



THE SOWER

Volume 3, Issue 4

The Sower is the bimonthly newsletter of Christian Educational Services, Inc.,
a non-profit organization, and is published in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Jul/Aug 2001

How do You Live By Faith?

<p>Home Office 2144 E. 52nd St. Indianapolis, IN 46205 317-255-6189 Fax: 317-255-6249 E-mail: Jesusces@aol.com www.christianeducational.org</p>	<p>Mark & Karen Anne Graeser 4911 Cavendish Rd. Indianapolis, IN 46220 317-255-6189 E-mail: Graesermrk@aol.com</p>	<p>John & Jenivee Schoenheit 3500 Rea Rd. Charlotte, NC 28226 704-542-7250 E-mail: Jschoen777@aol.com</p>	<p>John Lynn 49 Highland Manor Court Indianapolis, IN 46228 317-255-6353 775-720-0300 (cell phone) E-mail: Jalces@aol.com</p>
--	---	--	--

Dear Fellow Believer,

An interesting example of faith in action showed up in the newspaper in July. The following appeared in the July 13, 2001 Jerusalem Post about the situation in Israel:

Thirty hotels have closed, 30,000 employees made redundant. According to the Tourism Ministry, this has had a knock-on effect on some 200,000 Israeli livelihoods, with the \$270 million in lost monthly revenues exacerbating the general recession. Tellingly, the only tourists generally unaffected are the Orthodox Jews and Protestants of the evangelical stripe. The implication: Religious dogma, not always Jewish, is what keeps people coming to Israel. It's a matter of faith vs. fear.

The situation in Israel is such that even non-Christians can see the results of faith in people's lives. The faith of Christians keeps them going to Israel when others will not go. The "faith vs. fear" scenario shows up in many more ways than just tours to Israel, however.

All over the world Christian missionaries, stepping out on faith, are taking personal risks to help others. All over the world Christian caregivers are making personal sacrifices to help the needy. In almost every nation, Christians, acting as ambassadors for Christ, are taking their time and spending their money to take the gospel to the unsaved. Christian work is often unappreciated, and sometimes even risky, but if even one soul gets saved the effort is worthwhile.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth, “We live by faith, and not by sight.” A definition of faith is given in Hebrews: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see.”

We live by faith and not by sight because we are constantly doing things because of what we believe is true, not because of what we actually see with our eyes. Christians act on what the Bible says because they have faith that God will fulfill His promises and not let them down. Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him [the Lord] will never be put to shame” (Rom. 10:11).

We do not yet see the new and wonderful earth that God promised, nor do we see the rewards He has promised to those who serve Him. Because we walk by faith, we do not have to see them yet. We are confident that they are coming. That confident hope keeps us strong from day to day and energizes us in our work for Christ.

As we begin to wind down summer and get ready for the fall and fall schedules, let’s continue to make a genuine effort to let our faith show by stepping out on the promises of God. Thank you for all your efforts, which are making our ministry a strong and vital one. As we are stepping out on faith and acting in love, the lives of people around the globe are being changed.

Standing with you in faith,

Mark & Karen, John and Jenivee

Indianapolis Summer Fellowship is a Transformational Experience Tapes Now Available!

“Be Ye Transformed” was the theme of this year’s Summer Fellowship in Indianapolis, and the saints who attended were treated to some very powerful presentations that are now available to you - thank God for the person who invented audio tape!

John Schoenheit led off with “A Ministry in Transformation.” This is a “must hear” for you if you appreciate what CES has done for you and want to know our heart for the days ahead. John dynamically articulated our vision of reaching out to the world with the truth of God’s Word.

On Saturday, CES staffer Dottie Heman poignantly chronicled the story of her life, and how God has brought her and her family through some very tough situations. Her sharing was called “Standing Strong Through Adversity.” Better have Kleenex for this one.

You might cry during the next sharing too, but it would probably be from laughing. Craig Peterson, from Indianapolis, followed Dottie with “My Life of Disengagement,” a brilliantly crafted presentation filled with heart, honesty, pathos, and superb communication skills.

On Saturday night, Alejandro Marchesan, a leader in the Ministry of Reconciliation in Buenos Aires, Argentina, spoke on “Commitment to Transformation.” This is a very practical teaching on how to get from one place to another in one’s personal life, or in a ministry. Alejandro is a top business consultant in Argentina, and his understanding of the mechanics involved in personal transformation blessed us all.

On Saturday and on Sunday morning, there were informal sharings by the CES staff members, as well as participants at the conference. These are included in the weekend tape set.

There is also an amazing 10 minute sharing by a gentleman from Kenya who was here in the States, made a timely connection with us just before the weekend, and came to the conference. We hope to reconnect with him in Kenya before too long.

On Sunday morning, Father's Day, Mark Graeser most appropriately closed out the weekend with "Embracing the Father's Vision." He talked about how God, as our Father, wants to reproduce Himself in us.

Our heavenly Father has made it possible for us to be like Him, and to love others as He has loved us in Christ. Mark also addressed the biblical idea of "the many and the few," and encouraged us to be among the few in history who have really seen the Father's heart and exemplified it to a dying world. The whole tape set from the Weekend is available for \$25 plus s&h.



Women: Take Note!
***The First CES Women's Conference on the
West Coast !***

Dear CES Women,

Hi! I'm Nancy Berwid and I'm co-ordinating an exciting event we have coming up in November. We are holding the first ever West Coast CES Women's Conference!

You may have heard what a tremendous success the one we had in North Carolina this past March was. It was so groundbreaking, so powerful, so uplifting, so beyond belief, that it inspired a second one to especially accommodate those wonderful women saints out west.

The theme of the conference is: *Bloom Where You're Planted*. It's based on the scriptures in Ecclesiastes 3 (there is a time for everything). That was also the theme for the NC event and it proved to be a "timely" theme.

The NC women's conference was extraordinary. Many of the women who attended said it was the best CES event ever. What made it so unique? There are a number of things that I will do my best to describe to you.

The teachings were electrifying. They had a testimonial quality that was very inspiring. The teachers all shared personal parts of themselves that evidenced God's mighty power in their lives. It was a soul-baring time. If you haven't yet heard the tapes, I encourage you to get a set. They're certain to knock your socks off.

One of the things that we focused on is empowering women in their ministries. Throughout the history of the church, women have typically been discouraged from having ministries. Sue Carlson taught *The Role of Women in the Church*. It was a passionate, persuasive teaching that should eliminate any question about women being allowed to teach in the church.

Karen Anne Graeser had an inspiring teaching about women bloomers in the bible. It highlighted some of the women with great power, influence and boldness throughout the bible. Both of these dynamic women will be teaching again at this west coast event. They will be joined by some other exciting teachers who are women who have had great “blooms” in their lives.

Karen Anne has long been an outspoken voice about women’s ministry. I am very grateful for her inspiration to women to stand up and be counted. It’s Karen Anne and Jenivee Schoenheit who have spearheaded getting these events for women going. Jenivee set the tone for making the last event a nurturing, relaxing environment, by coordinating the physical details. She’ll be doing that again for this conference. Her vision is for women to feel pampered and taken care of over the weekend.

Of course we’re planning on making this west coast event even better, building on the wonderful things from the last one. One thing that will be new to this event is a “Bloom Room.” This is a room that will be adjacent to the meeting room that is available for women to display and/or sell things that represent God’s gifting in their lives.

This would be a display of something you’re talented in, such as music, art, writing, crafts, cooking etc. This is an exciting opportunity for us to share these “blooms” with one another. If you would like to find out how to sign up for a table in our “Bloom Room,” please contact the CES Home Office as soon as possible. One of the things we will be repeating is having lots of time for discussion groups. We will be breaking up into smaller groups throughout the weekend to have time to share in a more intimate environment.

One of the great things about being together is the camaraderie, networking and support. It’s a great time to meet other women of faith and start new relationships. As we know from the word, there’s great healing in bearing one another’s burdens. When you get women believers together, what results is a nurturing, safe environment and a place of bonding and acceptance.

This conference is going to be held November 9-11. The feedback from the last conference was that women wanted more time. As a result of this request we will be starting Friday morning instead of Friday night. The discounted rates at the hotel will apply to Thursday night as well as Friday & Saturday.

We wanted to give you this advance notice, so you can set aside the time, you can tell your friends and you can get excited about this with us. If you have any ideas or suggestions, I would love to hear from you. If you have a chance to squeeze this conference into your prayer life, that would be appreciated.

God’s Best to You,

Nancy Berwid
Chairperson for the Women’s Ministries Committee

2001 Family Camp at Rome City Indiana was a Real Adventure!



What happens when you have 140 Christian believers of all ages from 10 states and two foreign countries assemble for 5 days and 4 nights of great fellowship around God's Word? Well, you have the makings of a real spiritual adventure!

Many of the Campers were returning veterans, including the Foxworth family from Azerbaijan (that's a country in the Balkans that was once a part of the USSR). We were also blessed to have the Williams family from Sweden join us! The CES Family Camp is becoming an international event!

The theme of the Camp was "Boundaries," as taught on video by popular authors Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend (not the one of former Way fame). Each session included discussion and small group meetings to help drive the points home that were made in the videos.

Many Campers remarked at how timely and helpful this information was, and particularly helpful to those of us who had an association with The Way International because of the nature of that organization to not respect the boundaries of others. We intend to keep circulating the video curriculum around those areas where there are concentrations of believers who would like to learn what healthy boundaries in Christian living are all about .

Speaking of *The Way*, the Camp was held at the old Way College of Biblical Research Indiana Campus in Rome City, IN. In a surprising turn of events, the present owner of the property asked us to leave by Friday at 2 pm, almost a full day before the camp was over, breaching his contract with us and indulging in blatant religious discrimination against us as "former Way believers."

We pulled together and went on with our Camp, utilizing a nice park in Rome City and lodging and meeting facilities in nearby Kendallville (miraculously, we had everything we needed!). Predictably and awesomely, God made lemonade out of this lemon.

In fact, God so thoroughly redeemed the situation in every way that we actually got more blessed to leave the Rome City property than to stay.



Calendar Corner



—2001—

October 25-28
First Ever CES Men's
Conference
Bostic, NC

November 9-11
Women's Conference
San Jose, CA

—2002—

June 8-22, 2002
Bible Lands Tour
(Political Situation Permitting)

July 21-26, 2002
Family Camp
Pokagon State Park
Northern IN

CES Teen Camp 2001: One Hot Time in the Word!

By Mark Graeser



Sixty-six young people from 17 states came together from June 30 to July 6 at Camp Hope in western North Carolina to learn how to study the Bible and enjoy a fantastic week of fellowship with others committed to growing up in Christ.

The theme of the Camp was "I Fight, Do You?" and focused on the spiritual battle that rages around the accuracy of God's Word and the people who stand for it.

Armed with Greek and Hebrew lexicons and concordances, Bible dictionaries and atlases, and willing minds, these young soldiers of the Lord ages 13 through 23 marched into their study sessions with enthusiasm and faith.

Time and again their eyes opened to the amazing integrity of the Scriptures, and many were pleasantly surprised at their ability to work through challenging study problems put to them by **John Schoenheit, Sue Carlson, and Brandon Walker.**

Each study session included generous amounts of time for the students to work through the problems, after which John would guide them to the solution that best fit the biblical evidence.

The campers grew in confidence daily that they could “correctly handle” the Word of truth as 2 Timothy 2:15 directs, and even those who had never had any experiences studying the Bible were able to see the truth of God’s Word for themselves.

The flag was raised every morning by **Sam Schoenheit** and **John Hickman**, who donned their ROTC uniforms to show their respect for our country.

Each morning a passage of the Bible was read and **Sue Carlson** shared an inspiring part of early American history that revealed the profound Christian roots of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America.

“(An) unforgettable moment was walking into the hall and seeing all the tables lined up with research materials and bibles and just feeling overwhelmed by the greatness of what was set before me in the coming week.”

-Kathy Lunardini

Small groups gave each camper an opportunity to receive personal assistance in various aspects of his or her Christian walk, with particular attention being paid to the manifestations of the spirit.

The campfires each night gave the campers an opportunity to share their victories, and many firsts were reported (“This was the first time I ever spoke in tongues and interpreted, prophesied,” etc.)

The fellowship at the evening campfires was intimate and inspiring, and the campers became increasingly bold in sharing their lives with each other. One night the praise and worship went over the top as the campers united in song, dance, and many tears, rejoicing at the goodness of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greg Paules from Charlotte, North Carolina did a fabulous job of cooking for the 86 campers and staff, and the excellent meals he came up with were an important part of the success of the camp.

Serving as support staff for the camp were **Dave Carlson, Kevin Rourke, Marilina Vega,** and **Eddie and Sherry DeBruhl** from North Carolina, **Mary Stevens** from New York, **Lin Rimple** from Idaho, **Denise Zankich** and **Adam and Nancy Berwid** from California, **Don and Laura Stone** from Virginia, **Karen Theisen, Ruth Doan,** and **Kathy Lunardini** from Michigan, and **Matt Johnson** and **Mark Graeser** from the CES Home Office in Indianapolis.

With the gratifying success of this camp and double the number from last year, we will certainly have to find a larger facility to accommodate all those who will want to come to the camp next year.

We solicit your prayers as we search for just the right facility that will allow us to continue to train the next generation of Bible lovers and dedicated followers of Jesus Christ. It is certainly possible for us to do Teen Camps at other locations around the country, so if you know of a suitable place, please tell us.

Teen Talk! *What teens said about Teen Camp 2001*

Ben Jensen
Charlotte, NC

The recreation was a blast! The fellowship was excellent! Every day there was praise and worship. There was a campfire every night with even more singing and dancing, and we would quiet down and each of us would share about what had happened that day, good or bad (usually always good). And I would walk away from the fire every night thinking to myself, "I have never been so close to God as I am tonight."

Vanessa Bolen
Wichita, KS

The opportunity to be a small group leader was an unexpected but rewarding experience. One of the greatest parts of camp for me was seeing how the small group leaders would help, support and encourage each other.

Within our groups we were able to see first hand what God could do in people's lives—deliverance and joy was visible on so many individuals' faces.

The study sessions were also a time of excitement and fun that is probably not usually associated with such words as "lexicon," "study," or "Oxford Bible Atlas." But the energy was contagious as everyone would continue to learn and discover new things about a book that may have been gathering dust on their shelves or it could have been opened once a week or maybe even once a day.

Regardless, the teachings that were put together by the hard working staff were breathing new life into something many teens shy away from: God's Word.

Whitney Ricciardi
Ft. Collins, CO

When the camp ended, I walked away with sixty-five new friends. I'm truly blessed to have them as brothers and sisters in Christ. I loved the campfires because the worship was so powerful, and because it was encouraging to hear people speak from their hearts.

Before I went to this camp, I had never heard of a lexicon or a concordance. Now not only do I know what they are, but also how to use them, and I'm enjoying being able to dig deeper into the Word. So much joy and hope was brought back into my life. I'm definitely going back next year!

Grant Blackburn
Fishers, IN

Teen camp has really helped my spiritual life. I thought that John Schoenheit's teachings were awesome. The campfire and the praise and worship was really great. It was also a great place to make friends.

I really wasn't thinking about going but now that I have, I have been listening to my praise and worship CD's and have gotten back into the Bible. I would recommend going next year to all teens, especially the ones that are having a hard time getting into the Word.

Craig Heman
Greenfield, IN

I thought that the teachings by John Schoenheit were awesome!!! The small groups were really great also. They brought me out a lot spiritually. I also thought that it was cool that there were a lot of teens my age and the recreation time with those teens was awesome. I had a lot of fun.

It was amazing to see the way people would step up and speak into each other's lives—no fear. There were a lot of strong bonds formed by baring our hearts and being truthful and encouraging toward each other.

Vanessa Bolen

... we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and purity.

1 Timothy 4:10-12 (NIV)

Family News

Do you have something to share with the CES family of believers that would edify, encourage and inspire? If so, send it to the Home Office and we will publish it on these pages. Unless you tell us otherwise, we will print your name, city and state. Readers, if you want to contact anyone of these folks, you can do so by going through the Home Office. We reserve the right to edit for readability and length.

Lydia Banton Columbia, MO

One day before the June Fellowship in Indianapolis I saw an e-mail (one of my group loops) from a believer in Atlanta stating that her brother in Missouri had had a horrible accident and was being transported to the University of Missouri Burn Center. I immediately sent her a personal e-mail telling her that is the hospital where I work as a secretary here in Columbia. There are burn centers in the area where her brother Pete lives, but they all “happened” to be full! Pete was severely burned over 50% of his body and there was only 10% chance for his survival.

I met Robi at the hospital and we went in to see her brother. It was very sad but encouraging to see that God was working to have someone here to meet her in this horrible situation. The next day I came to Indianapolis for the summer fellowship and prayed with a believer on Friday night—it was powerful! We saw the spiritual battle in action and claimed his life in the name of Jesus Christ.

On Saturday, Robi went in to see Pete and said, “I love you and will be here for you if you want to live.” Immediately Pete attempted to get out of bed, despite the huge amounts of sedation he was on. Then his condition drastically improved to the point the surgeon was able to start the grafting surgeries. His chance of survival jumped from 10% to 50%.

One month later Pete’s burns are still improving. Robi & I continue to enjoy fellowship together and read e-mails to him as he continues to get better. It is truly amazing to see God work to save the life of a precious human being from the grips of the Adversary!

(Pete’s condition is still very serious. His sister, Robi, continues to give updates via email, and while he has made vast improvement, he is still in need of much prayer. Please continue to pray for him and his family.)

Bob and Yanira Klink Virginia

WOW, I just finished reading most of this incredible book, *One God & One Lord*, and am wondering where was this years ago. I joined The Way International in 1982 while living near Rockville, MD. My wife and I left the ministry around 1994 and have been somewhat of an island ever since, yearning for fellowship with like minded believers but having difficulty finding people not afraid to question what they have been taught.

This book is so important for me because it documents so well what my heart wanted to believe was true, but I would find myself doubleminded on the issue because I had no research

tools nor documentation to justify my understanding of Scripture. I feel like I just got a transfusion of truth and unbiased teaching so I can once again share my faith with others with the same conviction I had when I first took the PFAL classes. The biggest difference now is that I have a foundation I can trust because of the facts, not just the personality of the man teaching.

God bless CES and the work you have done to make this available for those of us who hunger and thirst after the truth. I am interested in finding if there are any fellowships in the Northern Virginia area and if possible to hook up with them. Thanks again for your faithfulness and the holding fast of your profession.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

International News

Faithful in adversity

Dear Brother John,

Greetings in the wonderful name of our Lord Jesus Christ, our risen brother and Savior. It is sad to say I cannot reply to your letter immediately because I have no money to pay the stamp for the letter. I think it was almost three months I did not write you.

Brother John, on the month of February I cancelled our ministry in Kitcharao. I leave the fourteen souls there because I have no enough money to spend for the jeepney fare. It is almost eight miles far away from our house, and the offering cannot sustain for the fare. If the Lord will permit me maybe I can go back there in Kitcharao ministry.

In the present, I continued ministering in Cabadiangan because it is only one mile near our house and it is a walking distance. There were four families I was preaching here and they are all pure CES people. I teach and care them through the word of CES and I am very thankful to God for them.

Brother John, please help me to pray that our true God will provide my needs so that I can facilitate in teaching the truth about God while still day and there are more people I can convince the CES doctrine. Until then kindly extend my warmth and heartfelt greetings to Mark Graeser and John Schoenheit, to the fighter saints in the CES office as well as to the people of God there.

Your brother in Christ,

Liberato T. Demol Sr.

[Editor's Note: We met Liberato in 1991 on our first visit to the Philippines, and he has stood faithfully for the truth ever since. If you would like to correspond with him on a regular basis, please let us know. Even a small monthly gift would help him expand his ministry.]

Dear Brother Jeff, and to all saints in the CES,

Greetings to you, God bless your all undertakings through Jesus Christ " THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD" our Savior and only Lord.

I am a peace loving person with a vision to unite people through the Love of God and of Jesus Christ. I was trained by a Traditional way of belief. I finished my theological study in the Assembly of God seminary. Before I've gone to seminary I pastored and plant Churches and still existing this time. I served in the Youth Department for 3 years, served in the presbytery council for 3 years, Am a Sectional Presbyter for 3 and a half years. I was serving in the Assembly of God for seventeen years, from 1979 to 1996. They love me and treat me as an asset to them. They gave me the West Misamis Oriental as my area of responsibility.

In 1992 I was invited to attend Christian Educational Services seminar in Cagayan de Oro City. Truly it was hard for me to accept the CES Teaching because of Trainings, but there are messages that strikes my heart and in my mind. It was so happen that I attended many series of CES Seminars, reading Printed Materials and Audio teaching. What I learned from CES I share it to Liza, (my wife) we have confrontations but in the late of 1996 November I won my wife to the truth.

The District Officers of A/G called me 3 times because they heard that I attended CES they said that CES is an Anti Christ Teaching. They advised me not to join anymore but still I attended and do a series of small group of my area because Liza and I agreed to share what we learned from CES to people what ever happened to us. I am expecting that sooner or later they will kick out me from the A/G.

My purpose in sharing the truth to others because, only in CES teaching I found out the denominational, religion, traditional bias free. I learned the real meaning of being born again, the person of Jesus, his pain, death and a good role model as a MAN sent by God to saved the World. Above all I learned the richness of God's Holy Word. My knowledge now in the Word of God is more growing now compared before.

I am kickout from the A/G just because I am not a Trinitarian and following not the Tradition or teaching of the Assemblies of God the so called 16 Fundamental Truth. Above all the main reason is that I am teaching that Jesus Christ is the SON OF GOD not God the Son.

We have 3 deacons, the leader of the youth, men, women, treasurer, secretary, 50% of the old members and all new saints who are nurtured in CES Teaching. As a whole we have 70% of the total figure about 70 people excluding the children.

We are planning to temporarily meet in the Iron work shop beside the A/G Church. Liza and some saints was seeking place there is available 2,500.00 to 3,000.00 monthly. It is around 70 to 80 dollars a month as the dollar and Peso rate varies. Some money to be used for our expenses for our transfer. We have only one week and four days to go as a grace period until we can secure a place.

We need you prayers specially this time. We are slightly affected but we are ready for this time, no one can hinder us. To work for God and for Jesus Christ freely. I cannot afford to lose the truth that CES Teaches. I thank God for CES, may God bless more our labor and increase our fruit worldwide.

THE WORD OF GOD SAYS:

"IF YOU KNOW THE TRUTH, THEN THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE."

The status now in Alubijid is there is another pastor introduce in replacement in my behalf.

I love you all,

Rodolfo and Liza Odarve
Alubijid, Philippines

From Togo in West Africa

Dearest brothers in Christ,

God bless you richly in the mighty name of Jesus Christ our Lord our Savior, our Mentor, the one whose perfect trust in his heavenly Father made it possible for us to do likewise and walk with him.

We have read your exquisitely beautiful letter of February 1999 to ex-Wayers on the web while searching a ministry which divide rightly the word of God.

We love you , John A. Lynn, John Schoenheit, Mark and Karen Anne Graeser, for the magnificent work you have done and still continue to do since 1988, exceeding abundantly above all that we ever think or can ever imagine, for us ex-Wayers who were deadly spiritually abused and mark and avoid, because of our integrity and boldness and pure stand for the One True God.

We are from the way of TOGO (West Africa). We have resigned from them and their spiritual mafia network nearly two to three months ago. We are composed of seven fellowship coordinators, one branch coordinator and over fifty believers. We have just founded our own Church officially on June 3, 2001. Its name is "The Faithful Remnant" (Romans 11:5). We have eaten deliciously everything we have found on CES website. It is tremendous. We love you for the inspiring God's work you are doing in his infinite resourcefulness. We need seriously your help as we want to continue to stand boldly for the accurate words of God. So we think you are

the best and the only one who can help as with sound, vibrant, accurate and energizing teachings and teachings materials and others God would inspire you to give us. We would not want to have any intermediary between you over there and us either an ex-Wayers or not. We want to have a sound partnership with you. Where can we find sound and pure nourishment if not you all over there? One of our great desire is that you come here in TOGO. We want to know you all and to tell you we love you. We have already put in service a solid team of translation (three of us are bilingual) and they speak fluently English. We have also a team for research. We apply for your English/French translation committee. Once again we love you all. Help us with sound teaching materials so that we survive. We pray for you as you will pray for us from now. You are deeply in our hearts.

Your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Moshe & Marie Therese Amegashie
Constance Afangbom
Fidelis Gafo
Tutu Dackey

CES and the Body of Christ: A Dialogue

[Editor's note: The following is the edited version of a letter by John Schoenheit to a believer who expressed concern about CES' relationship with the Body of Christ at large. In response to the changes taking place in our ministry, some folks have expressed the fear that we are moving more in the direction of "sectarianism," by magnifying our doctrinal differences with other Christians and Christian groups.

Some have suggested that CES would have more impact on the Body of Christ if we encouraged people to be more involved in mainstream churches. We would like to address these issues and in doing so take the opportunity to share our vision of where we see our ministry going in the future.]

We understand that some people of our acquaintance have found churches that have been an important catalyst for their healing. We are especially happy for those who have found a place to minister and teach, and a few have been able to introduce much truth and godly encouragement. People blessed by CES are making a difference in the lives of Christians in churches around the United States. Our books and tapes are blessing many Christians of different backgrounds and denominations.

CES is not attempting to be separate. We are trying to reach out. We teach in other churches whenever the opportunity opens up. We are careful not to exceed the bounds of our invitation and we share things that we think will bless the congregation without burning the house down.

Free Indeed airs to thousands, and I get calls and e-mails (and even an occasional visit) from people who want to know more. We reach out through the Internet. We are open to dialogue with other Christians. Yet we get closed out of conferences, churches, and people's lives simply because we hold to a certain doctrine that is considered "heretical" by the mainstream. Nothing is going to change that reality any time soon.

For this reason, we believe that it would not be honest or profitable in the long term for us to encourage those who believe what we teach to try to blend in with “mainstream” churches and organizations in order to promote the truth and reach the hungry.

Furthermore, if we were to try to pursue such a blending we would effectively sabotage the vision we believe the Lord has given us for the growth of the Word of God in the lives of as many people around the world as possible. If we were to depend on mainstream churches to adopt and promote our materials, we would be very naïve indeed.

But it is not just that we are concerned about our vision not being realized. There are ethical issues involved. If we actively encouraged people to “infiltrate” “orthodox” churches knowing that there are serious and fundamental doctrinal differences between us, we could rightfully be accused of causing division in the Body of Christ.

As Jesus said in Luke 6:37 and 38, no sensible person puts new wine in an old wineskin. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. If we truly have a fresh, unique, and wholesome perspective on the Christian life, which many believe we do, how can we fit into a traditional religious system bent on maintaining its age-old beliefs?

What does it mean that “the wineskin will burst”? If mainstream churches were to embrace what we teach and believe, would they not have to admit that they may have wandered far from the truth in a number of significant areas? Would this not bring great division and disillusionment to a traditional church confident of its roots and assured that it represents the true (triune) God?

Jesus also said, “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Confident that their beliefs are historically valid, and certain that they are presenting the true Gospel, the traditional church is doing a lot of good and ministering to the needs of people worldwide. Do we really want to divide this effort to prove that we are right? No, we simply want to provide an alternative for those who have not been satisfied by traditional Christian teaching, while affirming as much as possible our brotherhood with Christians world-wide.

Most denominational and independent churches are filled with loving and well-meaning people, but these churches, and the denominations they are a part of, assume that they are already in possession of the truth. They have an institutional commitment to a certain doctrinal system that precludes the possibility of any “new” doctrine being introduced.

As tempting as it might be, our job is not to stand in judgment of and try to correct the traditional Christian community. We are called to stand in the integrity of our own conscience, and with the power of our vision reach those who have not been reached by the mainstream Church despite its 1900 years of history. Our vision is to the world and the unchurched.

Paul’s apostolic words in Romans 15:20 form a blueprint for our own outreach strategy:

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.

For us to actively and publicly encourage people who believe what we teach to “infiltrate” mainstream churches would be to attempt to “build on another man’s foundation.” We would rather focus our attention on those people who have not been reached by the “historic, orthodox church.”

Does that mean that we have disdain for those who have felt led of the Lord to become involved in mainstream churches? God forbid! For those who choose this path, we hope that they have a positive experience and are able to both give and receive. However, we have a tough time

whole-heartedly encouraging such involvement because we have seen so many people hurt and disillusioned as a result.

As for us, we are moving in a different direction—toward establishing new churches around the world, centered around our understanding of the integrity of the Scriptures. What, then, should be the relationship between CES and mainstream churches? There seems to us to be four basic possibilities:

- (1) We isolate ourselves and consider them the enemy.
- (2) We try to be accepted by mainstream churches, but because of our doctrine we stay marginalized.
- (3) We are somehow assimilated into the mainstream by merging with or being absorbed by an existing denomination or ministry.
- (4) We maintain independence, marketing our materials to individuals or groups as the Lord guides us and opens doors.

The fourth option is the only viable one that fits with our vision. If we were to be “assimilated,” it would be at the cost of compromising our teaching. If truth, or sound doctrine, is lost, there are serious practical consequences pertaining to the quality of believers’ lives. Truth will set us free, and conversely, error will put us or keep us in bondage.

We have seen hundreds of people start going to a mainstream church, searching for opportunities to teach what they knew. In the vast majority of cases, instead of being able to teach, they were asked to leave. Others have compromised some or even most of the truth they once knew in the process of attempting to fit in.

Truth that is not reinforced is often forgotten. When people who have been taught the truth have gone to a church that did not accept it, they have almost always had to be cautious about what they said, and most of those who were at all vocal about what they believed have been rejected as heretics.

Many truths have been lost in the history of the Church. There are also some basic truths now openly held in denominational churches only because they were regained at the cost of human lives. Do we not trivialize the heroic sacrifices of these warriors for the truth when we compromise and say that these truths don’t matter?

Historically, when truth has won out, it has been because people organized or banded together to promote it. When people who believed the truth were scattered, the truth was most often lost. My heart yearns to teach the truth to faithful men who can teach others also, as Paul told Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2). I do not foresee this happening in the churches because if they consider us “heretics” they will not hear what we have to share with them.