



THE SOWER

Volume 6, Issue 4

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Jul/Aug 2004

Searching for Truth Wherever It Can Be Found

Dear Saint,

God's abundant blessings to you and yours.

As you may know, I (Mark) recently completed my second full year at Earlham School of Religion, and am now past the halfway point toward my Master of Divinity (M. Div.) degree. Because I am doing this not for my own benefit so much as for the benefit of the ministry, I feel obligated to keep you informed about what I am learning that is of help to us all. Please bear with me as I chronicle some of the things that I have learned since last reporting to you in the March/April 2003 Sower.

My *History of Christianity II* class deepened my convictions that our ministry is continuing the process whereby the Lord is restoring truth to his Church. I have also seen that Church history seems to revolve around certain common themes, or "streams" of thought, and new movements are likely to arise when balance is needed. One of these streams is the perceived responsibility of the Church to steward "the apostle's doctrine." Differing visions of what in fact constitutes the true apostolic tradition has frequently divided the Church, as has the question of on what authority the Church claims its affinity with the early apostles. Reformers asserted the



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sole authority of the Scripture, where Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches made historical claims to be the rightful heirs of apostolic succession.

Another stream is the "experiential," the idea that believers must have an authentic faith that is lived out, and not just held as agreement with doctrinal truths or some idea of "orthodoxy." The Pietists were those who insisted that one's faith must be validated by practice, and that one's relationship with God should be demonstrable by works of charity, etc. They were among those who emphasized genuine experience over dogma.

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Another stream is the “mystical,” that is, emphasizing the role of direct revelation in the Christian experience. Over and over again, men and women in the Church have claimed to have been visited by God or Jesus and told what constitutes true spirituality. There have always been those who would follow such people, believing that they are truly in touch with God and are in some way His messengers or true representatives.

Spirit & Truth Fellowship International remains committed to searching for truth wherever it can be found, and to gathering it into a coherent whole that can set people free from the excesses of religious traditions, legalism, experientialism (elevating experience above Scripture), or any other “isms.” By studying history, we can learn from the mistakes of the past and have a better opportunity to teach and live a balanced view of the various streams of Christian thought that each have some value.

I have found the study of Church history to be both helpful and supportive of our ministry goals, doctrinal stance, and the balance of Scripture, reason, and spirituality. Because I am taught a contextual approach to the study of history at ESR, I have also profited by being more sympathetic to those key historical figures like St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and others who were responding to issues the best they knew within their historical context. Though in hindsight we can identify many errors they introduced into Christianity, we can refrain from the arrogant notion that we might have done better. **We need to be preoccupied with restoring and propagating truth, not assigning blame and pointing fingers.**

I plan to take one more history course, a comparative study of the various forms of denominational church polity (or governance) in

order to make a proposal for an appropriate form of polity for our ministry as it grows. Better to learn from the mistakes and experience of other groups as their theories of church governance have been tested through time. We may arrive at a form that has never been tried before, but at least we can arrive at it by means of a thorough study of this aspect of Church history.

Introduction to Old Testament History and Literature was a course I took online through a software program called “BlackBoard,” a program used by many colleges and universities to allow their professors to offer courses to non-resident students. I have now had several such courses, and I can see us offering something like this in the near future. I have recently discovered an even more cost-effective program called “Moodle” that makes it a realistic possibility that we can offer courses online to people inside and outside of our community.

The Old Testament course was a good overview, containing some significant insights about the historical development of the Old Testament. Though I was the only student arguing for the historical accuracy of the Old Testament, I felt respected and understood for the most part. One of the more endearing qualities of Quakers is their capacity to respect those with whom they have significant disagreements. That is one of the main reasons I chose to study at ESR. I have been able to thoughtfully and honestly present my own views in a way that shows me that our biblical beliefs are both defensible and intellectually respectable.

Discernment of Gifts and Callings was one of my favorite classes so far. We were introduced to the Quaker process of discernment that occurs in what is called a “clearness committee.” The class culminated with such a committee of our choosing, clerked by someone with experience in this Quaker practice. I found it an intensely

edifying experience, and affirming of the leading from the Lord that I was interested in testing against this group of spiritually sensitive friends. A book I have been recommending is *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, by Suzanne Farnham and others who have surveyed the classic Christian literature for insights into the discernment process.

I am interested in how we might incorporate the clearness committee idea into our community as yet another way to help each other discern and clarify the leading of the Lord. I have often observed that prophecy often addresses spiritual potential and long-term leadings, but sometimes we also need something that can help us discern and confirm our next step in life. For instance, Quakers have traditionally called clearness committees before taking major steps in their lives, like marriage, a career change, a launching into ministry, etc. It is felt that a genuine leading will be discerned and corroborated by others in whom is the spirit of God, and that such major life steps ought not be undertaken without the support of a loving and discerning community.

The Work of the Pastor was a two-semester course that provided a wealth of insight and information about successful long-term spiritual leadership. The first course was largely about learning to take precautions against burnout, setting boundaries, and various aspects of self-care for ministers. The research shows that pastoral ministry can be hazardous to one’s health and the health of one’s family because it is a job that never ends—spiritual leaders are expected to be constantly on call.

The second semester dealt with the kinds of work that ministers do, including premarital ministry, weddings, funerals, child dedications, getting a job as a pastor/spiritual leader, and saying goodbye to a

church when it's time to move on. For those of us who were brought up in a centrally organized, authoritarian organizational structure, the idea of being invited to serve in a community is a foreign one. But for most Christian organizations and churches, this is the common pattern. A church issues a call for a minister, and candidates then approach the church to see if there is a match between church and potential minister. They call this the "candidating process." If local church and minister seem simpatico, the minister accepts the call and begins to minister there.

As our ministry grows, we will need to train people to be qualified ministers of the Gospel. We have a responsibility to do our best to qualify and encourage people who have demonstrated spiritual gifts within our community and who have a desire to serve others the Bread of Life. But we must never demean the integrity of the local fellowship by assuming that we know what spiritual leader/minister would be best to serve them, or assign a leader to an area that does not want one. We must let people formulate a request for spiritual leadership, and simply facilitate the process by which they choose a minister.

Leadership and Organizational Behavior was the title of a class that explored the business leadership literature for insights that might be applied to spiritual leadership. It was a gold mine of information and insights into the leadership development process, presenting a number of theories of what makes effective leaders. Though there is still significant disagreement among researchers and theorists, the growing consensus seems to be that leadership is to a great extent learned, and can be greatly enhanced by understanding how groups can be influenced.

I also found it interesting that systems theory has expanded the notion of leadership to include the

group itself in its own leadership, rather than following traditional thinking that leadership must be embodied in a single individual. Research shows that the best leaders are those who are able to unite people around a shared vision, a vision not necessarily developed or originated by the leader. Leaders are simply those who can articulate the vision in a way that motivates others to be a part of it.

I was also surprised to learn that it was one of the big names in the business management literature, a Quaker named Robert Greenleaf, who coined and popularized the term "servant-leader" based upon his understanding of biblical values. Though he applied his insights first to a business environment, they quickly caught on for application in the Church. We ourselves adopted the term "servant-leader" a couple of years ago to describe our ideal of spiritual leadership.

In addition to my regular course work, I have been able to participate to some extent in community mediation, and am working toward a certification in mediation. I see this as a very helpful skill for people in our community to have, because when we serve the Lord we will often find ourselves in the middle of conflict.

So that brings you up to date on my work at ESR, and I hope you can see the potential benefit to our faith community. I am doing my best to balance out my work at ESR with my regular duties as the President of Spirit & Truth/Christian Educational Services. I would appreciate your prayers for me during the next two years as I work to complete my degree without giving my family or the ministry short shrift.

Much love,

Mark

Have You Heard These Teaching Tapes?

What Is Christian Leadership? (Jul/Aug 98)

You can see by this title that it addresses an issue of indescribable importance to every Christian. This teaching is for anyone aspiring to Christian leadership, as well as for any believers who have been abused by Christian leaders and who are now suspicious of or even negative toward the whole idea of leadership in the Church. We are enthused about what this teaching can do for your relationship with God, the Lord Jesus and your Christian brethren. By John Lynn

Christian Leadership: Living in Balance (Sep/Oct 00)

This teaching takes a practical and insightful look at the leadership principles revealed in Titus 1:9 and Acts Chapter 6, when the apostles faced their first internal crisis. A segment of the Christian community was being neglected as a function of their rapid growth, and strategic delegation was the solution.

The application of these principles to the ministry of CES is then explored, and with it the need for others with ministries to be recognized and given responsibility for the work generated by the accurate teaching of God's Word. The concept of balance is then identified as a major component of healthy teaching, which is the essence of true Christian leadership according to Titus 1:9. By Mark Graeser

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Report on Dallas Praise & Worship Conference, August 13-15



The second annual Praise and Worship Conference opened with a contingent from Northern California leading us in worship, with a little help from their friends. The Californians were Rachel Graf, Brad and Lynn Rowland, Trina Hassen, and Mike Spiteri, and were joined by Pat Deasey and Andra Bennett of Dallas, and Billy Darr from the Home Office on drums. Together they made a dynamic team that wonderfully led us to connect first with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in both praise and worship, and then designated a time of praise and worship of our wonderful Heavenly Father. It was powerful to be in a worship service where both God and the Lord Jesus were differentiated and honored for the unique and amazing persons that each of them is.

Mark Graeser opened the conference Friday night with a teaching on worshiping in spirit and truth, and reminded us that John 4:23 and 24 emphasize that God seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. He also made it clear that God looks on the heart and is not committed to any one form of worship. It is very possible to emphasize the *form* of worship (silence, rock music, no music, dance, structured liturgy, no dancing, etc.) more than the way the heart participates in whatever worship is employed.

That God considers worship our number one priority is also clear from looking at the phrase “Ministering to the Lord,” and Mark shared some

insights in a book by that name, written by Roxanne Brant. Many thanks to Mick Heron of Dublin Ireland for recommending it to us!

Mark also took us to Job 1:30 and showed that Job worshiped God even when calamity struck him, and questioned whether we would do the same. Mark said he felt like a “fair weather worshiper” who is most worshipful when things are going well, and challenged us to be prepared to worship at all times and in all seasons of life. Paul and Silas worshiped God while in prison in Acts 16, not in order to get the prison doors to open, but to worship God despite their circumstances.

Mark closed the evening by giving everyone the opportunity to participate in a ceremonial cleansing of whatever stops us from giving our whole heart to God. We wrote down the things that hinder us and made commitments to overcome those things, then brought them up to throw them in a garbage can in the front of the room. The garbage can seemed like an appropriate symbol for the “junk” in our lives that keeps us from moving ahead with God and His Son.

On Saturday morning we entered into another wonderful time of worship and praise to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, led by Pat Deasey and “Desert Rain,” a group of musicians and worshipers in the Dallas area. John Truitt then did a masterful teaching on the biblical words for worship, and helped us to understand the difference between the way we worship Jesus Christ in his exalted “kingly” position and the way we worship God who is the One and Only True God. He pointed out that in the Old Testament times it was often the case that there were two “kings” or rulers at the same time, much like the Pharaoh and Joseph, or *Yahweh* and King David.

Again this year we had the following “Worship Workshops” (say

that 10 times as fast as you can):

- Worship in expressive movement
- Worship in flags & streamers
- Worship in a home fellowship setting
- Worship leading as a calling
- Speaking forms and styles of worship: an overview in tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Contemplative worship: practices & disciplines
- Dramatic arts in worship
- Worship musicians

After a delightful dinner we shared together, we went into a coffee house setting where everyone who wanted to could bring their worship offerings to the stage and bless God and the Body of Christ. A tremendous assortment of talent was assembled there, and we laughed, cried, sang our hearts out, and just generally had a wonderful time together for about 2 1/2 hours. After that we had a time of ministering, teaming up to pray and minister to those who requested it. God was faithful to speak to many hearts and heal many infirmities. We are excited to hear more reports of all that the Lord energized that night in the hearts, minds, and bodies of those we prayed for.

Sunday morning, Debora Paules led worship by taking us to a number of classic Christian hymns, and telling us a little about the people who wrote them. She also pointed out that there are hundreds of thousands of Christian hymns that have been written, and many are still played and sung, and that these represent the whole range of human experience in worship: joy, sorrow, thanksgiving, supplication, etc. She also pointed out that many of them were on the cutting edge of their time musically. “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” is the result of Martin Luther putting his inspired words to the tune of a popular German beer-drinking song in his day and time.

Mark led the group in a meditation, asking us to deeply relax our bodies and minds and picture ourselves as a holy place of worship, and as acting like Jesus Christ, and other things suggested by Scripture. After this Mark read with us a number of responsive readings from a congregational hymn book, including Psalm 150, the Apostle's Creed, and a wonderful prayer that all Christians could pray (with a slight modification of Trinitarian language). He again asked us to note that these forms have been meaningfully employed in worship for centuries, so we could do it for one morning without it crippling our spirituality.

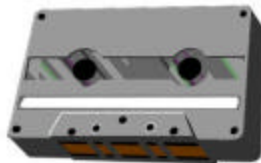
He challenged us to be open to a wide variety of forms of worship and not get stuck in our personal preferences. There is a time and a place for virtually all forms of Christian worship. Afterward, some people reported that they really didn't like the form of responsive reading because it reminded them of their denominational background, but they could see that they might have overreacted.

Mark then exhorted us to have a passion for the genuine unity of the Body of Christ, and to receive the elements of communion in its ceremonial form in recognition of the centuries-old practice in Christian history. To further add to the feeling of heritage, the bread used in the ceremony was matzo, unleavened bread in the Jewish tradition that can be meaningful to Christians as a symbol of our commitment to remove sin from our hearts.

We plan to continue to have a worship and praise event every year because it is a wonderful reminder that we need to "keep first things first." We also want to have a venue wherein our devoted worshipers and worship leaders of tomorrow can come and share their passion. Keep your ear to the ground as to the

location of next year's conference, and make plans to attend.

Oldies But Goodies



Let Us Praise (Nov/Dec 93)

Throughout the Bible, God commands His people to praise Him. Why? This teaching suggests an answer to that question. It focuses on praise, worship and thanksgiving toward God as fundamental to a Christian's emotional, mental and spiritual health. It shows how praise helps to "pull down strongholds," both in our own minds and in the realm of spiritual warfare. It shows how praise can lead to a life full of joy by helping a Christian focus on God and the Lord Jesus Christ rather than on negative circumstances or his own human weaknesses. Praise God! By John Lynn

Stretching for the Lord (Jul/Aug 95)

Did you know there are stretching exercises in the Bible, and that stretching one's faith is directly parallel to stretching one's muscles? This is perhaps one of the most applicable teachings you have ever heard, and is presented with much humor designed to make the key points stay with you. God will ask you to stretch, and thus be uncomfortable, but if you simply obey Him, you will become more flexible and strong in your faith. By John Lynn

90 minute teaching, \$4.00 plus S&H
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2004

Calendar Corner



October 6-10
 Fall Men's Conference
 Bloomington, IN

October 22-24*
 Northwest Regional Conference
 Vancouver, WA

November 5-7*
 New England Regional Conference
 Mansfield, MA

~~**November 12-14**~~
 West Coast Women's Conference
 San Jose, CA

There will be no Women's Conference this year due to the Vancouver, WA Conference

December 30 to January 2
 Midwest Live Out Loud
 Teens & Twenties Conference
 Kalamazoo, MI

Register online at
www.CESonline.org
 or call us toll free at:
 888-255-6189 M-F 8:30 to 5

* See flyers in this issue!



ON the EDGE

All of John Lynn's *On the Edge* articles are now available on:

www.TruthOrTradition.com

Some of the articles you will find are:

- *Getting in Touch with Jesus*
- *Growth vs. Comfort*
- *Life is a Contact Sport*
- *Magnifying God's Love For You*
- *Careless and "Carefull"*

In order to read the articles just log on to www.TruthOrTradition.com click on the TOPICS link and go to "On the Edge."

Testimonies From The Outreach Program

Spirit & Truth Ambassador Program Update

[Sergio Contreras, Suzanne Hall, and David Harris are our Outreach Ambassadors who made a one year commitment (from July of this year to next) to share God's Word, and they are in Nashville, TN. Please keep them in your prayers.]

Dear Sower,

This is a brief summary of what the Ambassador program has been for me so far.

It started with a week long training that was really amazing. I learned so much about myself and the way I relate to the world and others and also to Jesus. I was really challenged and stretched and I think I grew a lot just in that week. It was also a lot of fun. :) I had a really good time getting to know David and Serge better and also getting to spend so much time with Nancy, Mark, Dan and all the other awesome people who came in to teach and support us. I was really, really blessed.

On Friday we went to downtown Bloomington to witness to people. It was so awesome. We got into many interesting and powerful conversations with people and got to see the different ideas that are out there about God, Jesus, the Bible etc. The coolest part to me was talking to this guy, John. He told me about how he grew up in foster care and had sort of a hard life, but felt like God was trying to tell him something. It's a long story but I ended up getting to pray for him, and his heart was just so touched by the love and power of God that I shared with him. It was so

rewarding and meaningful to me.

We got to Nashville on Saturday and went out witnessing on Sunday. That was pretty amazing, too. We went downtown and I listened to and talked to a lot of homeless people. I prayed for an old man and that was really cool. I also met this really cool kid whose street name was "Truth." He was very intelligent and interesting, and I could just tell he was looking for something deeper. We talked for a while about spiritual things, and then I showed him what speaking in tongues was like. He was pretty blown away. I'm hoping to meet up with him again later this week. Please pray for him if you think about it.

There are a lot of searching and hungry people out there who need to be loved and need truth in their lives. You can make the difference in their lives. Also, I want to encourage you to consider being an Ambassador next year. So far it has totally rocked my world, and it has already begun to make my faith stronger and more sure. I think it would be a great thing to do in between high school and college. Anyway, we'll be keeping you updated throughout the year.

Suzanne Hall
Nashville, TN

Today the three of us went out to witness. We had planned on going to a park, but Serge really had a feeling that we should go to the mall. I personally do not like this mall, and almost every time we go to witness there I get discouraged because people just seem to be dead. Anyway, we went there. I personally went with a feeling of dread and cynicism. (Such great faith I have...)

So-o-o... I talked to a few people there, had a couple of blah, blah, blah kind of conversations. Then I saw a friend of a friend working in the coffee place and went to talk to him. We got into a good conversation about God, grace, etc. While we were talking, his co-worker came up and started listening to our conversation. She interrupted me and said, "Do you just go into random places to talk to people?" And I said, "Well... kind of..." Then she cut me off again and said, "Because I really feel like there's a reason you came in here."

She proceeded to tell me that she had had a horrible day, and that she just really felt like she needed God—an evangelist's dream. :)

I had an awesome conversation with her. She was very blessed and so was I. Both she and the guy offered me their phone numbers and asked me to call them when we were having the next fellowship or just to get together. It was so wonderful.

God is so awesome. I can't believe how He works with me and in me even when I'm being a brat. I'm starting to see that a big part of serving is simply "showing up for work," so to speak.

Suzanne Hall
Nashville, TN

For more information on the
Outreach Program please contact
Nancy Berwid at:
mender4@aol.com
or
call the Home Office at:
888-255-6189, M-F 8:30 to 5

Camp Vision Needs Your Help

I want to take this opportunity to thank the saints here in Indiana for all the help and support you have given to my family this past year. We could not have made it without you. We are settling in nicely here at Camp Vision, and I have no doubt that this is exactly where God would have us be. The boys are having a great time, they are getting big and healthy, and their days are full of awe and wonder at what God has created in nature. My relationship with God and the Lord Jesus gets sweeter every day when I turn around and see them there beside me. We have fellowship in our home on Thursday evening and I'd like to invite everyone nearby to come anytime, we'd all be blessed.

I believe Dan Gallagher was inspired to buy this land and to build a community of believers, and that vision is contagious—a number of us have caught it. I believe CES will purchase it, and I am truly blessed at this time to be able to sow into this land. My time and giving is often limited being a single mom for now.

The Schoenheits' are only one family whose giving continuously exceeds what is imaginable. The office staff is maxed out and I know how busy our families are. That being said, I hope I do not offend anyone with the plan I was inspired to propose when I saw John Schoenheit & Shawn Mercer, our teachers and scholars, hauling tables for the Teens & Twenties Camp. There are other members of this body who can help with the labor for our various activities that we are all blessed by, teaching and learning the Word so we can share it and people can get saved and join us.

Without getting off on too much of a tangent I'd like to propose that the first week of each month be a

time where any saints who want to could come down in groups, singles, families, etc., however they'd like, and give their talent and fulfill whatever the need is. Come and get healed, be blessed in your giving, bring a picnic, a tent if need be.

I want to continue to enjoy events like this years Fields of Grace. I want my boys to attend the Teens & Twenties Camp someday. This is our family and we are God's family. I believe Camp Vision is a holy place, and one that would serve as a witness to believers and unbelievers. What do you think?

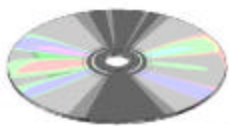
My number is (812) 339-3571, please call me if you would like to get involved.

Christine Kuhl
Bloomington, IN

Free Indeed on Hold

The *Free Indeed* video series is currently on hold due to the Schoenheit's move to Bloomington, IN. As soon as they are setup to be able to record, more videos will become available.

Buy 9, Get 3 Free!!! New Price on Tape/CD of the Month Subscriptions



The Tape/CD of the Month subscriptions have been reduced. A year's subscription for tapes is now only \$36 (plus S&H), and only \$54 (plus S&H) for CDs. And, as always, the subscription is free with the Partnership Plan.



In Memoriam

The Word of God makes it very clear that death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), and that Satan holds the power of death (Heb. 2:14). It also assures us that one day both the Devil and death will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). For this we thank God, who willingly gave His Son to die in our place, and we thank the Lord Jesus Christ, who willingly gave up his own life, trusting that God would keep His promise and raise him from the dead.

Whenever a believer dies, it is fitting for those who knew him or her to remember, to grieve, and to give thanks. It is fitting to remember how the person touched our lives, what they gave to us and we to them. It is fitting to grieve their death, which is our loss, and to say goodbye. And it is fitting to give thanks for the life they had and the life they will have when the Lord Jesus appears.

Dennis Lee Edwards
Houston, Texas
Born February 16, 1948
Died July 22, 2004

Ralph M. (Bud) Reahard
Indianapolis, Indiana
Born May 12, 1919
Died August 15, 2004

For further study on "What happens if you die," please visit:

www.TruthOrTradition.com

Also, under the FAQ section there is an excellent article on "To Grieve or not to Grieve."



Check out some of our new bookstore items!!!

New Seminar: Dating, Courtship, and Engagement: A Journey in Preparing for Marriage

Ever dream about having an amazing marriage? Most people do, but successful marriages are few and far between, and most people don't even know what it takes to have one. In this seminar, Adam and Nancy Berwid show how responsible dating can prepare your heart for marriage by helping you to get to the place where you can choose a person who is right for you, and becoming a person who is right for another.

Some of the topics they cover are: Why dating? When should people date? What kind of people should we date? What about unbelievers? How do you discern between personal tastes and real character flaws? What about physical/sexual boundaries? Should we get engaged, and when?

Romance was designed by God to be a blessing! He made both male and female and proclaimed them "very good." He wants to bless us and grant us the desires of our hearts with relationships that are full and fulfilling, but to have that requires us to be wise in the process of cultivating such relationships. Even though "dating" didn't happen in biblical times, the Bible does have a lot of practical things to say about how we should relate to each other and walk in love, and the Berwids contend that these things can and should be applied to dating relationships.

\$12.00 (plus S&H) for a three tape set or two CDs.
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SEMINAR link at: www.CESonline.org,
call us toll free at
888-255-6189, M-F 8:30 to 5, or
see page 4 of the enclosed price list.

New Book: Bible Manners & Customs

A revision of *Bible Manners and Customs*
by G. M. Mackie, © 1898
expanded by John W. Schoenheit

"People" magazine, and many others, owe their successful existence to the fact that we human beings like to know about other people. Readers enjoy stories about famous (and even not so famous) people. The Bible is full of people whose lives, and even thoughts, are open before us. All of the drama of life is set before us in the Bible: love and hate, laughter and despair, hope and fear. The better we know the people of the Bible, the more interesting it is, the more fun it is to read, and the more we can learn as we read it. But the people of the Bible lived in a culture that was very different from ours. If we are going to know the people of the Bible, indeed, if we are going to understand the Bible itself, it is imperative that we learn something about the manners and customs of biblical times.

Imagine trying to understand modern culture without knowing how we dressed, what we ate, where we lived, and about the jobs that people worked at all day. Under those circumstances it would be easy to misunderstand something we said or did. Yet most people know very little about the daily lives of the thousands of people who fill the pages of the Bible, from Adam and Eve to the Apostle Paul. The Bible becomes much easier to understand, and a much more fun book to read, if we take the time to learn about the manners and customs of the biblical culture. The people of the Bible, and the lessons in it, become alive for us, hold our attention, and make sense.

When Samson said that the

Philistines had "plowed with my heifer," he was not in any way referring to cattle he owned. Just as our culture refers to girls in various ways, including "dolls, babes, chicks," etc., so in the Biblical culture young girls were sometimes referred to as "heifers." Knowing that fact makes the passage understandable, and more fun to read. There are hundreds of examples in Scripture, where the meaning of a verse is clear if the custom is known. Understanding the manners and customs of the Bible can turn a frustrating session of Bible reading into a fun and meaningful session. Knowing biblical manners and customs can mean the difference between understanding and misunderstanding the Bible.

This book makes known many of the manners and customs of the people of Palestine. It covers many subjects, including the climate they lived in that affected their daily lives, the clothes they wore, the food they ate, the work that consumed their days, their love and marriage, the birth and raising of children, their funerals and mourning, and more. It helps people understand and enjoy the people of the Bible, and the Bible itself.

\$13.00 (plus S&H)
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Have you read a book lately that you think other believers would be blessed with? Write to us with a short description of the book and why you liked it, and we will start a web page for recommended reading.

Family News, Views, and Feedback

Do you have something to share with the Spirit & Truth 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,

I describe my life testimony (so far) to a lot like this true story: There was a girl on top of a burning building and she needed someone to save her, so she cried out for help, until a firefighter came and rescued her.

Later she sought out that firefighter, to thank him for saving her. After a time of being together she fell in love with him. He became More than just a firefighter who had rescued her, more than an infatuation, he became her best friend, the love of her life, the one she Most Wanted to share everything with and so they were married, Committed Forever.

Early in my life, about age 11, I felt the need to be saved, I was scared, because I realized I had sinned. While attending a children's crusade, with the faith of a child I accepted the gift of God, Jesus His Son. It was like having fire insurance. Boy! Did I have a lot to learn.

Over the years I got curious about who this God is, to make such an offer and why so many people "missed" it and turned to other gods. I've wondered why I found idols in my own life. I condemned myself and thought God was mad at me. You talk about fear!... I had a performance based mentality and didn't have a clue about grace and mercy.

Since I found myself not "performing" well at all, I became more and more afraid and almost hopeless of ever measuring up. But as I asked for the truth, God sent it. He

sought after me and drew me to Himself. The more I learn of Him, the more I love Him and the more I die to myself and know it's not about me, it's all about Him. He secured my salvation. Salvation and Eternal Life are mine---blessed be His name!

Now with God's strength, instead of mine, I can face my fears and see growth. I'm getting better and better, not because I'm good, but because I'm His!

I want to tell the whole world and invite them to trust and investigate the truth for themselves and see that His love is real. In my life, I found out that obedience only comes out of being loved. Once you experience God's love, you'll never be the same.

I am changed and changing everyday like and ugly caterpillar turning into a beautiful butterfly! I can't stop praising God!!!!

Jetta Inskeep
Lima, OH

Dear Sower,

Your website (www.TruthOrTradition.com) has blessed me so much, it has helped me immensely in getting back into alignment and harmony with God and set me well on the path of mental and spiritual healing.

I have read your book, *The Christian's Hope: The Anchor of the Soul* and find it to be utterly fascinating!

Frank T. Kopus
West Liberty, OH

Dear Sower,

God bless you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I have often started to put pen to paper to write to you but never seemed to be able to find just the words to say. I have often been blessed by the tapes and writings we have of yours.

The teachings have helped me to grow in the true knowledge of our Lord, and strengthened me in times of weakness. Most recently I've had to put my head and heart into the Word because of a crippling injury I received long ago. The teachings I have been listening to, in the morning before work and at night, have helped me to put my trust in God and to look to the Lord for my deliverance. More than anything else, the teachings have healed my heart that I might receive the physical healing I need. I trust that my Lord will increase my faith in great measure to bring this to pass.

Even this morning I saw that all I need is already given to me in the gift of holy spirit via the manifestation, or more to the point, gifts of healing—truly a most wonderful gift. Is there anyone as wonderful as our God? Has anyone ever conceived of better?

I thank God for your commitment to His Word and your service to His people!!

In His Service

Kenneth Robinson
Durango, CO

Family News, Views, and Feedback continued...

Dear Sower,

Wow! I just listened to the teaching by John Schoenheit entitled, "What Jesus Christ is Doing for us Today" (May 04 Tape/CD of the Month). The most revealing part of the teaching was regarding Col. 1:16.

I never realized it before, but what Jesus Christ "created" was Thrones, Powers, Rulers, and Authorities. That's what this verse is talking about!

When I heard this, I was jumping up and down for at least 15 minutes saying, "Yes! That's it! That's it! Yes! That's it!" Holy cow! That makes so much sense! Jesus Christ didn't create the angel, he created the position for the angel to function! This makes sense! Why? Because for thousands of years we have seen the "infrastructure" of kingdoms and dynasties operate in a certain way.

"Coincidentally," since the time of Christ, we've seen tremendous changes in how countries are run... We have seen an exponential increase in technology... World-wide standard of living has increased. I.E, how many homes throughout the world had running water and indoor plumbing a brief 150 years ago?

Great stuff! Thank-you for your continued diligence in researching and teaching God's word, and fulfilling your definite major purpose!

Erik Dirks
Virginia Beach, VA

Dear Sower,

To the whole staff, all who help out behind the scenes and on the front lines, THANK YOU!!! What you all are doing is so special and powerful

to those who are able to see the truth. For many of us, you are our new identity in Christ.

Many of us feel like we are out here alone fighting against the pressures of the world that so badly wants to dominate us. I hope you know what a joy it is to know that we have you all for a Family. To know that we are connected to a group who believes the same way we do. Your services provide food or faith. You are helping many of us to truly get to know our saviors heart and his power.

Please never under estimate the blessing you provide for those who are seeking the truth about our heavenly Father and His Son through the work that you are doing and of course, which is in Christ, you are setting captives free. Stay alert to all the deceits of Satan and do not let him destroy the Body of Christ which you are all helping it become a much more effective and active Body.

Know that many of us pray for the CES community daily to be able to continue the work that Christ wants done before his appearing, and that his Peace remain in your hearts so that you may Love one another deeply as you work together with the rest of his saints.

Scott & Shawannah Grady
Colwich, KS

Dear Sower,

Thank you so very much for this wonderful class and for making the Good News Class so readily available to those of us that seek after the things of God! It's so awesome that you have made it free, to those who wish (need) to attend—bless your hearts.

What an awesome class! It was interesting, captivating, engaging, and

thought provoking, and at the same time, digestible to even the newest most unlearned of us in the class. And what awesome teachers! All different styles and personalities and all clear, concise, and impactful. Your hearts for God, and His people (us in the class) was really evident and shown through wonderfully.

We all had our own expectations and hopes as we went into the class, and none of us were let down (to understand it). How can I express in one letter all of the blessings, all of the learnings, all of the impact and growth that each of us received through this class, and came away with.

Thank you so, so much to each and every one of you that helped and had a hand in this class seeing it come to pass for us here in Oregon.

Cash Reynolds
Eugene, OR

Own Session One of The Good News Class!!!

Many people who had little previous exposure to the Word of God have been thrilled by what they heard, many have spoken in tongues for the first time, and more than a few have been born again during the class.

We realize that you may want to know more about it so as to present it to others, so we are now making Session One for sale (\$15.00 plus S&H) so that you can see it, and invite others to watch too.

Order in the online catalog under the VIDEO & DVD link at: www.CESonline.org, call us toll free at 888-255-6189, M-F 8:30 to 5, or see page 5 of the enclosed price list.

News and Feedback from our Spirit & Truth International Community

Dear Sower,

How are you there? I miss you so much, and I extend my warmest greetings to all the saints there who stand in one God and one Lord and Jesus Christ our risen brother.

I asked an apologize for a long time before I write you a letter because I'm busy especially in the works of God. Our mission here in the Apa-apa village, one of our extension works for the glory of the Lord, is still going on through the help of our Lord.

Although it takes two miles to walk, God always gave me strength every day. I go there every Saturday together with my wife just hiking because there is no transportation or vehicle yet there because of the very sloping mountainous area. I'm still very thankful to God for the sweat I had every Saturday to adore Him and we have fifteen souls there who accepted the Word you taught to me.

I felt scared every time I hike in this area because there are plenty of NPA (New Peoples Army)—these are the people who took rebellion from our government. Despite of the fear I felt, I fought it in order to reach that place and worship God, because I believed that time will come I have a reward that it can't be compared to the things here in the world.

One of these days, we are planning to build a worship building, and please help us to pray that it will happen because there is a group of people here that they allow only Roman Catholic to build and no other because this village was dominated by the Roman Catholic denominations.

One of our members here offered that his small house can be our worship building, so we will extend his house. Again please help me to pray for our exciting situation here for the works of God.

We extend our love to you brothers and thank you so much for your support in spreading the works of God.

Your brother in Christ,

Liberato T. Demol Sr.
Agusan del Norte, Phillipines

Dear Sower,

Receive many greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from here in Tanzania.

I read *The Sower* and became to be interested in the Intercessor Team. I feel good when I always intercede for different things.

Later on I'll be sharing with you some prayer request from here in Tanzania, and the doings of the Lord Jesus Christ among in them ministry.

The Sower is a very wonderful things. It has been so helpful to me. I remember I was having a lot of question but when I read *The Sower* I came with a lot of my answers.

May God bless you for the wonderful job that you are doing to impart to the life of the society in all the world not only in the USA, but to the international.

Keep on doing so. Yours,

Daniel A Sinkonde,
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

Dear Sower,

It has taken me a long time to report to you what happened and what I felt when a close friend of mine and one who represented himself as a disciple to what we believe turned traitor and an enemy to the truth. Now he no longer even associates with me.

At first he visited me in our Cebu CES Office and told me about his Greek professor who in their private conversation confessed that in the Greek version of the Bible Jesus Christ is not the Creator God. Such information was exciting to me and on the very same day I shared with him of the CES standpoints. He seemed to be open and interested of all the points I explained to him. I even shared to him financial blessings. Lately, however, he has spread accusations that I am a cult teacher as anti-Trinitarian among other traditional ministers.

This reminds me of the prophecies directed to me in Davao City by Mark and John two years ago just after the ordinations of all of us CES Elders in the Philippines. A prophecy can be judged to be true after it comes to pass, and it really was true.

Now, as I type this message, I smile and praise God for the gift of holy spirit as manifested in prophecy in the Church today. Such adverse move by my former friend is just the fulfillment of those prophecies. But here I stand.

Love,

Rey & Linda Delima
Cebu City, Philippines

No West Coast Women's Conference in November

Because of the Northwest Regional Conference in Vancouver, WA, October 22-24, we will **not** be having the West Coast Women's Conference, November 12-14.

Other Upcoming Events

Northwest Regional Conference

Vancouver, WA

Friday, October 22, 7 p.m. to Sunday, October 24, 12:30 p.m.
(see enclosed flyer)

Register Online!
www.CESonline.org

Register Online!
www.CESonline.org

Northeast Regional Conference

Mansfield, MA

Friday, November 5, 7 p.m. to Sunday, November 7, 12:30 p.m.
(see enclosed flyer)

Start making plans for the...

Midwest Live Out Loud
Teens & Twenties Conference
Kalamazoo, MI

Thursday, December 30 to Sunday, January 2

(More information will be posted on our website in the next few weeks)



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