



THE SOWER

Volume 4, Issue 1

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

Jan/Feb 2002

Board Names National Coordinator of the “CES Fellowship Community”

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The CES Board of Directors is happy to announce that Dan Gallagher of Roseville, California will be the National Coordinator of the “CES Fellowship Community.” Dan served on the “Network of Affiliated Fellowships” interim committee last year, and distinguished himself by his tireless efforts to dream the network and formulate a possible structure. Though the network concept has given way to the idea of a “Fellowship Community,” many of Dan’s ideas will be tested out as our ministry grows.

We anticipate that Dan will be building a team of ministers who will be able to facilitate the formation and sustaining of local communities of believers around the U.S. first, and then around the world. We are looking for people with a track record of establishing and maintaining healthy fellowships and churches who would like to share their experience and insight with others. Dan can be reached through the CES West Office.

The Fellowship Community Coordinator position is a volunteer position at present.

Dear Beloved Believer,

Well, we’re in a new year full of promise and possibilities, and you will see in this issue of *The Sower* that we have planned a full slate of activities for you. If you have never been to a CES Event before, why not see if it works for you in 2002?

These are exciting times for our ministry, as we see more and more opportunities to bless God’s people. The new book, *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul* is healing people’s hearts and

helping them solidify their motivation to serve the Lord until his appearing. If you haven't read it yet, we trust you will this year. We have included a flyer in this issue for you to read and distribute.

We'd like to wax a little nostalgic and review the past year. 2001 was a year full of challenges and blessings. It began by informing our community of John Lynn's taking a year away from public ministry to concentrate on some personal healing and renewal. That was quite a shock to many of you, and we prayed that you would understand our reasoning and motivation. We were very gratified by the response of the vast majority who trusted that we were doing the right thing. Those who thought that this ministry could not survive without John's immediate involvement were thankfully proven to be mistaken. In fact, John's stepping back resulted in many people stepping up to take a larger role in the ministry. The interim committees worked away on their various interests and made progress toward a variety of ministry goals, not the least of which was to involve more people in the work of the ministry.

Perhaps the most exciting segment of the CES community that has stepped up has been the Women's Ministry. Led by Karen Anne Graeser, Jenivee Schoenheit, and Nancy Berwid (Women's Ministries Committee chairperson), two Women's Conferences were held with life-changing results. The women who attended were encouraged to "bloom where you're planted," and not wait for marriage, husbands, careers, or any other circumstance to change before stepping out in faith to fulfill the Lord's will in their lives.

2001 was also a first for the men of the CES community who held their premier Men's Conference. This was a great time for about 50 men who enjoyed a beautiful Fall weekend together.

There were twice as many "Teens and Twenties" this past summer as were there the year before for the Bible study camp. What a blessing to see our young people take a shine to the intense study of Scripture under the loving tutelage of John Schoenheit. Many an eye lit up as the campers saw the precision of God's Word.

An Advisory Council met in August at Earlham College to assist the Board in the many facets of transformation of the ministry from "provider of materials" to "full service church." Then in September the CES Leadership Team met to ratify the changes in the ministry and continue the work of the committees. The particular project that excited the Team was a new video class introducing people to Christ, the integrity of the Bible, and the many resources available to them in CES.

In 2001 we added 766 households to our mailing list, had about 20,000 hits to our website, and made contacts in 13 new countries, bringing our total to 54 countries. Bless God for His grace, and thank you for your support!

Mark & Karen Anne, John, John & Jenivee, Gary & Karen

An Important Letter from Dan Gallagher to the CES Community

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

God bless you all in the glorious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I regret that there are many of you that I have not yet had the privilege to meet. My heart burns with a desire to fellowship with you, to love you as Christ loves you and to see you grow to your full potential in Christ. I am writing to inform you of our ministry's commitment and progress toward establishing a "spiritually empowered fellowship community."

During the past few years it became apparent to the leadership of Christian Educational Services that our mission had begun to shift. For many years, we have focused primarily on being a provider of Christian materials in the form of publications and audio and video teachings. This past summer we thoroughly reviewed our mission statement and determined that it did not properly reflect our heart. With

you, we have grown to realize that we really want to be more than just a provider of educational materials. We have therefore revised our mission statement so that it now articulates our desire to not only be providing “sound biblical teaching” but also to facilitate a “spiritually empowered fellowship community.”

In September of 2000 at the Leadership Team Meeting we established a number of committees whose purposes were to examine various areas of the ministry’s interest and function. At that time, the Network Of Affiliated Fellowship Committee (NOAF) was launched with the purpose of identifying the possible strategies for starting a fellowship community. Ultimately, the NOAF committee developed a plan that establishes three levels in which Network members may participate within the CES community. These three levels are CES Fellowship, CES Affiliates, and CES Associates.

CES Fellowships are those who fully embrace CES and support us as the ministry that best represents their doctrinal beliefs. In return, CES focuses much of its energy and time to support those in the fellowship. We have also established two other types of Network members in order to accommodate those who do not fully agree with us, in either doctrine or practice. Any person or group that does not wish to participate as a CES Fellowship is welcome to join us as either a CES Affiliate or a CES Associate. CES Affiliates are those that wish to connect with our ministry but desire to maintain a greater degree of separation than a CES Fellowship. The third type of Network member is a CES Associate. This is any group that prefers a limited amount of contact with our ministry. These three different levels are explained in greater detail in the Network Organizational Document that is currently being prepared. Establishment of these three levels of involvement with our ministry demonstrates our respect for the boundaries of others, while acknowledging the great value to be gained through mutual exchange. Our goal is to promote unity, not division.

Just about now you may be asking yourself, “So how does this affect me” or “How am I going to fit into this plan?” I don’t believe much is going to change for those who want to relate to us as an Affiliate or an Associate. Many have participated in the past on such an arm’s-length basis. If you desire to continue this way, then that does not have to change. However, for those that desire to be a CES Fellowship, I hope that a lot is going to change. In the past we have not always been able to nurture and support you in the way you desire, deserve, or require. We want to be more connected to you and, hopefully, you to us so we both can be mutually edified. We seek to build a Fellowship Community in order to fulfill our godly responsibilities to love one another and to carry each other’s burdens. This means for those that have existing fellowships and want to participate, we hope to be able to work more closely with you. Some have wanted to either run or be involved in a fellowship but have not done so because there was no organization that you felt you could plug in to. We want to rectify this situation by supporting you in your desire to fellowship. In some cases, we will assist you by helping you plant a new fellowship or locate others near you who also want to meet. For others, we want to help strengthen and support you so the Church may be built up. **Now don’t worry, no one is going to start telling you what to do or how to conduct your fellowship.** Rather, we seek to serve you and assist you on whatever level of involvement you want.

It took me a while to break out of the mental mold of what I thought a fellowship had to look like. We all need to let the Lord lead us into what he wants us to do. Just last week my sister called from Oregon and informed me that she had begun to get together with three other women a few times a week to pray. She indicated that they had all begun to get bolder and even grown to the point where they are now operating the manifestations of holy spirit. She is still very involved with a church that she has attended for years, but now she is receiving referrals from the pastor because of the impact they are all seeing from her activities. When I explained what CES is now doing, she said, “Send me an application so I can sign up.” She intends to list herself as running a Prayer Fellowship. Why not have fellowships that are based on prayer, praise, and worship? If you’re led to teach, then teach, but let’s break the mindset on what we think a fellowship has to look like. Remember, not all are called to be teachers, but we all can pray and praise God.

Some time ago the CES Board of Directors asked me to serve as the CES Fellowship Community Coordinator. When they asked me, “What is your vision for the Network,” my mind raced. “How should

I answer, should I tell them about organization and structure?" Finally, I blurted out my heart, "I don't have a vision for the Network."

I was up to my neck now so I plowed ahead and poured out my heart. I told them that my vision is for individuals. CES is a community of individuals, and therefore each and every person is my highest priority. I don't see a cookie cutter program where we will just stamp out identical fellowships all over America. What works in Dallas may not necessarily be replicated in San Diego. What I do in my fellowship may or may not have any bearing on what you do in yours. We are all individuals and are placed in the Body of Christ as such. We each have our own individual difficulties, needs, wounds, likes, and dislikes. I realized, however, that we all want to be affirmed. We all want to be liked. We all want to be thought well of. We all want to be praised. We all want to be accepted. We all want to be loved.

The Lord sees us as individuals but we can't forget that he has called us to serve in a community of brothers and sisters. My vision is to promote a community where each and every individual flourishes, where we are all highly valued, highly esteemed and where we can all make full use of the individual gifts we have been given for the nourishment of the community. I am committed to you, the individual, and together with God and the Lord Jesus we will build a community of love and trust.

I invite you to come and fellowship with us. Let me know how I can help you plug in with others who also want to meet together. The Board of Directors has determined that to become a member of the Fellowship Community you must agree to the following documents, which I will send you upon request: The CES Statement of Beliefs, A Believer's Code of Conduct, the Believer's Bill of Rights, and the Network Organizing Document. You must also complete the CES Fellowship Community Application. I invite you to review these materials and decide at what level you would like to participate with us. The Fellowship Community Application is for those that either want to start or are currently running a fellowship and want to it to be part of the Fellowship Community. Just complete the application and send it in to us so we can get you listed. I truly hope you will decide to come and be a part of our Fellowship Community.

We Would Love Your Opinion on CES Projects and Events

Posted in a secure section of our website are forms that allow you to tell us what you think of our planned projects and what priority you think they are. You can also weigh in on an Events Planning Worksheet and help us plan our events for the next few years. If you have an idea for a theme, a location, or a kind of event, this is a good way to let us know. E-mail us and we will give you the link and password to these forms.

Are You a Frequent Flyer?

Recently, a couple of folks who had a lot of Frequent Flyer Miles in their accounts offered to donate airline tickets to CES personnel for us to use to travel and minister. If you are in the FF category and would like to do the same, just let us know. With the many events around the country this year, that would certainly help us save some money. In any case, it's great to know that we'll see you in the Friendly Skies when the Lord appears!

The First "Tape of the Month"

"Four Keys to Evaluating Prophetic Guidance"

Prophecy, both personal and corporate, is one of God's provisions for the Church Age, and more and more Christians are embracing prophets and "personal prophecy." With its popularity, however, have come abuses and misunderstandings, and this teaching aims to empower the listener with the keys to evaluating all forms of prophetic guidance. Armed with this knowledge, the Christian need not fear the ministry of a prophet or even false prophet, but can separate truth from error and God's voice from the human element. How to stand responsibly in regard to a prophetic word is also discussed, in order to not bring discredit to God, the ministry of a prophet, or the manifestation of prophecy. By Karen Anne Graeser

And coming in February—John Lynn's teaching on the life of Moses in "Ever-Increasing Glory." Don't miss it—subscribe today!

"We're On The Air!"

Do you listen to or know of a Christian radio or television talk show? What about contacting the host, maybe by sending him one of our flyers about the *Don't Blame God!* book, and encouraging him to have one of the authors on his program. Radio shows can be done by telephone. We can talk about any topic that is pertinent, such as the death penalty.

In light of the events of 9/11, you might also approach a "secular" talk show with the same suggestion. We have done a number of talk shows through the years, and each has been exciting and provocative. If you speak with anyone who is interested, just refer them to Mark, John L., or John S. and we'll take it from there.

Or you can do what **Richard and Lynn VandenBerghe** of Lansing MI did, and run a display ad in your local paper promoting *Don't Blame God!*. We can help you or your local paper generate the ad copy.

Together we are reaching out with the truth of God's Word, all around the world!

Together We Can!

Compensation Committee Formed

With the recent expansion of the Board of Directors, CES enters a new era in the age of accountability. We acknowledge the need for high standards, not only spiritually, but publicly as well. Mindful of this, the CES Advisory Council has recommended the formation of a committee of volunteers for the purpose of setting and monitoring the compensation of paid Board members. This committee will operate within IRS guidelines for the compensation to individuals based on comparable church organizations.

This compensation committee is chaired by **Gary Theisen**, a non-paid Board member, and composed of interested and capable CES supporters. The committee will likely have five members, but any interested person may communicate with the committee. If you would like to provide input, please contact Gary at theiphon@aol.com or drop him a line via the Home Office. Legal, business, or accounting backgrounds would be a strength. Committee members must not be related to Board members.

 Calendar Corner 2002 			
February 27-March 2 <i>Adult Bible Study Conference</i> Charlotte, NC	March 15-17 <i>Women's Conference</i> Virginia Beach, VA	April 12-14 <i>Western Regional Weekend</i> Santa Clara, CA	May 1-5 <i>Singles Conference</i> Washington, D.C.
May 15-24 Mark G. & John L. to The Philippines (pending finances)	June 29-July 5 <i>Teen Camp</i> Camp Hope Waynesville, NC	July 21-26 <i>The CES FAMILY Camp</i> Pokagon State Park, IN	August 20-25 Backpacking on the Appalachian Trail with Mark G. and John S.
September 19-22 <i>Leadership Team Meeting & Leadership Conference</i> Indianapolis, IN	October 11-13 <i>Men's Conference*</i>	October 25-27 <i>Eastern Regional Weekend*</i>	November 1-3 <i>Women's Conference</i> Santa Clara, CA

(*Location to be announced)

2002 CES FAMILY Campers! Remember the March 1 Deadline for RVers/Tenters!

The *CES FAMILY* Camp is not just for families—it's for the whole CES Family! It is an opportunity for the community of saints to get together and enjoy five awesome days of fellowship from 7 p.m. Sunday, July 21 to 11 p.m. Friday, July 26. This year there will be lots of activities for people of all ages and situations, so if you are single or married, young or old, have children at home or not, join us for an annual summer reunion of your spiritual family!

If you plan to tent or stay in an RV, **remember to postmark your reservation ON March 1** because the camp fills up fast (over 70% of its campsites and RV sites book on this one day!). They accept only mailed applications for their campsites and RV hookups. Mail reservations to Pokagon State Park, 450 Lane 100 Lake James, Angola, IN 46703.

Class A sites are available with water and electricity at \$15/night. There are 73 Class B campsites without utilities for \$12/night.

If you camp in a tent or an RV, you can provide your own food or eat at the Potawatomi Inn (no advance notice required).

Those reservations **postmarked before March 1 will be returned**. Those **postmarked after March 1 will be put in a pile** and submitted to a lottery system to fill the remaining slots.

Here are the details that you need to include with your reservation:

- Make checks payable to: Indiana Department of Natural Resources
- Reservation requests should include:

- A) Name, address, phone number
- B) Dates you plan to arrive and depart
- C) Number of campsites you wish to reserve (up to four per request).
- D) Each site must be in a different name and include the address of the person responsible for each campsite. All must be for the same dates. Campsite reservation forms are available upon request.
- E) A deposit equal to one night's camping fee for each site is required and will be credited toward the total bill.
- F) There is a NON-REFUNDABLE handling fee of \$4.00 for each campsite requested.
- G) Include type and size (length) of camping unit, tent, or RV. While there is no absolute maximum size for RVs and trailers, most parks have only a limited number of sites that can safely accommodate units larger than 26 feet.
- H) Specify the reservable sites you prefer, if any. We will try to accommodate. Please indicate your preference if they are not available. We can try to assign alternate sites or dates or we can return your deposit and handling fee. Please remember that only 50% of the sites are reservable, so you may wish to consider the first-come, first-served site for the day you requested.

This information on RV/Tent reservations has been taken from the Pokagon State Park's website
(<http://www.state.in.us/dnr/parklake/parks/pokagon.html>).

Potawatomi Inn registration confirmation deadline: June 21 (after that the room block is released).

Lodge Room Rates:

Rooms	#	Cost (incl. tax)
1 Double bed	18	63.72/night
2 Double beds	22	74.52/night
2 Queen beds	10	96.12/night

Meals are available in the dining room at the Inn at restaurant prices; you can have snack foods in the lodge rooms if desired.

The CES Camp registration fees will be announced in the next edition of *The Sower*.

Free Indeed Broadcast Information

Name	Where	When	Channel
Doug Eglinton	Larchmont/Mamaroneck, NY	Wed 8:30 p.m.	73
Mary Amlin	Fairborn, OH	Daily 8:00 p.m.	23
Gary Nix	University City, MO	Wed 3:00 p.m.	*
Jeff Brumm	Ft Wayne, IN	Wed 1:30 p.m.	57
Mina Hacker	Kinderhook, NY	Daily 10:00 a.m.	7
Dee Cerasiello	Albany, NY	Mon 5:30 p.m.	18

Christina Day	Beaverton, OR	Thurs 8:00 p.m. Tues 11:00 p.m. Sun 4:00 p.m.	6-21
Sherry Mayer	Greensboro, NC	Varies	8
Judy Dupree	Duson, LA	*	*
Ramona Feldman	Linden Park, NJ	Wed & Sat	*

Dallas Weekend Devoted to Planting a Church

"Spirit & Truth Fellowship of Dallas," a new church in the "CES Fellowship Community," was launched over the weekend of November 16-18. The local believers, led by Paul & Christine Keniston and John & Lisa Truitt, invited Mark Graeser to come and inaugurate their new church. Hearing about the event, Dan Gallagher and Nancy and Adam Berwid of California requested to participate, and paid their own way to come and be a part.

The weekend was a sweet time of fellowship and community building. Mark, Dan, and Nancy all shared on topics that related to successful church planting and living. Adam helped out with the sound board and one-on-one ministering.

Paul spiced up the weekend with his trademark humor and pastoral ministry and John Truitt closed out the weekend with a dynamic teaching.

The following Sunday was their first official meeting, and they had 13 adults, 2 teenagers, and 10 children. Please keep them in your prayers as they walk out their divine purpose as a "called out" body of believers.

CES Women's Ministry to Produce : "The Good News" Video Class

In January, the Board authorized the CES Women's Ministry to plan and produce our first full-length video class, which is being planned to run in a single, power-packed weekend. The "Good News Class," as it is being called right now, will consist of 8 hours of inspirational preaching and teaching designed to introduce newcomers to God, His Son, the Bible, and the sweet fellowship of the saints. It will combine video (and DVD, we hope), live preaching and teaching, at least one communal meal, and other elements depending upon the mix of students.

A friend of CES has generously offered the after-hours use of a Hi-Definition Studio, which will guarantee a first rate production at a reasonable cost. Please pray for the planning, production, and marketing of this timely and exciting project.

The Mission of Christian Educational Services

To glorify the One True God and the Lord Jesus Christ by providing sound biblical teaching and a spiritually-empowered fellowship community so that all people may be saved, come to a knowledge of the truth, and become established in faithful and fruitful Christian living

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 us and we may publish it. To contact any one of these folks, drop us a line and we will forward it on.

(We reserve the right to edit for readability and length, and unless you tell us otherwise, we will print your name, city, and state.)

Dear Sower,

I recently finished reading John Schoenheit's book *The Christian's Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*, and thought I would tell you what a phenomenal work it is! It absolutely fills in a lot of the gaps in my thinking concerning the future Paradise, the Millennial Kingdom, the Everlasting Kingdom, as well as what kinds of things will happen in the future. It has definitely changed my perception of our Hope in this life to inspire me to pursue holiness more eagerly on a daily basis. I definitely got a much clearer vision, as well as a deeper realization of, our day of accountability at the Bema.

In my mind's eye, it is like seeing the scope of God's Word from Genesis to Revelation from left to right, and seeing how all of these different, difficult verses fit into the context of each administration, and also a better understanding of some of the things that Jesus Christ was saying in the Gospels.

Pat Baird
Erie, PA

To order your copy of *The Christian's Hope*, see the enclosed price list, page 4, or order online at:
www.christianeducational.org
(304 pages, only \$15.00 plus S&H)

Dear Sower,

I thought that I would share with you about the most amazing and unexpected experience of my life. God has delivered my beautiful niece from a demon and she felt it leave. Praise God for this deliverance. Please pray with me that she may stay delivered. Thanks for all your prayers, members of the Body. Glory to God for this deliverance.

I had been praying for God to give me the words to feed her hunger about the loving Lord Jesus. Words just began to flow out and my niece began convulsing. I was inspired to keep speaking wonderful words as she sobbed loudly and I spoke even louder. I then commanded the demon to leave in the name of Jesus, and in an instant it left. She said... "I could actually feel it leave." That was around midnight. We spent the next hour praising God and just talking. When we finally got up in the morning, I found her lying next to me sound asleep. This has given me a confidence that will never leave me. Praise God for such a wonderful miracle. God is even more real than I ever knew. Hard to not sob as I write these words. Thank you for your continuous prayers for the saints, and praise God for our wonderful ministry, CES.

J.A.
Indianapolis, IN

Dear Sower,

Many wonderful things have happened this year, I thought I'd write and share our good news.

A year and a half ago, the Lord led Michael and I to get out of debt. Michael and I made the commitment to be debt free and I'm not even sure where the dollars came from, but 12 months later we were debt free! Praise the Lord! We even did a little jig in the kitchen.

I say this with loads of enthusiasm because a few months later, Michael lost his job (his company was sold). Whatever would we have done with all those debts?

Throughout the job search period we both had the most calm and peaceful feeling as we looked to God for His guidance. We never became anxious or fearful. I'm not wanting to sound braggadocios, but trying to convey the growth that the Lord has wrought in our lives. It is truly a blessing to have so much peace in very challenging times.

Not one job offer came thru, but even thru this we did not panic, we went self-employed! And God was faithful, we started getting jobs right away and never did we not have the mortgage payment or the water bill payment. Now, it looks as if God is opening a job opportunity for Michael that will be a blessing.

What a great year we had! The year was so tremendous because we had so many challenges, and we were able to see God's faithfulness in every situation and we saw our own spiritual growth. I would not change one thing about last year, because I know we have grown even stronger in the Lord. I praise Him with my whole heart.

Michael & Robyn Riddle
Niceville, FL

News from the CES International Community

Dear Sower,

I received your letter and the enclosed CES books. Thank you very much for the big favor!

The truths that I'm learning in the study of them beside my open Bible are fresh and priceless. I truly thank God for the ministry that He, in grace, has entrusted you and your colleagues.

The dogmas formulated at the so-called "Ecumenical councils of the Christian Church" are nothing less than apostasy from the truth, delivering the world to the thralldom of superstition, tradition and religious bigotry of the Dark Ages. I rejoice with you in the Lord, dear brothers and sisters, that because of God's grace the great forgotten truths of the divinely breathed scriptures are now being returned to us in its purity!

I find the CES study materials truly helpful and thought provoking. I want to request for an extra copy of the book, *One God & One Lord* for our church's small library for the use of everyone.

Danilo A. Esplana
Camarines Norte, Philippines

Dear Sower,

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord. We are happy to introduce our selves as prayer warriors from India. We have several prayer groups throughout India. Recently, Brother Simon Peter has come to our rural area called Amalapuram, along with his coworkers to teach the Word of God.

According our invitation he came to our crusade hall and taught among the 75 prayer warriors. We were all Trinitarians, we believed Jesus is God, Lord & Holy Spirit. He is three parts.

Brother Simon Peter has started to teach the subject on "Truth or Tradition?". Then we understand he is a non-Trinitarian. First of all we were offended by his teachings that 'God has no parts, He is One, Lord is One and Holy Spirit is One the three things are purely different.'

Although we got much angry on Peter, but his teachings makes us very different. We argued for Trinity. But he has shown us Bible proofs that Trinity is not right way to please God. But we are unable to show proofs for Trinity is right.

First the first time in all of our 14 years of life as follower of Lord, we started to think about what is truth and what is tradition & what is wrong and what is right.

When brother Peter returned after his teachings, he gave us some of your books and cassettes. We have read and heard your books and cassettes. Finally we agree with you.

We are very glad to know the right path to reach God. Now we found truth, which is very biblical and of sound doctrine. We have been serving the Lord 14 years although learning very little. We are very ashamed in this regard.

We questioned our selves why we did not find the Truth earlier? However praise God for we have found the real Truth in One God & One Lord.

United Prayer Warriors of India

George Victor
Rajahmundry, INDIA

Dear Sower,

Greetings and may God bless you all today. I read not all of the book *Don't Blame God!* but part of it and I have discovered many, many things that helps Christians to answer some of the questions they have in this life. Many Christians believe that when tragedy and accidents comes into their life they feel it is according to the will of God, even myself, but when reading your book then my mind had been open that God has not responsible for all of this trials you may have. This book is good for Christians who have many why's and need the answer of this. As to compare this book with so called popular books then I should say that this book is more sound and clear to understand and it helps much of the things that Christian worry about. I'm blessed reading your book. Thank you for the great wisdom God given you who wrote this book. May God increase your wisdom in order to answer some of the difficult questions that no man can meet the real answer except are those whom teaching the biblical truth and teaching. God bless you all.

Nestor Lagdamen
South Cotabato, Philippines

A printable flyer of *Don't Blame God!* is available on our website.

Frequently Asked Questions ...

Q. I was surprised by the opening article in your Nov/Dec. edition about grieving. I thought that we were not to look behind us at what has happened but instead were to press on to what is ahead. I believed any emphasis on grieving and the idea that grieving could help us emotionally was just more of today's touchy feely pop psychology and not the truth of God's Word.

[paraphrased from a lengthy e-mail]

A. As we wrote last issue, grieving is essential to the healing process. Thousands of studies done on people who have and who have not grieved, have led the medical profession to concur that grieving is essential for healing. I could also relate my own experience. When my dog was killed by a car, I grieved. It was natural and spontaneous. I cannot imagine what I would have had to do, or the person I would have had to have been, not to have grieved. My dog was dead, and the grief was irrepressible.

We grieve when we are emotionally connected to the loss, and the more connected we are, the more we grieve. This can be seen at any funeral. If a teenager is killed in a car accident, the immediate family of parents, brothers, and sisters grieve bitterly, friends cry and have a sick and empty feeling, distant relatives are quite sad, acquaintances are sorry the accident happened, and so forth. The intensity of the grieving is related to the degree of emotional connectedness.

Interestingly, as we become more Christ-like and connected to the heart of God, we become more large-hearted toward people and may experience grief for people we do not even know. In my experience, truly Christ-like people even have grief to some extent when they read in the newspaper about a total stranger dying. This is why Scripture says that when one part of the Body suffers, we all suffer with it (1 Cor. 12:26). On a personal note, it was that very verse that caused me to "wake up" about my own hard-heartedness toward other Christians. Often I would see a brother or sister in the Lord having trouble, and instead of hurting for them, I congratulated myself on my own personal faith and strength of character, and that I was not having such problems (was I ever out of touch!).

Since the more emotionally connected we are to people the more we grieve if they encounter tragic circumstances, we can see why grief is healthy and godly. God wants us to be emotionally connected to people, and to love them. What kind of person does not grieve about the tragedies of life? Ebenezer Scrooge is famous for his lack of feeling toward others, and when confronted with the possibility of people dying of starvation, he commented that their death would “reduce the surplus population.” Scrooge is a caricature, but the fact that the vast majority of the people who watch *A Christmas Carol* applaud his change of heart at the end of the story shows that people commonly recognize that there is something fundamentally wrong with hard-hearted selfishness.

Since grieving seems to spontaneously flow out of the core of the human heart, there should be something in the Bible about it, and there is. Before going to chapter and verse, however, it is important to understand some principles about what is and what is not covered in the Bible and how to properly use the Bible to attain knowledge and godliness. There are people who foolishly state that if something is not in the Bible, then it cannot be godly, but that is not true. It is a general principle of Bible interpretation that when something is spontaneous and important to human life, God’s Word does not command us to do it.

Rather, the principle we need to know to properly understand the Bible is that if something we do flows out of our human life or nature (not sin nature), we go ahead and do it unless God’s Word specifically says not to. For example, there is no chapter and verse that tells us to chew our food, dress warmly when it is cold, or take time to cleanse the dirt out of a cut or scrape if we fall on the ground and hurt ourselves. These things are “natural” and need no comment from God. When something seems to flow out of our human life or nature that is not good or can get out of control, God warns us about it. For example, it is a natural tendency to want to improve our lives, and that is godly. However, our desire to improve our lot in life can come at the expense of someone else, so although there may be no verse about chewing our food, there is a verse that says not to covet our neighbor’s wife, animals, house, etc. It is fine to try to improve our lives, but not at the expense of others.

Just as God does not have to command us to eat when we are hungry, God does not command us to feel in certain ways in certain circumstances. God is emotional, and He created us in His image as emotional beings. God’s emotions are portrayed many times in the Bible. He may be angry, grieved, jealous, etc., depending on the situation. Because God created us, He knows that we all respond to certain things in the same way.

We humans are naturally “happy” if someone gives us a present, so there is no chapter and verse that says, “feel happy if someone gives you a present.” Our human feelings are many and varied and include a warm, glowing feeling at seeing puppies, anger when someone steals from us, frustration when we are telling the truth but the one we are speaking to does not believe us, etc. These feelings are spontaneous and godly and God does not command them. Similarly, there is no command saying, “Feel badly when someone close to you dies or when some tragedy occurs.” We feel badly naturally. That feeling is grief, and the process we go through after the tragedy while we are adjusting to the way life will be without our loved one is grieving.

God knows that feelings of grief are healthy and important. God Himself feels grief on occasion (Gen. 6:6, 1 Sam. 15:11, etc.). The grief that we feel when someone dies is called “mourning,” although grief is mentioned in other circumstances in the Bible as well. “Mourn and mourning” are mentioned more than 100 times in Scripture. God says there is a time for mourning (Eccles. 3:4). The first mention is in the life of Abraham when he grieved at the loss of Sarah. The Israelites officially grieved for 30 days when Moses died (Deut. 34:8). Ecclesiastes says “the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning” (Eccles. 7:4), surely not something He would say if grieving were ungodly. Christ said that those who mourn now would be blessed in the next life (Matt. 5:4). He also told his disciples that they would grieve when he died. The Lord reproofed the Corinthian church for not mourning about the evil that was done in their midst (1 Cor. 5:2). However, because of Paul’s reproof, they did become sorry and mourn, which was a good thing (2 Cor. 7:7 and 8). James told the ungodly people to mourn and weep. These are a few examples from God’s Word about grief and mourning, and there are more verses about grief, sadness, mourning and sorrow that could be studied.

It is also important to realize that there is no case in Scripture where anyone mourning is told that it is unhealthy, ungodly, or inappropriate to mourn over loss. The fact that God Himself feels grief on occasion, and since there is grief and mourning from Genesis to Revelation with no mention of anyone trying to stop it or stuff it, that is good evidence that in certain situations it is appropriate.

In conclusion then, grief arises spontaneously out of the heart when tragedy happens to someone or something that we have an emotional connection. Grieving is an adjustment process that we go through as we deal with loss and all the associated feelings such as anger, frustration, and hurt, and as we deal with the new realities we will be facing, such as living without a spouse or child. We grieve because we are emotionally connected, and to deny, cut off or try to “stuff” the grieving process is to deny that it is okay to hurt and need time to heal. Grief naturally lessens with time, because God made humans able to adjust to changing circumstances and to be able to move on with life.

John Schoenheit

“Truth or Tradition?”

Updated by "New Life in Christ: Foundations for Powerful Christian Living"

John Schoenheit and his sister Sue Carlson have been in production this month taping a new audio seminar to add to the seminar offerings of CES. Called "New Life in Christ," this seminar will consist of 24 segments of 30-39 minutes each, and come in an album of 12 tapes or CDs and include a detailed syllabus. The cost is to be determined.

The seminar will revisit most of the same topics covered in “Truth or Tradition?”, but without some of the controversial edge. Over the years we have heard from some of you who have played the tapes for your friends and relatives who were put off by some of the teaching that challenged their beliefs a little too aggressively. "New Life in Christ" will keep the enthusiastic presentation of the truth of God's Word without as much negative comparison to traditional beliefs. In this era of hyper-sensitivity and "non-judgmentalism," we have found it necessary to adapt our methods somewhat. As Paul says in I Corinthians 9:22 (KJV), "I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some."

Look for “New Life in Christ” to be available in the near future.

Teen Camp Scholarship Fund Established

We now have a special fund to help our young people attend the Teen Camp. If you would like to donate to this fund just specify on your check memo. If you would like to recommend someone who wants like to go but can't afford it, please let us know.