



THE SOWER

Volume 4, Issue 3

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

May/June 2002

CES Becoming a "Church": What That Means to All of Us

<p>CES Home Office 2144 East 52nd Street Indianapolis, IN 46205 317-255-6189 Fax: 317-255-6249 Jesusces@aol.com www.cesonline.org</p>	<p>CES West Dan & Lori Gallagher 125 Sunrise Av, Suite 2 Roseville, CA 95661 916-784-7117 ceswest@rcsis.com</p>	<p>CES East John & Jenivee Schoenheit 3500 Rea Rd Charlotte, NC 28226 704-542-7250 Jschoen777@aol.com</p>
--	--	--

CES Board of Directors

<p>Mark (& Karen Anne) Graeser 317-626-5943 (cell) Graesermrk@aol.com</p>	<p>John Lynn 317-255-6353 317-847-1024 (cell) Jalces@aol.com</p>	<p>John (& Jenivee) Schoenheit 704-542-7250 Jschoen777@aol.com</p>
<p>Gary & Karen Theisen theiphon@aol.com</p>		

After an extensive meeting between Mark Graeser and Marilee Springer and Katrina Clingerman, representing the law firm of Ice/Miller in Indianapolis, the CES Board decided in April to reconstitute Christian Educational Services as a yet unnamed church, creating a new entity and dissolving the corporation Christian Educational Services, Inc. Because we are becoming more and more identifiable as a church, there are significant advantages compared to our present non-profit corporation status. We are not required to pay taxes (except payroll taxes), and as a church we automatically are tax-exempt even without a 501(c)(3) designation, and donations in any amount continue to be fully tax-deductible.

Though we are starting from scratch, we will be incorporating the work on the articles and by-laws that has already been done by our attorneys. The name “Christian Educational Services” will continue to exist as an “unincorporated division” of the church, and will continue to provide educational products as it always has, but only as one facet of the church.

Ms. Springer recognizes that we have evolved to the point that we are legitimately a church, satisfying almost all of the criteria the IRS uses to determine that an entity is a church (see March/April 2002 issue of *The Sower*). She noted that this was not the case when we first came to her. Thus, the changes in our ministry are not only in keeping with our expanded mission, but also enable us to legitimately say that we are a church according to the standards established by the IRS, with all the benefits thereof.

Becoming a church significantly reduces the likelihood that the IRS or any other governmental agency would bother us. The “regulatory” functions that the IRS performs “over” churches is not specific to churches, but applies to all legal entities (like the stipulation that a 1099 must be provided for every person or entity paid more than \$600 per calendar year). It is our opinion that people who are worried that the IRS is going to “direct the American pulpit” and “approve sermons” are not considering the constitutional guarantees involved in the separation of Church and State. The last thing the IRS wants to do is get into a very public tussle with a legitimate church, which we are, over anything other than payroll tax issues. The Baptist Temple here in Indianapolis provides a clear and recent example of this. Their building was finally seized only after they refused to pay payroll taxes over a period of many years.

So what does this mean to us as a community of believers? It means that we are more than ever a “we,” becoming a body of believers united by a common vision and “called out” to a common purpose. In this church, there are no spectators, and no national, ethnic, racial, age, or gender limitations. We have one God, one Lord, one faith, one spirit, one baptism, one body, and one hope. We are full of love for God and our neighbors, filled to overflowing with the spirit of God, armed to the teeth with the sword of the spirit, the Word of God, and joyfully serving others the Bread of Life.

What is True “Tolerance”?

Dear Beloved Saints,

May God’s amazing love for you and yours be abundantly evident as you walk the path of righteousness hand-in-hand with Him and His Son.

Speaking of righteousness, look in this issue, page 5, for the description of a newly published booklet by John Schoenheit called *Righteousness: Every Christian’s Gift from God*. It is a short but very edifying read. At one time we were all very “wrong,” even enemies of God Almighty, but He made us right in His sight. This fact of rightness and wrongness is crucial to understanding the essentials of the Christian faith— God, sin, the Devil, grace, etc. But these days, questions of right and wrong are becoming less important than being “tolerant.”

I (Mark) had an opportunity to be out and about in early April during my kids' Spring Break. On our way down to Florida we stopped in Atlanta and were blessed to be with Ivan Maddox and his friends on Easter Sunday. I had been thinking about the convincing evidence for the resurrection of Christ, and how reasonable it is to be a Christian. In fact, it is the *right* thing to do to believe in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, based on the biblical and experiential evidence available.

Ivan works at Emory University in the Assistant Chaplain's office and sees firsthand the cultural and religious war that is going on in the academic trenches of American colleges and universities. "Toleration" is being hailed as the ultimate virtue, and the enemy, then, is anyone who claims to have a religious belief that might actually be *true*. Because if it is true, then that is to say that someone else is believing something false, and to say that is considered rude, crude, and socially unacceptable in this climate of "tolerance." Apparently, many would rather live in a misty realm where nothing is either true or false in any objective way, and everyone can be, in the words of the book of Judges, "right in his own eyes." Then we can all be detached from each other, have no answers, and just try to make people feel good about being eternally separated from their Maker.

According to this postmodern philosophy, as long as we are sincere in our beliefs and do not make anyone else feel bad about his beliefs, we are considered to be on the right path. Anyone, that is, except the Christian, cannot be true to his faith if he agrees that all beliefs are equal. Jesus claimed to be "*the Way, the Truth, and the Life*," and we who follow him must be faithful to say what he said. I would rather be told outright that I am *wrong* than to be told that I am "intolerant" of other beliefs. I can live with being considered wrong, but I shouldn't be muzzled because speaking about my faith makes someone else feel bad. Every mature adult should take responsibility for his or her beliefs, along with the possibility that they are wrong. We should be prepared to defend our beliefs and not resent others for speaking about competing beliefs that challenge ours. "Tolerance" is meaningful only if there is something to "tolerate," or to put it more biblically, to "forbear" (Eph. 4:2 -KJV). Forbearance is required, because, as humans, we will have serious disagreements that test our friendships and relationships. If we had no such conflict, we would not need to forbear anything. We would just go along and get along without muss or fuss.

Actually, there are four steps toward true biblical forbearance, and until these steps are fulfilled, we have no actual need to forbear each other.

1. We discover, through engagement in each other's beliefs, opinions, and attitudes that we have a disagreement.
2. We explore this disagreement until we can say that it is a disagreement of substance and not just definitions of words.
3. We determine that the disagreement is about something that really matters, something that has consequences to us, our loved ones, to the Christian faith, or to society.

4. Through dialogue we find that we are not able to persuade each other one way or the other. We have distinct positions, and we are not going to change each other's minds through continued dialogue at this point in our relationship.

It is then that we are actually prepared to "forbear" each other, that is, to continue in friendship or relationship with each other despite our disagreement on some belief, idea, doctrine, etc., that we think is important.

Unfortunately, many relationships never even get to Step One, because of fear of engagement, fear of conflict, fear of rejection, or just taking the easy way out. It's always easier to pretend that we don't have real differences than to find out for sure and deal with them. Once we do that, then we have to learn to love those with whom we have a conflict. That is the test of our capacity to love. It is easy to love those with whom we are in agreement.

Ephesians 4:2 and 3 says something important about the attitude we are supposed to have:

- (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- (3) Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Does this mean that we must compromise our beliefs in order to have relationship with others? No, because "compromise" is not "forbearance." We are mature enough to separate *ideas* from *people*, and learn to love people despite their ideas and beliefs. Sometimes we can love their ideas and beliefs as well as their person, but oftentimes not. And how will we ever be of service to others if we have no relationship with them?

Certainly, there are times when conflict ends relationships, but even if we feel that we were completely right and the other person was wrong, we should stay open to the Lord of reconciliation to bring about a change for the better in our relationship. And in that openness we may discover the Lord requiring us to be the first to move to forgive, make peace, start up dialogue again, etc. If we are unwilling or unable to risk conflict, we will never experience the joy of resolution and true, biblical peace. We will have only temporary and superficial periods of calm at the expense of authentic relationship based on a real understanding of each other.

Personal insecurity sabotages friendships and relationships. If you can be in relationship with me only on my terms, and must agree with everything I believe and do in order to avoid conflict, then ours is not a relationship, much less a friendship. You are merely an object to me, a sounding board, a dart board, a non-person with no ideas or opinions of your own that you can express to me unless they agree with mine. If you cannot be real in my presence, but must play a role that I have scripted for you, then you are not an authentic person in my life. I have "directed" you to become merely an actor.

Spiritual and relational maturity involves being able to be one's self in the presence of others who can also be themselves, and working out a mutually satisfactory relationship with each other based on who we really are and what we really believe. That relationship can then change as we grow as individuals. A commitment to love and forbearance allows for the space that a relationship needs to have in order to grow. We must learn to stay in relationship with each other even while in meltdown, or the relationship becomes more distant for a while.

I read recently that the main reason that start-up enterprises do not succeed is dissensions among the founders and principals. I thought about how much I love my brothers John Lynn and John Schoenheit, and how many times we have weathered adversity and conflict together with, and sometimes between, each other in the course of our friendship. We have been to the brink of division on many occasions, but we have always been willing to stop, to pray, to listen, and to wait until the Lord could work to bring us back to him and to each other. Sometimes this has taken months and even years. Our resolved conflicts have bound us together with the glue of true friendship, tested by adversity. The Theisens, too, have hung in with us through thick and thin, and through some serious disagreements that have now been resolved.

Together with you, we are building a ministry that is not based on creating “cookie cutter Christians” who must play some role, look a certain way, or curry our favor to be accepted and find a spiritual home. We are One Body, full of rich diversity of human interests and abilities, united around a common vision of what constitutes healthy teaching and a powerful experience of the reality of God’s power in Christ Jesus. When we look over all the names of those who are standing with us, we are humbled and blessed beyond words. How our hearts yearn to see our family grow, and to teach everyone we can about the joy of living and speaking the truth in love.

But this is all a fool’s enterprise if there is no truth, if there is no *true* love, or a *true* God. Let’s hold fast to the notion that God’s Word is truth, but, like our Heavenly Father, passionately love those who are caught up in unhealthy beliefs and behaviors, and be willing to be thought “intolerant” as the price we pay for being a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We love you and are blessed to be standing with you.

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

Help Us Find a Name for Our Church!

Because we are becoming a church, and Christian Educational Services will be an unincorporated division of the church, we need to come up with a name for this new church. We are looking for a name that best fits our mission, our vision, and our “personality.” So far, there are only a few names that have been submitted that are presently under consideration:

- Spirit & Truth Fellowship (or Ministries?) (International?)
- Christian Educational Ministries International
- The Grace L. Ferguson Church and Storm Door Co. (apologies to Bob Newhart)

We are praying for a name that will make us all light up like Chevy Chase’s house in National Lampoon’s *Christmas Vacation*. You can read the justification for the first two entries on our Website.

Sorry, there's no giant cash prize for the winning name (we're saving our money to pay the attorney for the legal changes in our ministry). But if your suggestion is the name by which our ministry comes to be known, we will recognize you in the Sower with great thanksgiving.

Together We Can!

CESONLINE.ORG

You can now log on to our website more easily than ever by going to <http://www.cesonline.org>, and e-mail us at the following addresses:

For general office inquiries	Ces@cesonline.org
For ordering materials	Orders@cesonline.org
Mark Graeser	Mark@cesonline.org
John Lynn	JAL@cesonline.org
John Schoenheit	JohnS@cesonline.org
Jeff Blackburn	Jeff@cesonline.org
Matt Johnson	Matt@cesonline.org
Dottie Heman	Dottie@cesonline.org
Elizabeth Prygrocki	Elizabeth@cesonline.org
Lydia Banton	Lydia@cesonline.org

A New Audio Seminar Now Available!

“New Life in Christ”

A new 24 session audio seminar introducing our basic teachings on all the foundational issues of Bible study and Christian living is scheduled to be available late June 2002. We are currently accepting pre-orders. The class, called *New Life in Christ: Foundations in Powerful Christian Living*, is a family collaboration of John Schoenheit and his sister, Sue Carlson. The blend of their two voices, manners, and teaching styles is an extremely logical and winning presentation that you can give to your friends and acquaintances who want to know why you are so jazzed about life and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The seminar is available in both cassette and CD form, and each of the 24 sessions is just under 39 minutes. A comprehensive syllabus of about 50 pages is included in the \$50 cost for Audio Tapes and \$70 for CDs. Additional syllabi are available for \$3.00 each. A list of session titles will give you a good idea of the content and the flow of the seminar:

Session titles are:

Session 1. New Life In Christ	Session 13. The Christian Church
Session 2. “Take My Word for It”—God	Session 14. The New Birth
Session 3. “Take My Word for It”—God (continued)	Session 15. The Gift of Holy Spirit
Session 4. The Text We Have Is Reliable	Session 16. The Manifestations of Holy Spirit
Session 5. The Workman and the Perfect Word	Session 17. Speaking In Tongues

Session 6. Uncovering the Perfect Word	Session 18. Hope—the Anchor of the Soul
Session 7. Uncovering the Perfect Word (continued)	Session 19. Hope—Jobs and Judgments
Session 8. The Fall	Session 20. Sonship—Blessings and Responsibilities
Session 9. Who Is In Control?	Session 21. Developing the Character of Christ
Session 10. Where Are the Dead?	Session 22. The Power of Prayer
Session 11. Salvation and the Savior	Session 23. Giving, Witnessing, and Fellowship
Session 12. Salvation By Faith	Session 24. Praise and Worship

We certainly encourage you to run the seminar as a group whenever possible, deciding on a schedule that works for you. The syllabus pages for each session contain reflection questions that would be good for group discussion, and students could help each other master the material. Questions are encouraged at the end of each session to make sure the students are on track.

This seminar will probably eventually replace *Truth or Tradition?* and *Introduction to God’s Heart*, but before making that decision we will wait to hear from those of you who go through the seminar and tell us what you think. This is also a way for us to move economically in the direction of a video class, working out the bugs in the class while it is still in audio format before going to the much greater expense of a film or video class.

The Women’s Ministry Committee is working on developing “The Good News Class,” a weekend experience that will give people a complete introduction to Christianity and how our ministry can help them grow in their faith.

New Booklet Available
Righteousness
Every Christian’s Gift From God

The following is the back cover text of this inspiring new booklet available for only \$3.00. This study may be the best anti-depressant substance on the market today!

Some 4,000 years ago, Job asked, “How can a mortal be righteous before God?” This question still plagues people, many of whom feel unworthy and unrighteous before God.

It is true that if righteousness came by our own efforts no one would be righteous. The Bible says what every honest person already knows: “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins” (Eccl. 7:20). All of us fall short of God’s standards.

God knows that no one can be perfect enough to earn righteousness in His sight, and so in His grace and mercy, He gives righteousness to Christians as a gift. The Christian’s righteous standing before God is given to him, not because he does good works, but because he has faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ paid for the sin of mankind, and opened the doorway so that God could bless His people with the gift of righteousness.

This booklet shows from Scripture that each Christian is righteous in the sight of God. Furthermore, it shows that we are righteous before God even if we do not feel that we are. For Christians who have felt unaccepted and unrighteous before God because of their sin and shortcomings, this booklet offers a word of comfort. It is indeed a blessing to know that we Christians stand in the presence of God, “right” in His eyes, accepted by Him and acceptable to Him.

This makes a great gift/witnessing tool

Volunteers Still Needed!

Is there anyone in the CES community who has experience designing camera-ready ads for publishing in print media? We would like to develop a series of attractive ads for our materials that could be published in newspapers and magazines when the opportunity arises and finances permit. If you have experience and/or a desire to see what you could come up with, you could try your hand at designing an ad for *Don't Blame God* or *Sex and Scripture*, two books that might interest a more general audience.

Hey, Teens 'N Twenties! Get Yer Books for Camp ...

New bookstore item - a four volume Interlinear Bible, Hebrew, Greek, and English, by J.P. Green, Sr. published by Sovereign Grace Publishers. Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers.

John Schoenheit recommends this set for anyone attending the Teens & 20s Camp, but this is not a “required” item.

Available for only \$100.00 plus S&H. We save you \$60.00 off the retail price. See page 5 of the enclosed price list.
To order online, go to the “Books by Others” link.

More Bloomin' Women!

The third *Bloom Where You're Planted* Women's Conference was held March 15-17 at the Oceanfront Sheraton in Virginia Beach, VA. The theme was “Breaking Through in Faith,” and break through we did! What a time of joy, renewal, and healing!

Nancy Berwid, CES Women's Ministry Coordinator, did the keynote teaching Friday morning on “Breaking Through in Faith.” She set the tone for the expectation of miracles and deliverance with the emphasis on God's power and our little “mustard seed” of faith. **Allison Hunt** followed by building on the same theme with “Strong in the Lord.” She gave an inspiring testimony as a single mom who has “broken through” in faith to see God's personal deliverance and provision.

Friday afternoon, **Laura Stone** gave a presentation and led a workshop on “The Wise Woman of Proverbs 14:1.” This was a time of reflection that prepared hearts for further growth

Friday night, **Karen Anne Graeser** shared on developing a more intimate relationship with Jesus. She focused on the continuing stages of coming unto the Lord of Matthew 11:28-30.

Karen Theisen, the CES Board representative for Women’s Ministry, shared on Saturday morning that the best dressed women are the ones wearing their spiritual clothing in Christ.

Saturday afternoon, Breakthrough Workshops were held on the themes of deliverance, inner healing, family relationships, jubilee time (50 years old and up), and starting out or starting over.

Saturday night was an unforgettable time of joy, dancing, and healing, culminating in a beautiful celebratory candlelight communion service. Sunday morning, **Sue Carlson**, CES Women’s Teaching Coordinator, closed the weekend with a powerful teaching on The Hope: The Christian’s Anchor of the Soul.

Throughout the weekend, there were many other teachings emphasizing various areas of breaking through, including ones by **Jennifer Mason, Cathy Pittinger, Stephanie Savaterri, and Carol Schoenheit**. Also representing a strong contingent of inspiring young women were **Abigail Hunt, Tricia Ivey, Lindsay Harvey, Anita and Julia Graeser, and Jenny Lindblad**.

Jenny’s inspired dancing and the exceptional praise and worship added to the impact of the event. **Allison Hunt** was the Event Chairperson, and her creativity, attention to detail, and beautiful floral touches from her “Blossom’s” flower shop all contributed to a wonderful time of healing and breaking through in faith for the nearly 100 women who attended.

Make plans now to attend the next CES Women’s Conference in Santa Clara, CA, November 1-3.

Hit the Appalachian Trail?

What does a backpacking trip have to do with the Bible and Christianity? We don’t know, but John Schoenheit and Mark Graeser are avid hikers and can’t be stopped. They have invited anyone hale and hearty enough to hike 10 miles a day with a 50 lb. pack to join them for a four-day adventure hiking a section of the Appalachian Trail in Western North Carolina, August 20-25. E-mail Mark or John if you are interested, and send pictures of yourself on the top of some mountain or peak to impress them.



Calendar Corner



<p>May 12-21 Mark G. & John L. Davao City, Philippines</p>	<p>June 29-July 5 <i>Teens & 20s Camp</i> Camp Hope Waynesville, NC</p>	<p>July 21-26 <i>The CES FAMILY Camp</i> Pokagon State Park, IN</p>
<p>August 20-25 Backpacking on the Appalachian Trail with Mark G. and John S.</p>	<p>September 19-22 <i>Leadership Team Meeting & Leadership Conference</i> Indianapolis, IN</p>	<p>October 11-13 <i>Men's Conference</i> <i>Hidden Falls Camp & Conference Center</i> Bedford, IN</p>
<p>October 25-27 <i>Eastern Regional Weekend</i> Charlotte, NC</p>	<p>November 1-3 <i>Women's Conference</i> Santa Clara, CA</p>	<p>February 13-16, 2003 One Flesh Couples' Retreat <i>Hidden Falls Camp & Conference Center</i> Bedford, IN</p>

You can register online at www.cesonline.org

Fellowship Community Update

The CES Fellowship Community ball is rolling and gaining more momentum every day. In September of 2000, there were about twenty fellowships listed on the CES website. Today, in the United States alone, there are sixty-five fellowships in twenty-eight states, and Internationally there are nine fellowships in five foreign countries.

It's been fantastic to see the enthusiasm of the new fellowships as they ask to be added to the CES website. God has called us to be members of His family, so, it's only natural for people to have a strong desire to be connected to each other. At this time we have heard from fellowships in the following cities (are there more out there?).

United States:

Anchorage, AK	Fresno, CA	Fort Collins, CO
North Pole, AK	Huntington Beach, CA	South Colorado Springs, CO
Skagway, AK	Pleasanton, CA	Hollywood, FL
Mobile, AL	Roseville, CA	Longwood, FL
Phoenix, AR	Roseville, CA	Tampa, FL
Tempe, AR	San Jose, CA	Atlanta, GA
Alameda, CA	Boulder, CO	East Atlanta, GA
Encinitas, CA	Canon City, CO	Marbleton, GA

Pocatello, ID	Charlotte, NC	White Haven, PA
Indianapolis East #1, IN	Asheville, NC	Hilton Head, SC
Indianapolis East #2, IN	Las Vegas, NV	Nashville, TN
Indianapolis NE, IN	Brasher Falls, NY	Austin, TX
Columbus, IN	Larchmont, NY	Dallas, TX
Wichita, KS	Flushing, NY	Grapevine, TX
Louisville, KY	Greenwich Village, NY	Houston, TX
Lafayette, LA	Dorset, OH	Plano, TX
Braintree, MA	Findlay, OH	Farmville, VA
Yarmouth, MA	Fostoria, OH	North Reston, VA
Cockeysville, MD	Lima, OH	Richmond, VA
Severna Park/Beltsville, MD	Bartlesville, OK	Virginia Beach, VA
Kalamazoo, MI	Norman, OK	Lusk, WY
Pickney, MI	Corvallis, OR	
Port Huron, MI	Medford, OR	

Foreign Countries:

Hafizabad Pakistan
Davao City Philippines
Misamis Oriental Philippines
Negros Oriental Philippines
Alingsas Sweden

Has your heart stirred recently for Christian fellowship? Have you desired to get connected again to God and the Body of Christ but don't know how? Or do you just miss a place where you can go and be accepted and loved? Then why not consider attending or starting a fellowship in your community?

It breaks my heart every time I get a call from someone looking for a fellowship when I have to tell them, "We don't have a fellowship near you at this time." Unfortunately, this happens many times a week. Have you considered that there isn't a fellowship in your community because you have not decided to start one? I assure you there are people out there looking for love and truth. If you need help with what to do to get it started, let us know.

The Lord commands us to "love one another, to serve one another, to encourage one another, and to bear one another's burdens." These are commands, not requests, and the standard of the love that we are to follow is his love, which was unto death. How can we love one another if we're not even *with* each other? I invite you to come fellow-ship with the rest of the CES Fellowship Community. You won't regret it!

Dan Gallagher

Invest in Our Youth: Help Sponsor a CES Intern

The CES Board has approved a special fund to help support our summer interns, who this year will be **Anita Graeser** and **Ryan Maher**. In addition to helping with the work of the ministry, these young people will be exposed to the international scope of our ministry and have an opportunity to do research and teaching in areas of their interest. Anita has special plans to develop materials to assist young women in their spiritual growth. Special donations can be designated to “Summer Internship Program.”

What is “Man's Basic Spiritual Problem”?

A few of us were taught (through The Way International) that “man’s most basic spiritual problem” is “the integrity of the Word,” which is not really a problem at all, but a blessing and a provision. What was really meant was that man’s basic problem is *failing to believe that the Bible has integrity*.

But there is a major downside to thinking that this is the *basic* spiritual problem of man, because it leads to the idea that the problem is one of ignorance. If a lack of knowledge of the integrity of Scripture is the problem, then *knowledge* is the solution. And if *knowledge* is the solution, then those with the most knowledge of the integrity of the Word are going to be in the best position to help others.

But those who think they are in possession of the most knowledge are also most likely to be puffed-up by that knowledge if they think that it is their special knowledge that gives them spiritual value. In a puffed-up state, they cannot truly edify others or lead them to Christ, whose burden is easy and whose yoke is light.

Actually, this whole situation has already been enacted in the Gnostic heresies of the first and second centuries. These people also believed that man's basic spiritual problem was *ignorance* of a special body of knowledge necessary for salvation and immortality. And this was not a knowledge of the Savior and his work, but a knowledge of a complicated system of passwords and keys to ascend through the levels of heaven to “the One” (i.e., “God”).

The Bible says that man's basic spiritual problem is *sin*, and the solution to this problem is not knowledge, but a *person* named Jesus Christ, who sacrificed his life in payment for that sin. Knowledge of him and his work on our behalf is important, but not as important as his personhood.

To be a part of the solution to the sin problem plaguing mankind, one needs enough knowledge to articulate the good news of Christ's accomplishments, enough to introduce another person to the one who did the work for them, namely Jesus Christ. Introducing someone to the man named Jesus Christ requires both knowledge and love, as well as a recognition that knowledge alone will not suffice to adequately represent this person named Jesus. By our love they will know we are his disciples, Jesus said in John 13:35. Many who know little, love much, and many who know much, love little.

By identifying man's basic spiritual problem as sin and not ignorance, we are able to keep Jesus Christ at the center of all our efforts to lead others to the spiritual solution to their problems. Man's basic problem is neither intellectual, for which education is the answer, nor moral, for which moral training is the answer, nor emotional, for which love is the answer. Man's basic problem is *sin*, and Jesus Christ is the only answer to that problem. That solved, man's other problems can be handled in the best way. Without that problem solved, all attempts at perfecting man and improving society are doomed from the start, as thousands of years of human history attest.

Mark Graeser

Praise for the Hope book!

I am writing to share my enjoyment of the book, *The Christian's Hope: The Anchor of the Soul* by John W. Schoenheit. I was recently loaned the book by **Eddie DeBruhl**, following a discussion we had regarding the traditionalism of mainstream Church doctrine.

The book answered many of the questions I had as a result of conflicting messages given in the various churches I have attended, as well as the varying mythology that is expressed as truth throughout our everyday lives in our interactions with other Christians. The bottom line question for many of us is, "What does the Bible *really* say about life and death, and what exactly does our Christianity mean to us in terms of the afterlife?".

Throughout the book, Mr. Schoenheit takes these questions and provides thoughtful, deep, and scripturally accurate answers. The truly amazing thing about the book is the depth of research and documentation of each of the answers. It is too easy in this day and age to take the path of least resistance and provide emotional or "politically correct" answers to questions about the Bible and what is in store for each of us; to provide the answer that "feels good," or the same answers that have been handed down, rather than what is actually written. Mr. Schoenheit disposes information in a scholarly fashion – yet in a completely readable manner – with cross-references to the Hebrew, Greek, and various modern versions of Scripture. He tactfully points out errors and omissions, mistranslations and varying punctuation, and presents what I believe to be a "cleaner" more accurate version of what is written, and as a result gives us an accurate representation of what the Bible really says about our lives here on earth and what is in store for us in the future.

This is an incredible work and one that I highly recommend to anyone who is searching for answers, and is not afraid to shed the constraints of tradition in the quest for knowledge.

Adam Brooks
Candler, NC

Family News, Views, and Feedback

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 anyone of these folks, contact us 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,

In again listening to your teaching, "Jesus Christ and You," (Jan/Feb '92) I was reminded of something that I experienced in my early twenties. At the time, I thought I was going to die--literally die. I wasn't afraid, I just thought I was a goner.

I took a boat from mainland Japan to the island of Yoron, located at the southern tip of the Ryukyu chain of islands, just north of Taiwan. Yoron is a tiny island, about 1 mi. in diameter, surrounded by coral reefs. The trip was supposed to take about 36 hours, by way of the East China Sea, but because of what I will tell you, it took much longer than that.

I boarded with the same cheap ticket as everyone else who piled into one big open space in the bottom of the boat. Upon boarding, we were each given a tatami mat and a metal bowl. It was an insubstantial little boat, which, in the middle of the night, was caught up and tossed like a cork in the blackness and torrent of a typhoon. In the innards of the boat, people were being flipped around--broken limbs--the smell of human fear and regurgitation. The air--nervous and unbearably heavy within. I pulled myself up the stairs and out onto the empty deck to greet the storm, and wedged myself between two slats in a banister. Wedged, I watched the storm in awe through the pitch blackness--waves breaking over me as cold as ice. But I felt a kind of serenity there, being wedged in. The air was violent, but fresh from its own agitation. Air I could breathe well.

As I listened to you teach about Jesus and the disciples on the boat caught in the storm, I could picture that storm rising up out of the sea as Jesus & Peter walked on the water. I've seen that kind of storm firsthand. But I also could picture myself wedged between my Father, God, and my Lord, Jesus Christ--being held-up, secured by them, flanked in the middle of chaos--and then the ensuing serenity. That is how I want to live each day--wedged in.

Heidi Brant
Tucson, AZ

Dear Sower,

I am grateful for Mark's response to D.H. in the FAQ section of the Mar/Apr 2002 *Sower*. I am just beginning to see what CES is really saying, and is about. Now my focus is more on Jesus Christ being at the center of my Christian faith. I also have a desire to be Christ-like, (the fruit of the spirit tapes are still blowing me away!). I now realize this in no way discounts the greatness of respect and hunger and need I have for the rightly-divided written Word. Also,

sharing about your trip to Tanzania and Kenya really hit it out of the park for me, like Babe Ruth on his best day.

And lastly, I am thankful for the person that was concerned enough to ask, and I pray for meekness in that person's life, and for all of us.

You and all of you are making such a difference in my life. I am so thankful!!! It's hard to tell you how much, but somehow I think you know. I am no longer anemic, but still real hungry, thanks for all the great spiritual meals I find via CES.

Beginning to get it,

Holly Pipkin
Tampa, FL

Dear Sower,

I just want to let you know that your publication releases are godly. Last week, just prior to your release announcement for the new booklet on the resurrection, our local weekly paper here in Nashville had the following headline:

"The body of Jesus is rotting in the grave if it hasn't been eaten by jackals and vultures."

This was quoted from the head of the divinity program at Vanderbilt University, who opposes the resurrection as false doctrine (frankly, I thought it was a quote from a fallen angel!).

All this to say that your work is truly relevant! I love you guys!

Ralph Graham
Nashville, TN

News and Feedback from our International Community

Dear Sower,

The greatest wealth that I am inheriting from CES is the truth that shone into my heart, dispersing the shackling traditions of men that actually occupied a bigger space in my mind in the past. Although we Filipinos generally know and acknowledge that there is God (but traditionally, God who appeared as human in Jesus) and have not been a victim of Paul's descriptions of being a Gentile in his epistles as idol worshippers, immorals, etc., yet I now realized that the Philippine Christianity that was brought to us by the Spaniards is actually a different version of heathenism. This traditional Christianity, as a system and a religion, is actually an idolatrous religion with her distorted doctrines, pagan doctrines presented as Christian doctrines.

In this regard I am so challenged how am I going to teach the truth to as many people. The books and tapes that CES are sending to us are bread to our spirit and a light to our minds and hearts. They are treasures and life to us because they give us wisdom and teachings.

I recently have listened to Karen Anne's tape of the month, "Four Keys to Evaluating Prophetic Guidance" (Jan 2002) and am so much blessed about the truth of prophecy. "Ever-Increasing Glory" (Feb 2002) is also inspiring and insightful.

John Schoenheit's Hope book is very enlightening to me. I used to believe that Heaven is the final abode of believers, although I already questioned that view in my heart, but I found no solid teaching to that until I got his book! It is really the anchor of my soul.

I am very excited about our Leadership Conference in Davao in May with John, Mark, Anita and Dan Gallagher. I am anticipating this event to be most inspiring, educational, encouraging, and full of truths prepared for our enlightenment.

Benjie Casido
Bais City, Philippines

Dear Sower,

There's so much to say to express how much my soul is thankful for all the truth I've learned via CES. Saying " Thank you" isn't even enough to show the passionate gratitude I'm feeling all the way inside. First, because of the *One God & One Lord* book, *The Contender & The Sower*, and *The Christian's Hope: The Anchor of the Soul* book! So much to thank for the efforts CES is doing to provide Truth for every seeker and additional encouragement to every believer.

I and my friends have decided to start up a fellowship here on the MSU campus. To tell you, this campus has a lot of Youth Ministries and though this is an Islamic city, we have the freedom to express the love for God even in the open-public places. In our desire to really distinguish ourselves as well as the truth we know from the errors and the traditions that are so prevailing today even here in the university. We have to move on. Knowing more about God and His Christ has led me to really speak the truth in love!

Now I've been sharing to my friends the wonderful truth that there is One God, the Father, and One Lord, Jesus, and five souls had joyfully accepted this truth. I praise God about it! I decided to have a prayer/worship meeting with my co-believers! We're gonna start next semester! We been praying for this and so I write to ask your support in prayers!

Vincent Rosales
Butuan City, Philippines

Dear Sower,

God bless you richly in Christ's wonderful name! I am a believer from Germany, and I just wanted to take the time to thank you for your two-part teaching "God Told Me To Do This Teaching" (Jan/Feb & Mar/Apr 2000) that I just finished listening to.

Since I come from a doctrinal background of teachings where micro-management was practiced from the top down (or should I say "the root up"?) these teachings have been a real delight. I now have a much better understanding of "the big picture" of God's heart and intentions.

I have been struggling lately with pressing matters in my private and professional life to the end that I haven't quite come up with a decision that I was comfortable with (and therefore made none!). Basically I think this is due to a fatalistic view of God getting involved in my life directly or indirectly only "through leadership." I am still a little afraid to make these decisions but now I will make them because these teachings gave me back the confidence to make good decisions for my life. Now for the first time I sense real freedom to go about my life with my family and to trust God while I work towards my goals and the challenges of life.

Rainer Schroeder
Pliening, Germany

Frequently Asked Questions ...

What Constitutes a Marriage?

Q. My girlfriend and I are totally in love and are committed to be together the rest of our lives. My family thinks that we should "officially" get married. Do we have to get married by a minister or a justice of the peace, or is it okay if two Christians just commit themselves privately to each other in God's sight? A.L. , CO

A. The short answer to that question is that a person should get "legally married," not just make a private commitment, and there are several reasons for that answer. Marriage is what is known as a "creation ordinance," meaning a rule that God designed for every living person, in contrast to a "Christian ordinance," or a rule applying only to Christians. When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they recognized that before Him they were to be committed to each other. Adam had been naming animals all day (the sixth day), but did not find a suitable companion for himself. He took a nap (and slept deeply) and when he woke up, to his surprise and delight, God had made a companion for him that was so suitable that he gave her a very revealing name: "She shall be called *ishshah* [female man] for she was taken out of *ish* [man]" (Gen. 2:23b).

God made Adam and Eve (and men and women) to be pair companions, and He brought them together to be "one flesh." Adam and Eve had no ceremony or witnesses, but for a good reason: there was no one else around. The special relationship between the woman and the man was

immediately recognized, and Eve is called “wife” (or “his woman”) and Adam is called “husband” (or “her man”) while the two of them were still in the Garden (Gen. 2:24 and 25; 3:6,8,16,17,21).

Because it was clear that God brought the first man and woman together in a permanent relationship, the occasion of a couples pairing up (marriage) has always had a very special significance. It did not take long before there was a “marriage ceremony,” complete with accepted cultural customs. Knowing mankind’s penchant for pomp and ceremony, my guess would be that even when Cain took a wife, there was probably some kind of ceremony (Gen. 4:17). In any case, marriage ceremonies complete with gifts for the bride, dowry for the bride’s family, and wedding feasts are all mentioned in Genesis. Weddings, both simple and elaborate, are also mentioned in the ancient records from Egypt, Babylon, Sumer, and other ancient cultures.

It also did not take long before the concepts of fornication, adultery, and divorce were clearly formed. These are mentioned early in the biblical text, and also in the ancient texts from other cultures. It is significant that the common point of all these definitions is the marriage. Fornication is sex before marriage, adultery is illicit sex while married, and divorce is the dissolution of the marriage. The fact that the marriage is the defining point of all these activities reveals the importance of the formally recognized marriage. If who is married and who is not married is not clear, then neither are the commandments that are defined by the marriage relationship. Although our modern society recognizes a “common law marriage,” that does not occur in the Bible. At the very least, the bride and her parents wanted some recognition that the girl was married.

The wedding ceremony served many purposes, including letting people know who was married to whom, avoiding appearances of evil and accusations of adultery (2 Sam. 3:7 and 8), maintaining proper order and behavior in society, providing a time for the relatives to get to know each other (which was very important since many marriages were really about power and economics—1 Kings 3:1), and providing memories that would be a blessing throughout the marriage, especially for the bride (Jer. 2:32). These things are still important in our modern society, and so we will examine them.

In order to maintain the proper order in a society, people must obey the just laws of their land. The laws of the United States (and most countries) recognize marriage, and also recognize a “common law” marriage if a couple has lived together for a long time. God’s Word instructs Christians to obey the laws of the land (Rom. 13:1-8; 1 Pet. 2:13), and living together without being officially married, although it is done all the time, is not keeping the law. Furthermore, Christians are to “be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody” (Rom 12:17b). If a Christian couple starts living together after making a personal but not a public commitment, that certainly is not doing what is right in the eyes of everyone. In point of fact, it looks like fornication and is a very poor witness to both other Christians and non-Christians. Many people reject Christianity because they think Christians are hypocrites, but the marriage ceremony lets everyone know of the couple’s intent to live together as husband and wife.

Anyone desiring to be married without a formal legal recognition of the marriage should carefully consider the reasons for this decision. Couples who live together without a formal marriage are much more likely to have serious trouble than couples who are married, and, adding insult to injury, if they do go on to get officially married, studies show they are not as happy as couples that got married from the start (See footnote 7, *Sex and Scripture*). Surely a Christian couple should want to give their relationship every possible chance to succeed.

Perhaps the word “why” is at the core of the entire question about having a marriage ceremony. If the couple intends to stay together, why *not* get legally married? Yes, there are a few exceptional cases in which some legal or social entanglement keeps people from formally marrying, but I think in those cases the Lord would ask them to wait, and would bless them for doing so.

There are many reasons why couples who are not formally married have more problems than those who do. For one thing, living together is difficult, and many times it is the difficulty and pain of divorce that keeps people from calling an end to their marriage, thus giving them time to work things out. A couple not formally married has an “easy out” to walk away from the relationship, and many people take it. There is usually confusion and even embarrassment among friends and family about the relationship. There are also more difficult legal issues. Having an official marriage can be especially important with in-law relationships. Having solid relationships with in-laws contributes greatly to the richness of any marriage.

The official marriage ceremony is also a source of wonderful memories that help to anchor the relationship and build the bond that exists between the couple. It also provides a forum for family and Christian brethren to witness the vows the couple makes to one another, and obligates them to help the couple stay faithful to these vows.

Studies show that there is also a greater amount of sexual promiscuity outside of a paired relationship than there is adultery among people who are officially married. Sexual infidelity is very hurtful to any couple, and is a sin against God. Most men freely admit that the main reason they live with women without marrying them is the availability of sex. Furthermore, without the formal marriage, the temptation to sleep around on your partner is greatly increased, partly by friends and acquaintances who do not honor the relationship and “hit on you.”

So, why get formally married? It is the law of the land, it is clearly doing what is right in the eyes of God, and it gives your relationship the best possible chance for success.

John Schoenheit

West Coast “Strong in Faith” Conference A Groundbreaking Event

The recent Western Regional Conference was a groundbreaking weekend. The theme was “Strong in Faith,” and it was definitely a faith-building experience. Actually, “experience” is probably a better word than “conference” to describe what it was. It was a new kind of conference for CES in many ways. Of course, the best of CES was still represented with powerful, solid Bible teachings, but it was more than just a meeting with teachings. In order to help understand more about how faith works and to help build faith, there were a number of interactive experiences throughout the weekend. One of the other things that was distinctive was the impact of so many new people there. There were more than 40 people who had never attended a CES event and they brought a diversity that was truly refreshing.

Friday morning was dedicated to faith as it relates to our self-worth. The session started off with a bang with **John Lynn** teaching “The Battle of the Minds,” about the power of self-talk. It was followed by a testimonial by **Song Oh**, who recently became a Christian after having a life that seemed perfect from the outside but left her empty on the inside. Next there was a poignant dramatization of a real life incident in which **Comika Griffin** changed the focus of her self-worth from success at acting to seeking God first. The morning ended with a writing exercise on two questions: “What do you like about yourself?” and “What does God like about you?”

Friday afternoon took us into a deeper reflection as **Mark Graeser** taught on trust and trustworthiness. To further understand how trust works, we did two trust exercises. In the first one, Mark had everyone pair up with someone who they didn’t know very well and fall back into their arms past the point of no return. Then people were to pair up with someone they knew and do the same thing. Everyone talked about how easy or difficult it was to trust and that who we are trusting is very important. The more we know a trustworthy person, the more trust we have in him—and this is how we grow in trust of God and Jesus—by knowing them personally.

In the next exercise people paired up and one person was blindfolded while the other partner led them around the hotel using only their voice. We broke out into discussion groups afterward to talk about how the exercise showed us things about how we trust or don’t trust God and others. Both of the exercises were very revealing, and many people kept referring back to the lessons learned in them throughout the weekend.

Friday evening was an emotional time. It began with erecting a 10’ tall wooden cross built by **Adam Berwid**. It was significant that the cross was the centerpiece for the evening since Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith and for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. Everything during the evening was focused on Jesus and what he did for us and is doing. **Comika Griffin** danced to “I Love You for the Cross,” which brought many to tears. It was particularly moving because she just came to know Jesus when she got saved at the Women’s Conference five months earlier. Then **Nancy Berwid** taught on “A Little Bit of Faith Goes a Long Way.” She encouraged people that God is willing and able to help us and told stories of some of God’s great deliverance and power. She then led people in a ceremony called “casting all your care.” There were stones placed in the aisle representing burdens that people could bring

to the cross and lay them there. If anyone felt he had a burden too heavy to carry to the Lord on their own, he could have someone help him take it to the cross. This was a powerful time of healing and deliverance.

Later that night **Karen Anne Graeser** talked about personal prophecy and taught and demonstrated the presence and power of personal prophecy in the Church today. Prophecy was then made available via prophecy teams for anyone who wanted a prophetic word. Many people were buzzing later about the impact of the words they received.

Saturday morning was a high time. We started out with **John Truitt** teaching about “Prophecy and the Power of God in the Church.” Then we had **John Schoenheit** teaching “The Bible, You Can Believe It,” very persuasive even to the most skeptical people attending. The morning was topped off with people turning in their Bible questions and John and Mark answering them. It really illustrated that the Bible holds up to scrutiny and that we can trust in it.

That afternoon was dedicated to faith in community. First **Paul Keniston** taught on “Faith In Friendships.” Then **Dan Gallagher** taught about “Faith in Community.” He talked about the value of “one anothering,” which became a big topic of conversation throughout the weekend. Mark then led everyone in an exercise that helped people connect. He had us pretend that the room was a map of the USA and had people go to different places that were significant to them. First he had everyone go to where their mothers were born and when they got there to talk to everyone in that vicinity about their mother. It then moved into many other topics that facilitated intimate conversation, such as “where did you feel closest to God.” It was a fun and creative exercise that helped people see the importance of “one anothering.” People then met with those others in the area where they live now and talked about “one anothering” and ideas to build community in the local areas.

Saturday evening was a time that won’t soon be forgotten. Everyone gathered for a banquet dinner and coffee house. The evening started with an assortment of great musical talent: **Kristina Perez, Dave and Carol Demars, Paul Dionisio, Brad Rowland, John Truitt, and Rich Duffy.** Then some of the young people in the San Jose CES church did a dramatic presentation called “East Side Story” about a girl from the ghetto who came to Christ and then spoke the Word to her friends. The theme verse was Romans 5:8 “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” It really got the message across.

One of the highlights of the weekend was that night, when four more people who recently came to Christ gave their testimonies. They were from completely different backgrounds and life experiences, but all were transformed by making Jesus Lord. First **Joanne Perez**, who is 20 years old, shared about being hurt in a relationship with a boyfriend and how much her life changed when she looked to her Lord for the love she was yearning for. Then **Daniel Zacapa** gave his testimony of coming to Christ recently and how, when he surrendered to his Lord, his acting career turned around and he booked a lead role on a TV series. He brought his daughter to the conference in the hopes that she would get saved and she did, right before he gave his testimony. Then **Comika Griffin**, who is a young actress who has co-starred on a couple of TV series, shared her story of getting saved at the Women’s Conference in the same hotel in November. She talked about the peace she had when she learned that it was the Devil and not God who was responsible for all the evil in the world. Next, her fiancé **Chris Beaudry**, who is a

Ph.D. scientist, shared about how much his life had changed since he was saved. He talked about his natural skepticism and how liberating it was to find out the Bible was logical.

Mark then talked about what happens to people who aren't saved and how we can trust that God will judge them justly. Then Nancy Berwid spoke about it being an easier choice to say "yes" to the Lord Jesus' invitation. She talked about Jesus' invitation to be yoked with Him and what that symbolized, and invited those who had not yet made Jesus Lord to come forward and declare "Jesus is Lord." To symbolize being yoked with Him, each person that came forward was given a cross necklace. It was an emotional and inspiring moment to see people enter into receiving everlasting life. After the new people came forward to say "Jesus is Lord," there was an invitation to anyone else who wanted to recommit their lives to Jesus Christ and be "yoked together with Him."

The weekend closed out with four wonderful teachings that focused on commissioning everyone to act on what they heard. **Robert Witt** of Austin, TX taught on "Opening Doors for Fellowship: a Leap of Faith." He spoke about his and his wife Debbie's experiences in getting a fellowship started in Austin, Texas. **Debbie Witt** taught on "Synergism and a Sacred Trust." **Adam Berwid** taught on "Faith in Obedience" and his own learning that God's Word is faithful when we walk out on it. Then **Karen Anne Graeser** gave a rousing close to the weekend by sharing on "Strong in Faithfulness." She focused on Hebrews 12, exhorting us to continue faithfully following "the Living Word," the Lord Jesus Christ.

The past year, beginning with the Women's Conferences, we are experiencing a gradual shift from a strong teaching orientation at our events to a more multifaceted approach to ministry. This is in keeping with the sense we have that the Lord is directing us to a cooperative effort of many gifts in the Body of Christ. This results in an experience that ministers to people on many levels. This was certainly true of this conference, as we all became "stronger in faith."

May Tape of the Month

"The Joy & Rewards of Sexual Purity"

Three dynamic women from the CES community team up to encourage the listeners, to remain sexually pure, or to receive God's forgiveness and then make a new commitment to sexual purity. Nancy Berwid speaks of God's design for sexuality to be expressed in marriage, and shares her inspiring testimony about her experience of God restoring her to a place of purity after many years of disobedience to God's Word.

Karen Theisen shares from her wealth of experience studying this subject biblically and teaching sexual abstinence to teenagers. Kathy Lunardini, an experienced public health nurse, then shares on sexually transmitted diseases (this part is graphic, and parental discretion is advised). Taken together, these sharings provide a powerful and persuasive package that will help anyone, but especially young people, get on the right track and glorify God with their God-designed bodies.

(You can order a tape for only \$4.00 or a CD for only \$6.00)

Listeners' Responses!

I have to tell you how much I've been blessed by listening to the May tape of the month. And I just wanted to thank CES and all the women involved for putting this crucial subject matter on a CES tape of the month. Bravo!!

Furthermore, it's done so well and in such good taste that I've been able to play it for my 15 year old daughter and she has greatly enjoyed listening to it and is really soaking up this biblical-based teaching. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Beth Jackson
San Diego, CA

God bless you all. I just received and listened to the new tape of the month. I am blessed. Needless to say, I cried when I heard the teaching. If I had had this information as a teen, I would have avoided a lot of heartache in my life.

Nancy's sharing is so right on, about feelings and emotions, and how sexual activity before marriage impairs one's judgment. Her sharing is timely, as well as the information by Karen and Kathy.

CES is providing a wonderful service to believers. The variety of topics shared is so helpful. Being a woman, I especially appreciate the sharings by women. We need more of that. There is still a lot of controversy regarding the role of women in the ministry.

(We apologize to the author but we have misplaced your name)