chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes that he remembers without ceasing their works of faith, labor of love and patience (v 3). He even hears of them from others in various parts of the world (v9), and bolsters up his, Silas's and Timothy's ministry (v9).

Reputation does matter in this work, but not at the expense of sincerity.





Over concern with perception can lead to an artificial ministry. Consider John the Baptist. Although full of conviction we know that he certainly was not a refined man as far as society goes. He wore smelly camel garments, had a diet of honey and bugs, but his calling was great.

Conviction and Passion sometimes does not lead to popularity. Paul's passion got him under custody by the Romans, and he was abandoned by some brethren. The Passion of the Christ led Him to crucifixion, a shameful way to die, but gave us an example of God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2). These examples may seem extreme and they are, but it is not outside the realm of possibility. They do however show the superiority of sincerity over hypocrisy and selfish gain.

Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were not entrusted to the gospel by God only to turn around and please men (1 Thessalonians 2:4). What he may be referring to in part is the use of flattery to forward the gospel.

Elders preach and work for the reward of others.

### Conclusion

We will conclude with James' interim conclusion in Chapter 3:

*Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (James 3:18).*

The fruits of righteousness (fruits of the Spirit), come about from those who preach the word (by mouth and by actions) in a peaceful way. This peaceful way should be recognized by the sincere believer. These are words that do not incite the believer.



It takes a certain kind of climate to cultivate and raise righteousness, much like having good weather. In harsh and bitter weather it is difficult, if not impossible, to grow a healthy crop. An environment that is lacking the ministerial traits that James speaks of will make it difficult to bring about the righteousness of God in the believers. An environment that is dominated by worldly wisdom will bring about confusion and dysfunctional congregations. The power of the gospel invokes real change in a person, not the wisdom of words (Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 2:5). Therefore, we want power restored to God's people where there is an undercurrent of confusion. We are all in part responsible for our worship environment.

In light of our discussions above, though an individual may have a desire to teach, have ample knowledge, and perhaps an attractive image with oratory skills, consideration

should be taken into account for the stricter judgment, which includes the higher expectations the Lord and others will have of them. To escape the trappings of worldly wisdom, to have a willingness to take the hit, to offer their own soul, and the capacity to have mercy, is not for those who may be well meaning, but for the few who have or can develop the spiritual sensitivities our Lord has in mind communicated by our brother James.

Therefore, seriously again consider the reality of our Lord's call for prayer:

*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers in His harvest" (Matthew 9:37). 🙏*

## What Is Your Ministry Model?

While this title sounds more academic than New-Testament biblical, it asks a question that every church and ministry must answer today. It is not easy to think about—because it can shake the foundations of our relationship to God and why we believe what we believe. But if we can look into this matter and withstand the shaking, we are on solid ground:

*Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:27-28).*

The purpose of this article is not to discourage any believer from doing their Christian work. Rather, it is to encourage each one to grow in harmony in all of what God is doing, and to eliminate conflicts where we do not need them.

The New Testament era was blessed with apostles who had personally known Jesus Christ and/or who had miraculous signs and wonders attesting to God’s action in their lives. Sure, there were also false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13; Revelation 2:2), some with apparent miraculous signs (Acts 8:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:9) and cleverly devised false teachings (Ephesians 4:14). But in general, the believers in a specific place all met together, in spite of their differences. Indeed, most of the New Testament epistles and Revelation 2 & 3 are correcting various problems held by some people within those congregations. Paul clearly taught the believers not to voluntarily divide (1 Corinthians 1:10-15; 3:1-9). There are instances where some leaders cast true believers out of their congregations

(3 John 1:9-10), but it did not appear to be widespread.

But today, church denominations and separate congregations abound, everywhere. They are the expected way of life. Try walking into any church meeting and asking why they do not meet together with another group meeting at the same time across town—or across the street—and you will usually get puzzled expressions and answers:

“They are a *this* and we are a *that*.”

“They don’t believe like us.”

“We pay our minister and they pay theirs.”

“We have different headquarters.”

“I don’t know why.”

“I never thought about that.”

The latter two answers here might come from relatively new believers. Leaders and older believers might expound complex doctrinal differences that are unknown to those new in their congregation.

This writer knows of a case many years ago where a congregation had split in two. A younger member asked why they met separately. Upon further investigation, both congregations realized that the leaders who understood why they had split were no longer alive and the reason was no longer known. They began to meet together again!

### The Important Questions

It is not enough for us to have a good relationship with God ourselves and to see God as the head of the church or ministries in which we are involved. Our concept of God must also establish Him as God and ruler of the entire Earth (Psalms 47:2, 7). We cannot have a ministry model

that ignores most of the people throughout the world.

For the purpose of this article, we will use the term “ministry” to include whatever religious activities in which you are involved, whether that be local church, a worldwide denomination, or any number of ministries. A ministry may include any type of organized religious activity, whether a group with missionaries all over the world, a group that translates or prints Bibles, a producer of Bible teaching materials, a local ministry to feed the poor, or the most simple ministry I ever heard about: a man who posted signs on grocery and laundry bulletin boards offering to give anyone a free Bible and to answer any questions they might have. Some of the questions below are more applicable to churches and some more to ministries; but for simplicity, we will lump them all together and you can decide which statements apply the most.

We will first list all of the questions, and then discuss each one in more detail:

1. Is your ministry the only one that God is presently using?
2. Is your ministry the only one in your locality that God is using?
3. Is your ministry the best one that God is using?
4. Does your ministry provide services that no other provides?
5. Does your ministry provide services where they are needed and utilized?

### 1. Is your ministry the only one that God is presently using?

To some Bible believers, the answer to this is an obvious, “Yes”. They view their organization as the “true church”, and they would not attend any other. To others, this question seems outrageous and any answer but “No” would be the height of

vanity. After all, how could anyone know exactly which ministries God is using?

Nearly every group that considers itself the “only one” bases that decision on doctrine—they believe their doctrine to be right and find one or more errors in the doctrines of every other group. But they should also consider the past: Has their church group had the exact same doctrines for the last 2000 years? Anyone who is honest will acknowledge the answer is “no”; we cannot trace any church group that has held the exact same doctrines for 2000 years. Yet Christ said His Church would exist continuously (Matthew 16:18). If His church has had varying beliefs in the past, could it have varying beliefs now? It is much more difficult to consider a ministry the “only one” if one tries to base that decision on Christian works.

Is there any one group today that can claim it does most of the Christian work on the planet? Does some one group, translate, print and distribute most of the Bibles? Is one ministry primarily responsible for feeding the poor, healing the sick, implementing biblical principles in our institutions, defending the rights of Christians at law, defending unborn babies, writing and performing Christian music, etc.? Even more pointedly, suppose every professing Christian, **except those in this “one group”**, had always been atheists, instead. Would Christianity be any kind of known force on the world only from the actions of this one group? Probably not. Ministry models which consider themselves the “only right one” on the planet need to realize they are making themselves responsible for all of God’s work on earth—a job that is much better left to Christ.

## 2. Is your ministry the only one in your locality that God is using?

This is a much more tenable ministry model. It eliminates the problem of taking responsibility for what God is doing across our world in the many places that we will never go or hear about. Indeed, this model seems to be used in the New Testament. Most congregations were identified by the

words “church” or “church of God” and then a place name (“Galatia”, “Laodicea”, etc.). There did not seem to be multiple congregations in the same area, so there was essentially one “true church” in one place.

But today, our world is not like that. Most Christian nations are full of churches in the same city: in buildings, rented halls and homes. So how does our ministry model treat them?



When a local ministry considers itself the only one God is using, it is again, usually because they believe their doctrines are more correct than any other. It is not likely that one congregation believes it is doing all of the Christian work of helping the poor, healing the sick, proclaiming the Word, etc.

So let us assume for a moment that a certain ministry has better doctrine than all of the other groups in a particular area. Does their ministry model require all of the people in the other groups to learn about their right teachings and to join their group? And if all the people left the other groups to join the one, would not all of their former Christian work stop? Might it be better for that one group, with its right teaching, to share its teachings with the other groups so they could both continue their previous works and learn new truth? Yes, it would require the groups to cooperate for

that learning to take place, but isn’t that what we should be encouraging? Each should appreciate what the other does right and want to learn from it. It is so much better than numerous church groups each touting their good points and denigrating the others for their errors.

## 3. Is your ministry the best one that God is using?

Whether a ministry is global or local, some of them acknowledge that there are true believers in other groups, but claim that theirs is doing the best job. Some may go to Revelation 2 – 3 and claim that their group is like one of the best of the seven churches found here. But what is the point of doing that? Is it to keep the members of one group from visiting other groups, risking the loss of members? Should we, instead, work to make our ministry so good that others are stirred to come help in its work?

*Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand (Romans 14:4).*

Indeed, many believers will rightly say, “It is not our place to judge other groups, we make no comment on whether other ministries are or are not being used by God.” This is good. Jesus said some would claim to do works in His name without knowing Him (Matthew 7:22-23), and those who do not “gather” with Him “scatter” (Matthew 12:30). But He will judge those things; we are not the judge. He instructed His disciples not to forbid those in other groups who were doing Christian work in His name (Luke 9:49-50). So when we say “we don’t know if God is using them,” do our actions match our words? So do those with this ministry model give them the benefit of the doubt and treat them like believers? Or do they treat them in the same manner as the groups who consider themselves to be the “only one”?

We can learn a lesson from the ministry of Jesus Christ here. He was perfect in His knowledge, doctrine and Christian works. Yet He feared

*Continued on page 22*



These thirteen images of the moon were taken in Illinois about 10-15 miles east of the Mississippi River. Careful planning is needed two to three days in advance to anticipate clear skies. We had to drive 4-5 hours to get on the other side of the weather front to ensure clear skies throughout the 3 to 4 hour event. Photographs were taken from 11 PM on April 12 until 4:30 AM the next morning.

Multiple sets of exposures needed to account for the changes in the light and still maintain the detail and demonstrate the shadowing. During the event, 8 to 12 images were taken every 5 minutes, potentially 144 images an hour for roughly 4 hours which would equate to over 700 images in total.

In order to create the final image about 1 out of every 50-60 images was chosen. The entire event starts about 45 minutes before the cast shadow is seen and also 45 minutes after the cast shadow has disappeared. 756 raw images were taken at 18.1 Megabytes each. This generates 13.68 Gigabytes of data. These images took 5 days to sort through and select for final processing. Approximately from start to finish processing took 7 days, including one day to take the images, 5 days to sort, and a final day to create the canvas, align the images, and make final image adjustments for lighting.

To take images, a super-telephoto lens was used which has a physical range of 300 to 800 mm and a fixed f-stop of 5.6. Fixed f-stop means that the camera settings at 300mm would be the same at 800mm. This allows for retention of the image without the loss of detail (light) during various stages. It comes at a high price, but the final result is well worth the investment. If the lens had a floating f-stop, then when the camera "zoomed" in it would be harder for the camera to capture the image. The shutter would be open longer to capture the light. The additional length in time would have caused the image(s) to blur.



Moving from left to right, the first three images are about the same light intensity, these are where the moon moves into the penumbral part of the earth's shadow. The earth shadow exists in two portions. They are the penumbral, which is a partial shadow, and the umbral, which is the direct shadow. In the 4<sup>th</sup> image the moon is almost completely covered but the area that still is reflecting light actually brightens, which is a property called lensing. The light that is available gets concentrated to a small area that gives us this instant of brightening.

The next image of the progression is when the moon moves from the penumbral part to the umbral part or the center part of earth's shadow. Light is being bent around the earth's atmosphere. Because it is indirect and refracted by the atmosphere we now get the yellowish orange.

The next and central image, the Blood Moon, is when 100% of the lunar surface is completely in the umbral shadow of the earth.

The right part is the reverse of the previous. The yellow orange is on the opposite side as well as the lensing effect has an opposite curvature as the moon now exits the earth's shadow rather than enters it.

A six foot wide image of this moon phase progression by Jon Aros is on display at the Challenger Learning Center at Purdue Calumet.

Jon Aros is an astro-photographer and resides in Valparaiso, Indiana. Those interested in a print of this photo may contact Jon at [arosobs@yahoo.com](mailto:arosobs@yahoo.com), or by calling him directly at 219-629-9945. When emailing, please use the subject line "2014 Total Lunar Eclipse."

# Keep the Faith and Faithful Friends

This article is from the “Edifying the Body” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s Web site by Mary K. Thompson, <http://www.churchof-godbigsandy.com>. It was posted for the weekend of December 13, 2014.

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—When God called us, He invited us to have a growing relationship with Him. Another benefit of His involvement in our life is the opportunity for us to develop deeper relationships with other people.

It is sad to notice how some people sometimes have a difficult time maintaining relationships with people who attend a different church.



## Childhood Friend

I recently got an email from a good friend of mine who was preparing for a Christian retreat. The retreat organizers had asked her to contact friends and ask them to identify spiritual gifts they saw in her. I was readily able to identify many spiritual gifts that she has.

Since I knew this woman well and we have shared openly about our desire to know, love and serve God, it was easy to identify these gifts. I have seen her growth over many years and have benefited greatly from sharing

with her about my faith and struggles.

We went through a lot together as teenagers, young parents and now mature women with grandchildren. She has remained in the church we grew up in, and I have left that church and hold some different doctrinal beliefs now.

We have talked about this a bit but mainly continue to share about our faith journey and do not dwell on doctrinal differences. If she asks about my beliefs, I am ready to share them. But, if she doesn’t ask, that is fine too.

It does not occur to me for a minute to question whether she is in a relationship with God. I intimately know how deep her love for God is and have seen her grow spiritually. I have leaned on her faith at times when mine was tested. I do not see her as misled or deceived even though I now disagree with some of the doctrines she holds.

## Now in Different Churches

I am grateful that she does not worry about my relationship with God even though I have left the church I grew up in. I am sure some in that church would consider me to have lost my faith. She continues to pray for me and asks that I pray for her.

We respect one another and I count myself fortunate to have a childhood friend with whom I can still share my faith, even if our understanding of God and His plan may differ in some ways.

My faith is in God, not in a specific church or even in a set of doctrines. It is God who does not change, but my understanding may change and has changed over time.

I think what allows us to continue to share our faith journeys, even if not

all of our specific beliefs, is that we both trust that our relationships with God are very important to both of us.

We also trust that God is working with each of us and we can leave that work to Him. I am not responsible to correct her beliefs and she does not feel she needs to correct mine.

## Why Lost Relationships?

I share this in the hopes that this can be helpful for others who have friendships and family relationships with those of other faiths or other church groups.

I am struck by how many painful stories I have heard about relationships lost or damaged by someone leaving one church group and joining another. Many times these lost relationships occur over some minor differences in doctrinal beliefs.

Sometimes the loss occurs because church leaders decide that someone is no longer welcome to continue to worship with a group because of differences in doctrine.

The remaining believers may place themselves under the authority of these leaders and shun the individual who has been asked, or perhaps chooses, to leave.

Other times, people believe it is not in their spiritual best interest to continue to meet with someone because of the differences.

## Conviction and Compassion

Certainly it is important to follow where God and our study of the Bible are leading us. We should be willing to “count the cost” and be willing to lose relationships if necessary to follow God.

Of course, we will want to worship with others who worship in the ways that seem best to us. If others are try-

ing to control us and force their beliefs or doctrines on us, we should resist that and hold to what we understand and believe.

Often, however, it is not necessary to lose these relationships. With mutual respect and trust in God, many rich relationships can continue and flourish despite changes or differences in doctrinal beliefs.

### Loving Feast

My husband and I recently attended the Feast of Tabernacles in Flagstaff at a site sponsored by the Church of God Big Sandy. While we enjoy the edifying messages, we greatly appreciate the loving environment that encourages loving fellowship.

At the site this year, we were aware that some of those attending were using a different calendar. This meant that they were planning to stay at the Feast site for a few extra days.

Some had done a lot of study on that issue, and, if asked, they were willing to share about it. It was clear they were happy to share the Feast with those of us on a different calendar, and there was no sense of judgment or condemnation about that issue.

There was a sense of love and shared meaning in keeping the Feast and respect for others keeping a slightly different calendar.

It was clear that the priority was on loving relationship with God and others. This was a good witness in placing the importance on the central understanding of God's plan and on loving God and others.

### Handling Differences


I was recently struck in reading the book of Acts to realize that Paul and Peter had some strong differences. Neither was "disfellowshipped" over these differences.

We see in the book of Acts how Peter had a vision from God that allowed him to understand what God's plan was for the gentiles. This allowed him to grow in his understanding.

Evidently Paul was willing to wait for God to give Peter this understanding. Likely this was in part because Paul was aware of how wrong he previously had been in his understanding of God, and recognized that God patiently worked with him about that understanding.

This is an example many of us would be wise to follow. Maybe we can leave it up to God to correct the understanding of those who are seeking Him.

Perhaps more people can avoid becoming exclusive concerning with whom they meet, with whom they talk and for whom they pray.

Rather, people can help one another and support one another as they lovingly share their understanding. 

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# Ask Norm!



[asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](mailto:asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org)

Dear Norm,

*Shalom v'Ahav* (Peace and Love), may this letter reach you and yours in the presence of angels and filled with the Ruach ha'Qodesh (the Holy Spirit).

I received the Fall 2013 Issue of *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* and much to my delight, I saw my letter to you published with a very lengthy response to my questions. Thank you. I'm satisfied with your response, as I know that you're just being careful to not go beyond what is written (1Corinthians 4:6), and you can't do nothing but respect that. In the interest of letting "iron sharpen iron" (Proverbs 27:17), I would like to rebut a few points of your response.

You say in your response "...the New Testament writers...make no effort to tell us to use Sacred Names:...". To use another writer's own words, because he just articulates it better than I ever could, I'd like to quote from author Lew White's book *Fossilized Customs, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*, concerning the promotion of the Sacred Name in the New Testament: "At Romans 10:14, after quoting Joel 2:32,

Paul asks, 'How then shall they call upon Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not HEARD?' They don't know, or call, on His name" (p. 94).

But not only that N.T. verse, how about Matthew 6:9? How can we "Hallow," i.e. set apart His Name when using inferior substitutes? How about Acts 4:12? This points to one name only! Is it Jesus? Yeshua? Yehoshua? What??? In John 17:6, 26 Yahusha talks about manifesting and declaring His Father's Name, yet, as you have rightly pointed out, the New Testament writers "make no effort to tell us to use Sacred Names."

You said, "We are doing a very dangerous thing if we claim that the original New Testament taught the use of Sacred names, but that it was somehow intercepted by translators who removed the correct names and all the teaching about them. If we claim such, we are teaching that the Scriptures were under complete control of people who could have inserted or removed any doctrine that they wanted." To this I would say that it might be more dangerous to not state these claims. For one, we have evidence that such is the case (see E.W. Bullinger's *The Companion Bible* appendices 30-34). Also, see all of the footnotes in the New Testament of *the Word of Yahweh, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. For two, Yahuah tells us that it is possible (see Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32 and Revelation 22:18-19), but He suggests that He will not let it go beyond recognition (see Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:24-25).

All in all, Norm, I was satisfied with your answer and respect it. I'm a believer in "universal reconciliation" as taught by Dr. Stephen E. Jones and do not believe that this is a "salvation" issue, but rather a "firstfruits"/"better resurrection" issue and when I come across brethren like yourself who epitomizes the love of Yahshua, I want to pass that precious jewel on to you, I'm just sorry that either I'm doing such a piss-poor job convincing you of what I truly believe that Yahuah revealed to me on or around Pentecost of 2009 or either He doesn't want to reveal it to you yet. One thing is for sure though, there will be a time when He will reveal His true Name to us and He will cause us to pronounce it correctly (Zephaniah 3:9). Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and may Yahuah bless you and yours abundantly!

In Mashiyach Yahusha,  
—John J Adkins

Dear John,

Thank you for your kind letter even though we still have very different views. All of the scriptures you cited make perfect sense if understood from the standpoint that everyone must know the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and His Son, our Savior.

The pronunciation or word used in each language to describe God does not seem to be an issue. Acts 2:8-11 shows that on Pentecost, each person heard the disciples speak of "*the wonderful works of God*"... "*each in our own language in which we were born*". If they all heard in their native language except that they heard the Hebrew name of God, why didn't Luke give us that name here, instead of the Greek *theos*? In Acts 9:36, Luke gives both the Hebrew *Tabitha* and Greek *Dorcas*, for the name of a godly woman. In Acts 13:6-8 he gives us both the Hebrew *Barjesus* and the Greek *Elymas* for a sorcerer.

If Luke could do this for these less important people, why did he not do it for God if the pronunciation of His name was an important doctrine? Romans 10:14 states they need to hear the gospel, but Paul uses the Greek *Theos* in verse 13 saying, whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." Similarly, the "Lord's prayer" in Matthew 6:9-11 that tells us to hallow His name, never uses any name for "god", but the Greek *Pater* for "father". Later on in the chapter, Matthew writes, "You cannot serve God and mammon. (v 24), using the Greek *Theos* for God. Acts 4:10-12 tells us the name under which we must be saved: "Jesus [*Iesous*] Christ [*Christos*] of Nazareth...whom God [*theos*] raised



from the dead. We do not find any effort to refer to the proper Hebrew name spelling or pronunciation here, but we find **more description of the Son and Father**. It gives: the city where Jesus was from—which narrows it down greatly because Nazareth was a small town, and declares the God who raised Him from the dead—other gods do not raise people from the dead. Finally, John records Christ’s prayer about manifesting and declaring His Father’s Name, but is certainly referring to His character, not the sound of His name. The Hebrew word for “name”, *shem*, clearly has this meaning: “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,” (Proverbs 22:1). This is not about the sound or spelling of a man’s name, but his character. John makes no effort to explain the Hebrew name for God, even though it was written with non-Jewish readers in mind. John actually explains the meaning of the common Hebrew word “rabbi” in John 1:38: “...*They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher)...*”

Yes, I agree that there is some possibility that the Scriptures have been mildly altered, but I think God holds us responsible for what He has preserved. I have heard or read hundreds of doctrines from people who are convinced that one or dozens of Scriptures have been altered and that they know the real truth. Some of those people think only certain races can be saved, others have concocted scriptural excuses for their adultery, some believe they personally fulfill nearly all end time prophecy, etc—all by changing a few verses that they “know” are wrong. Over 6 billion Bibles have been printed all containing the same 66 books (many with the *Apocrypha*, but still clearly labeled “apocryphal”, meaning “of doubtful authorship or authenticity”). I would much rather stand before Christ’s judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10) saying I followed that Word the best I understood it, rather than explain where I thought that Word was wrong and why I thought my ideas were better.

While I cannot reconcile Dr. Jones’ “universal reconciliation” with verses like Matthew 26:24 which

says it would be better if Judas “had not been born”, but I have learned a lot from Dr. Jones. I do believe that eventually everyone will have the opportunity to be saved (Acts 2:21; Romans 11:26; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:2). I agree with your statement that this life is largely about who will be “first fruits” in the “better resurrection.”

However, I do not think the exact pronunciation of His name will be the issue. For example, you use *Yahuah*, but you cite a reference work *The Word of Yahweh*. Will the authors of that work be demoted to a later resurrection because they did not get it right and say: *The Word of Yahuah*?

To further complicate the matter, I do believe the Scripture teaches ongoing Revelations from God (1 Corinthians 14:6, 26; 2 Corinthians 12:1,7; Galatians 1:12; 2:2; Ephesians 1:17; 3:3), which is essentially the gift of prophecy (Romans 6:12; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 13:2; 14:1; 1 Timothy 4:14). So I accept it is possible that God did reveal His Name to you and ask you to use it. Before I would accept that revelation, I would want to know something about how it happened. Most of the Biblical prophets were very clear how they received their revelations: hearing a voice, seeing a vision, seeing a dream, hearing from an angel, etc.

These revelations are generally clear as to whether the individual is to take a message to somebody, to use it himself or even to seal up the book for later (Daniel 12:4). I have received 65 dreams that I thought were significant enough to write down, but I wasn’t told to take the information to anyone else. For some of them I also received an interpretation which has come to pass, others I do not yet know how or when they will apply. Several of them were pointing out my sins that I was ignoring and needed to correct. A few caused me to make massive changes in my life which have worked out for good. None of these dreams were ever contrary to Scripture, nor can I remember any dream that appeared to be “the right” explanation of a Scripture. These things do not make me (or anyone else) a better or more

righteous person—just responsible to carry out specific things that God has shown me to do. At times, I have prayed for a dream to help me know what to do in a certain case and have received one—but more often, I have not.

If you have indeed received a revelation, I would like to know more about how it occurred. When others have told me that God revealed something to them, sometimes they had a specific answer to that question, and other times they say, “when things really seem right to me, then I know it is God talking to me.”

I think the latter can be dangerous. We can learn a lot from the commissions of Daniel and Ezekiel. They were alive at the same time. Daniel was an important official in the Babylonian government (Daniel 1:19-21) and Ezekiel was a captive of Babylon (Ezek 1:1-3) who had one revelation, part of which required him to lie down for 430 days and eat food cooked on dung. Daniel had an important purpose as God used him to steer the actions of the Babylonian government. Ezekiel had an important purpose declaring and atoning for the sins of Judah and Israel. Both of their revelations were recorded and preserved for us to this day—and they were very specific about how those revelations occurred.

But what would happen today if a poor person claimed to have a revelation from God which involved him cooking food on manure? Many Christians would probably not accept it because it is just “too gross”. Other Christians might not accept any revelation that came from a person who worked for our modern “Babylonian” government. I wonder if there were some God-fearing people during the time of Ezekiel and Daniel who only accepted one or neither of them as inspired of God. While we do need to judge the modern prophecies that we hear (1 Corinthians 14:29), we need to seek God on these matters and not be quick to condemn based upon our own wisdom:

*“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24).*

July 19, 2014

Dear brothers & sisters at S.V.M.:

I pray everyone is having a peaceful Sabbath day. Here in Coral, Michigan, it was 75° and sunshine, and I spent the majority of my Sabbath sitting outside, reading my new Spring 2014 issue of Shepherd's Voice. I **love** the cover—the little girl, all the flowers going down the path, playing, being free and happy! When I read the inside cover, I loved how Jim explained his “challenge” for the cover for the magazine, I felt warmed with his answer.

I feel many publications by various COG [church groups] repeatedly pound home all the bad stuff in the world, and repeatedly hammer it in how we haven't seen anything yet, and what are we doing to get ready and how we are **all** Laodicean, and are asleep. But to listen to message after message with the bad stuff discourages my spirit, and my human nature starts to grieve God's Spirit in me, because for me, I hunger for food that encourages and edifies, in ways that all your articles result in.

Every article, I can identify with something in my own life with, and the manner you “get to your point”, I, with zeal, can say **Yes!!** Most of all, even though I know we may never have “solutions” and answered prayers in the way we want, the whole point, that **God is Holy and Perfect**, and full of grace, mercy and justice toward us, steers me back in the right direction, so that I don't have the cart before the horse, thinking I am somehow “worthy” of what I'm asking. As I nestle in His care, **He** works it all out for my best. How could I even think I know what's best!? L.O.L. [Laughing Out Loud]

Please accept this tithe, and use it for whatever God leads you. Whether it be the Kenya Brethren, other brethren, I trust God will bless whomever **He** chooses with this tiny mite. I thank you again, for all your encouraging words to me. Now, I'm off to read about Godly Grandparenting.

May God Continue to bless you, your sister in Christ Jesus.

T.V, Michigan

Dear Terry,

We are glad that Shepherd's Voice Magazine is a blessing to you. We encourage our readers to share it with others who might also be blessed by it.

I believe the subjects of the New Testament books are a good guide to the messages that Christians today should write and speak about. The vast majority of the New Testament is about preaching the Gospel to unbelievers and then edifying those believers in their congregations. Prophecies of impending disaster constitute less than 30 of the New Testaments 260 Chapters (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, 2 Thessalonians 2; 1 John 2; 2 Peter 3, much of Revelation, and a few others). Even though the Roman Empire and especially the Middle East were in great upheaval during the writing of the New Testament, we do not find any long description of the disasters of their day. Paul mentioned “the present distress”, but does not give great amounts of detail.

The New Testament contains very little prophetic interpretation of the Old Testament. Rather, the emphasis is on ongoing prophecy. See our article *Need Prophets More than Prophecy*, Fall 2013, Shepherd's Voice Magazine. The emphasis is clearly on the love of God, the goodness of God, the resurrection of the dead and Eternal life—not on how bad things are going to get.

When I was a teen, I knew people who were already convinced that the end was near, so they spent a lot of their time, energy and money preparing for “the end”. Most of those people are dead, now. How much better would it have been if they had used that energy to share the love and truth of Christ with their neighbors, rather than prepare for an “end” that never came. I know parents who taught their children that they need not worry about college, a job or a marriage—because the end would come before they would need to do those things.

For children who believed those parents, it was a disaster. For children who sought God, ignored their parents and planned a life for themselves,

it was better. Christ's instruction was for us to be doing His work when He returns (Matthew 24:45-46; Luke 12:42-43; 16:10; 18:8; 19:17; Gal 6:9), not to be waiting with our prophecy chart in hand to congratulate Him for returning according to our calculations.

The purpose of the Christian life now is to attain the first—the better—resurrection and rule with Christ (Matthew 19:28-29; Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:6). Unfortunately, many “doom and gloom” preaching churches scare people into thinking that the church leaders understand prophecy and will therefore provide a way to escape the trouble to come, but in the meantime, a member is mostly expected to stay away from the rest of the world and give lots of money to their church. (If they don't, they might be classified “Laodicean”.) But who will be prepared to reign with Christ? Someone who worked long hours, gave offerings and avoided the rest of the world? Or someone who has been out in the world, teaching Christ, yet remaining unspotted by it? (John 17:11-13; James 1:27).

We must realize that God is not calling us just to earn money. He is not calling us to build churches, colleges, ministries, magazines, websites, businesses, houses or anything else to last into the Millennium. He is building sons and daughters to reign with him. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us while we were sinners (Romans 5:8). We need to learn to have that kind of love for others (Luke 11:42; Romans 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 3:16-17; 4:19; 5:3). It is not easy to try to physically help someone or teach them about Christ when they are trying to take advantage of you or possibly even hurt you. But in doing that work, we can grow in faith, trusting God to protect us until the time of **our** end—just as He did for Christ.

Your comments about the love of God are a blessing to all who read them. The judgment of God goes hand in hand with it. Some people can learn from a message of love and truth, others must learn from judgments. The world is full of sins right now.

Most people disregard God. When great wars or other disasters occur, millions of people will suddenly be very interested in God. God is more than able to preserve them in a disaster. People repenting and turning to God in such a time is a good thing. Whether in times of plenty or peril, let us be ready to share our heavenly Father and His Savior Son with our neighbors.

Hi Norman,

Shabbat Shalom. Thanks for your Shepherd's Voice. Have you noticed something about the 24 elders in the book of Revelation? In Revelation 5:8-10, the beast and 24 elders sang a new song: *"Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."*

If the phrase, *"hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,"* is a song sang by the 24 elders referring to themselves, then these were once human, we might term them as saints. Also, Rev 19:1 said about *"much people in heaven."* So these are the 24 saints in heaven! Matt 27: 52-53 *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.* Although the old WCG [a church denomination] taught that these were only physical, nothing is done to prove this restricted meaning. Jude 1:14 says *the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.* Of course I don't know Greek, and I can rely on them as they are translated.

The Question remains whether Christ would come (a) alone, with angels only, and that the saints meet Him only in the first heaven; or (b) with his saints, starting from third heaven (God's Throne) and angels on his Second Coming.

Now then, what are your thoughts?

Shabbat Shalom

Joseph Huang,  
Doonside, Australia

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for pointing these things out. Christians everywhere need to be patient with others who may use these and other scriptures to "prove" that people who were formerly human beings—other than Christ—are now consciously living in heaven. Unfortunately, the issues you are dealing with are largely King James Version translation errors. This is not surprising, as those translators largely believed that good Christians did "go to heaven" immediately upon death. Also, they were still considerably influenced by the Vulgate—the Latin translation by Jerome—who also had this belief. Notice these different Bible versions in the last half of Revelation 5:9:

*... hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation (Douay-Rheims: translation from the Latin Vulgate)*

*... hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (KJV).*

*...have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (NKJV).*

*...with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (NIV).*

*... by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (ESV).*

*... by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (RSV).*

*...by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation (NRSV).*

Virtually every other modern translation says it was people who were ransomed, not the 24 elders. There is an extra pronoun in the

Byzantine Greek text which was largely used by the King James Translators, but even so, according to my limited knowledge of Greek, it does not clearly say it was the elders who were redeemed. Another notable example of King James Version translators relying on the Vulgate is Isaiah 14:12 which uses the word "Lucifer" from the vulgate. Nearly every translation not based on the King James translates the Hebrew *heylel* as "morning star" or "day star" Moern translators go directly from the Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts, bypassing the Latin Vulgate.

Similarly, mostly Vulgate, the KJV and some related translations say "much people in heaven" in Revelation 19:1. Even the New King James Version corrects it to "a great multitude in heaven." Nearly every other translation says "multitude", "large crowd", "throng", etc. The Greek *ochlos* used here means "a crowd" and is translated that way about half of the time even in the KJV—it is translated "people" most of the rest of the time, but in those situations the writer is clearly talking about people.

Even before Christ and the various saints rose from the dead, "there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God" (Luke 2:13). The Greek for "multitude" here is *plethos* from which we get our word "plethora", which means a lot of something but not necessarily people.

Matthew 27:52-53 says the saints were "coming out of the graves after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many." Everything mentioned happened on the earth. It says nothing about them being given immortality or ascending into heaven as Jesus did (1 Timothy 6:14-16, John 20:17).

Furthermore, if these saints were given eternal life and appeared to others, why would John say decades later: "...it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like

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## Feast of Tabernacles Carribean Cruise

Greetings fellow church brethren! The Church of God Downers Grove sponsored a nine night Bermuda and Caribbean cruise for the Feast of Tabernacles 2014. This cruise was a success with over 40 people in attendance with at least five different churches of God represented. We began the Feast in Elizabethtown, New Jersey with Stanley Deveaux as the main speaker for the first service. His message was clear about why we were celebrating God's commanded Feast. Sailing out of Cape Liberty, New Jersey, the initial plans were to stop in Bermuda, St. Martin, Puerto Rico and Labadee, Haiti. However, we did not make it to the island of St. Martin due to Hurricane Gonzalo chasing after us. That made for an interesting and fruitful feast experience with a lot of praying.

The messages this Feast were incredibly inspiring with a total of three speakers on the ship, including: Ken Svehla (pastor of Church of God Downers Grove), Jim Patterson (pastor from Chicagoland Church of God) and Al Turner (pastor from Detroit, Michigan). Each and every service had 100% attendance from all the brethren thoroughly glorifying God. As a part of glorifying God, there was daily special music including vocal solos, vocal duets, vocal trios, and piano duets. Many single members actively contributed to the services by leading songs, opening or closing prayers and playing hymns. The feast was incredibly rewarding for everyone and we really united as a group with eating dinners together every evening of the trip. The spiritual nourishment was very satisfying as well as the non-stop food and entertainment fulfilled by the physical aspects of the feast. We are planning another Feast of Tabernacles Cruise again in 2016. Make sure you look for us on Facebook, The Journal or here in Shepherd's Voice Magazine.

Submitted by Marjory Amber Warrington



## Feast of Tabernacles Okanagan Valley



*A very talented group performs special music.*



*Alex Kennedy and Ernie Webber wonder why no one else is wearing grey pants and black jackets.*

Once again the Winnipeg Church Of God has sponsored the Feast Of Tabernacles in beautiful British Columbia, Canada. About eighty of God's people joined together in the small city of Penticton, between the lakes, mountains and vineyards of this scenic land in the Okanagan Valley, to praise our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Our numbers represented most of the major groups of the Church Of God. While normally separated by physical boundaries, here we were joined together, united through the common bond of God's Holy Spirit.

We were instructed by a variety of speakers who helped us in our walk with Christ through a theme of unity in creation. We enjoyed wonderful special music every day, brought to us by very talented and gifted brethren. We praised God together through song and prayer. We enjoyed many meals together. We danced and played together. We were the family of God, rejoicing at His Feast of Tabernacles in Penticton 2014.

For information about The Feast of Tabernacles 2015 contact Alex Kennedy 250-487-7446 or 403-273-0244 or email [info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](mailto:info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org).

Submitted by Janice North Kennedy

## New Feast Insight - Only, Tennessee

The Feast of Tabernacles at Wooten Woods, Victor Wooten's Center for Music and Nature, was attended by 23 brethren, many of them present for only part of the Feast. We hope to have a much larger group at the same site next year, located a few minutes from Only, Tennessee or about an hour west of Nashville. The things learned this year will make for much better planning for next year. Combined with an early start, 2015 should be a very good year.

A new insight was employed in this Feast. Deuteronomy 16:14 teaches that everyone should attend the Feast, even the "stranger". Believers from all religious backgrounds were invited. One man could not sleep one night and found our Craig's List event posting on a part of the Internet to which he had never been before. He believed God showed him to come to the whole Feast, so he did. The homeless guests from Port Austin Bible Campus were invited; one came for the whole feast. The messages and instruction were given by people from a variety of backgrounds: Church of God ministers, other church pastors, long-time Bible teachers, professional musicians, nature experts, etc. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the return of Christ and his physical Kingdom on earth, with his resurrected saints reigning with him (Matthew 19:28-29; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 15:49-58; 2 Timothy 2:2; Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6). We want

to encourage believers everywhere the need to understand, commemorate and prepare for it.

This Feast was about inviting people to come and prepare for the return of Christ. There is so much more to do in coming years. The following are five general parts of the plan and how they were implemented this year:

**Diversity.** The Bible indicates that Christ leads his church directly by placing spiritual gifts in individuals (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 28-31; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Peter 4:8-11). The people listed in Hebrews 11 who are awaiting the "better resurrection" to reign with Christ are from very diverse backgrounds. Some lived long lives of service to God; others are famous for one major act of faith. Similarly, for that last two thousand years, there have been many believers with varying spiritual gifts—and there are many believers with different gifts today. For example, if one believer has the gift of knowledge, that means there must be other true believers who do not know as much as he does. Similarly, if another believer has the gift of healing, that means that there will be other true believers who are less or not able to heal. A gift is not a gift if everyone has it. We cannot expect or require every other believer to have our gifts. This Feast has and will continue to advertise and pray for a diversity of people to come.

**Music:** Communicating God's messages through song is a command

of God, not only a means of making worship services more interesting. There are seven commands in the Old Testament to sing a "new song" to the Eternal (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:1). Moses wrote a song to commemorate God's victory over Egypt. When God told Moses that Israel would depart into sins, he commanded Moses, as his final function, to write a song to remind them of these things (Deuteronomy 31:20–32:50). New songs are an integral part of the return of Christ (Revelation 5:9 and 14:3). Even now, religious music is the means whereby servants of God can produce trans-denominational messages: Most church groups will readily sing good songs written by lyricists from other groups, even when they will not allow preachers from other groups to speak to their congregations. One of the professional musicians gave a very interesting seminar showing how artists have been largely free to expose and counteract the deeds of corrupt governments and religion through song or theater, even when those writing similar messages have been silenced.

**Nature:** Wooten woods staff members conducted classes in use of wild plants and fire making from naturally available materials. The plants in nature class included plants useful for food and healing. This writer has personally witnessed the use of one of the grasses studied to heal a tooth abscess that a  
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## Feast of Tabernacles Philippines

**IN PLAYFUL MOOD...** Feastgoers at Oasis of Prayer, a quiet, breezy, and green convention center near Tagaytay City, Cavite, Philippines, gesture happily at the cameraman during a noon break before a hearty lunch. But more than this, they had their fill of spiritual food in live messages and videos.

Next year, this small congregation based at Imus City, Cavite, will be joined by a congregation in Metro Manila.

Shared by Max Noble.



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not to keep company with known sinners (Matthew 9:10-13; 11:19). If we are full of truth and the Holy Spirit, we can work with others and not be concerned that we will be moved.

#### **4. Does your ministry provide services that no other provides?**

This is a good and valid ministry model, with services being a very broad term. Websites, publications, broadcasts and other forms of teaching can be unique. Those preparing them have their own experience and gifts—indeed, God may have raised them up for a specific ministry. They may be reaching certain audiences better than any other; they may have been given knowledge that no other group has.

Local fellowships can also fall into this category. Brethren have rented halls or opened their homes to become the only place within driving distance where people can regularly meet on the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath, meet in an open format with questions and answers, or meet without the restrictions of a “501(c)(3)” church corporation.

That does not mean these believers should disdain those who meet together without these requirements. As long as a ministry does not act as if it is the most important thing God is doing, this model will let it coexist peacefully with many other ministries. Each ministry should encourage believers to use whatever helpful Christian services are available from any responsible ministry. Even when this writer was a member of a church that taught it was the “only one”, the ministers serving the people had the good sense to recommend certain Christian ministries to help with music, child rearing, substance abuse, demon-related problems, etc.

#### **5. Does your ministry provide services where they are needed and utilized?**

A ministry does not have to be unique to be of value. It can wholly duplicate the services of another ministry, as long as it is doing God’s work, and as

long as it acknowledges work that God is doing elsewhere. For example, this writer works in a ministry that serves homeless people; when we have too many guests, we call other ministries to take them and vice versa. We also share big offerings of food, clothing, etc that we may receive.

The whole key is to accept the good works that others do, skipping over those things with which we disagree. Again, this writer would like to refer to his experience with a homeless ministry. We occupied the same property for six years and taught the Sabbath, Feast days, the resurrection of the dead, and other biblical truths. We had signs posted and web sites, but the surrounding community generally ignored us. Now that we house and feed homeless people, hundreds of others have recognized us as a Christian ministry, volunteer to help in various ways and have occasionally inquired about our biblical teachings. We have learned that many of these ministries are involved in good Christian works and we participate in some of them.

Are there people in church groups who do not seem to have the Holy Spirit? Yes. Are there sins and scandals in some of them? Yes. We have baptized people, unfortunately, only to find them going back to crime and to jail. Even Jesus’ ministry had an apostle who stole the ministry’s money (John 12:5-6).


#### **Jesus’ and the Apostles’ Ministry Model**

Jesus largely used ministry model 4, even though he had the right to use number 1. Jesus, being the only begotten Son of God, certainly had unique teaching. Nevertheless, He did not set up His own buildings, but traveled and taught at the synagogues and temple. He taught His followers to keep going and continue listening to the Scribes and Pharisees when they read the Word of God (Matthew 23:1-5), but He also told them about their errors so they would not be fooled (Matthew 23). Jesus allowed the disciples of John the Baptist to continue to operate separately from His ministry (Matthew 9:13-17; 11:2-6; John 4:1-2). Jesus even had secret followers that were part of the corrupt leadership for a while, such as Joseph

of Arimathea and Nicodemus. (John 19:38-39)

The Apostles still had very unique truth of Christ’s teaching, but they became more like ministry model 5 as time went on. They allowed for others who essentially wanted to do the same thing as they had been commissioned to do. Paul and Barnabas planned to travel and minister as a team, but when they could not agree on who to take, they formed two teams (Acts 15:35-41). Apollos was not trained by any of Jesus’ disciples, but began to teach that Jesus was the Christ from the Scriptures (Acts 18:24 – 19:6). The apostles did not stop him, but taught him more so his teaching would be better. The Household of Stephanas appointed themselves to the ministry (1 Corinthians 16:15—the Greek *tasso*, used here is usually translated “appointed”). The New Testament church was so tolerant of various teachers that many false teachers eventually entered (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1). Paul taught that the purpose of these false teachers was to determine who was approved (1 Corinthians 11:19)—God wanted to know who was interested in truth and who was interested in teaching that which would appeal to their human nature.

To many people, the solution to this problem was a church hierarchy that would control exactly who could and could not be a teacher. But that compounds the problem when the entire hierarchy becomes corrupt—as it did with the Pharisees and Sadducees. God has always promised that truth would come through His Spirit—which men cannot control (John 16:13).

We should never expect to preserve our spiritual life by staying in the ministry that has the truth. We should expect to preserve it by keeping our relationship with God—reading His Word, praying and fasting. Churches and ministries are not for assuring ourselves we are right, but for doing God’s work. Let us adopt a realistic ministry model that does not make ourselves too right, and others too wrong, and be about our Father’s business, till our Messiah comes! 

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Him, for we shall see Him as is”? (1 John 3:2). Would not John already know the appearance of a believer who had received eternal life.

Other verses tell us that Christ is the only one raised from the dead to have eternal life in heaven:

*He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things* (Ephesians 4:10).

*In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him* (1 John 4:9).

*These [righteous people in the Old Testament] all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them... God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us* (Hebrews 11:13, 40).

*And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some* (2 Timothy 2:17).

*Feast Report - Continued from page 21*

dentist had said could only be healed by a root canal or complete extraction procedure. When Christ returns to reign, everybody will again be given their own agricultural land (Micah 4:1-5). The world needs to learn how to rely upon God and the natural things He made, rather on the manmade things that are often largely designed to make certain people wealthy.

**Simplicity:** Music and messages were planned so that everyone could enjoy them—from the novice to the mature. The main point focus was to bring positive messages. When there are many people from diverse backgrounds, it is foolish to attempt to try to correct everything that everyone might be doing wrong.

When Jude quotes Enoch saying Christ will return with “ten thousands of His saints”, he makes no effort to tell us where those saints come from.

We can know where the saints come from by going to verses that say. The dead do not rise until Christ returns: *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming* (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The truth of the matter is we cannot send anyone to Heaven, Hell or any resurrection via our doctrinal arguments. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and He will reward us accordingly (2 Corinthians 5:10). Some people will not even understand what they did that was good that brought them eternal life (Matthew 25:37-40, 46). Is it possible that a righteous person who expects to wake up in heaven after death may wake up in the first

Even Jesus and Paul had much truth that they would like to teach, but had the wisdom not to teach it to those who were not yet ready (John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrew 5:11-14).

**Wide outreach:** The goal is to take this basic message to many people, not to teach everything we know to a small group of people. The work will not be done by perfect people. Jonah took a very basic message of repentance to the people of Nineveh—he did not teach the five books of Moses to the Ninevites. Yet they repented of their violence and wickedness and their city was spared. Jonah himself was an imperfect minister. Similarly, Samson delivered and judged Israel (Judges 14-16), even though he struggled with sins.

resurrection? The first resurrection seems to be composed of people who have humble hearts—they would immediately accept Christ’s explanation of where they are and why.

I believe the teaching that people immediately go to heaven or hell (or the lake of fire) when they die is in error. It makes God appear to be unjust—especially since some people have either little or inaccurate knowledge. Throughout the Bible, God claims to be just. Nevertheless, I believe a Christian can still bear spiritual fruit with this error. I believe God gave me His Spirit when I still had major doctrinal errors.

For those whose scripture study leads them to believe that the dead in Christ are already in heaven, they still must realize that prayers should be directed to the Father, in the Name of the Son (John 15:16; 16:23). Trying to talk to people who are already dead is called necromancy and is a sin (Deuteronomy 18:21; 1 Samuel 28). Even when Peter James and John see a vision of Christ in His Glory with Moses and Elijah, Christ ignores Peter’s plan to build tabernacles for them and tells them not to tell the vision to anyone. Praying to or communicating with deceased relatives or holy men is simply not taught in the Bible. It stops us from praying to God who can hear and answer our prayers! 📖

Similarly, some of the professional musicians who taught and attended at this Feast do not have a Sabbath- or Feast-observing background. But some do, and more are interested in what we do and why. Victor Wooten has been voted Bass Player of the Year three times by Bass Player magazine. J.D. Blair, drummer for Shania Twain, is considered the world’s best drummer by some critics. All of these musicians are very skilled at their music and gifted in reaching out to people—an important part of one ministry helping to prepare the way for the return of Christ.

As we read through the Bible, we see that God uses whom He chooses. We can trust that He has made the right decisions in the past, and will in the future. 📖

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