

THE SOWER

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The Sower is the bi-monthly magazine of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International, a non-profit organization, and is published in Indianapolis, Indiana.

THE JOY OF GIVING

*GIVE, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU. A GOOD MEASURE,
PRESSED DOWN, SHAKEN TOGETHER AND RUNNING OVER, WILL
BE Poured INTO YOUR LAP. FOR WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE,
IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU (LUKE 6:38).*

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LETTER FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

John Schoenheit

The shadows are shortening and the sun is rising higher in the sky each day. Just the other day I noticed the new growth of budding leaves on many of the plants at my home. Yes, Spring is upon us and Summer is right around the corner (Praise God—I am still not used to Indiana winters). Thinking of Summer, I began to reflect on all the chores that accompany it, tasks like grass to mow, bushes to trim, painting to do, the garage to clean, and, of course, I still want and need to have quality time with friends and family. There are many things that need to be done and obligations to keep.

I have thought a lot about obligations lately because since Mark Graeser went on sabbatical, I have had to “step up to the plate” in many areas of ministry, most of them administrative. If you know me, you know that, although I can do administration work, I enjoy the depths of biblical research much more, but we all have to prioritize what is set before us to do. My most important activity is spending quality time with God and the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ve learned that they are much more concerned with my *praise of* them than my *work for* them, so I do my best to set my priorities accordingly.

Summer is a wonderful season to spend quality time with God amidst the beauty of His creation. I am a “morning person,” and I enjoy the fact that in summer the air is warm and the sun is up when I awaken (I think the sun must get up at 4 a.m. here in Hoosierland where we do not have daylight savings). I can sit on the porch and talk with my family, read the Bible, and pray—it’s wonderful. If you are a “night person,” Summer works for you too, because the sun goes down late and the evenings are long and relaxing.

Prioritizing God into our lives is not easy. We live in a competitive world, where all day long things clamor for our time. When we finally do get some time to ourselves and are able to choose what to do, the voices screaming for that time are loud and appealing. Television promos tell us that a show is “exciting” or “amazing.” Video games, movies, theaters, sports, parks, malls, and friends all aggressively compete for our time.

Sitting in the background, not being competitive, are God and the Lord Jesus, who do not have glitzy promos or exciting advertisements to pull us in. In fact, it seems there is little they do to attract our attention in this competitive world. When we pray or read the Bible, we are not “entertained” in the sense that the world entertains us. “Entertainment” is “amusement or diversion provided, especially by performers.”

When we pray or read the Bible, we are not usually “amused,” or diverted from life. Quite the opposite, contact with the Lord drives us into the very core of life itself. People who pray from the heart often find themselves in tears as they bring their needs and supplications before the throne of a Holy God. Or they may find themselves energized by holy spirit and speaking God’s sword-like words in commanding tones, making war in the spiritual realm and thus affecting things on earth.

Prayer, Bible study, and time alone with God require us to give of ourselves, yet our giving to God is exactly what He deserves. It is precisely because time with God requires us to give of ourselves that we need to schedule it into our lives. When we do, we find ourselves enriched in deep and heartfelt ways. Life becomes less hectic, more peaceful, more positive, more enjoyable, and more purposeful. We feel closer to God and Jesus, and we feel better about ourselves.

Yes, it’s almost Summer. Grab a Bible and your favorite beverage, and then go sit on the porch and take some time with your God. Do it often. You will be glad you did.

Porching it with God,

John Schoenheit

THE JOY OF GIVING

(The following letter has been reprinted with Jerry and Janet's permission. It was such a blessing to us that we wanted to share it with you.)

Dear Mark & Karen Anne,

God bless you in the wonderful name of our living Lord Jesus Christ. It has been on my mind for some time to write to you. Our friendship goes back to the days we were in another ministry together. I consider certain people I knew back then as outstanding believers and lovers of God, and you and Karen Anne are among these people. In the last year and a half Jerry and I have had the opportunity to see your hearts and lives up close and personal because of our fellowship with you and our association with Spirit & Truth Fellowship. You have not disappointed us in your quality of life and ministry. Thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and our God, and for your love to the Body of Christ as well as the lost souls around the world who need our Lord's love.

It is because of this that Jerry and I have come to trust you and Karen Anne and embrace you as our friends and fellow labors of the Lord. The standard of truth held in this ministry has motivated us to put our hands in your hands as partners and connected believers embracing this ministry as our own. We feel very privileged and honored to be a part of a ministry that loves and worships the One True God and His Son Jesus Christ. **We have found our spiritual home.**

Jerry and I did not come to this decision lightly. We listened to the teachings, spent time with ministry leaders, and prayerfully considered what we saw and heard. Thus we came to believe that this ministry is where the Lord wants us to be, and to support it with all that the Lord works in us to do. He has blessed us so abundantly in so many ways, and Jerry and I are humbled that the Lord has found us faithful to steward so many things for him and given us the joy and privilege to give of his abundance to the ministry for the work he wants it to accomplish in his Body and the world.

One reason we are where we are today is because the Lord has worked with Jerry and me from the beginning of our marriage to help us stand faithful, honest, and diligent before him in our stewardship and oversight of what he placed in our hands. We have done our best to honor and love God first and foremost with the first fruit of all that came to us. It has been a step-by-step walk of learning and understanding and a fantastic adventure of experiencing God's unlimited ability to provide, Ephesians 3:20 style. But it was not until we became part of Spirit & Truth Fellowship that we have seen the Lord give us such an increase financially as he has of late. Jerry and I both believe this is happening because the Lord wants to show you his care and concern for the ministry and for all the leadership individually. He will not let your words fall to the ground. He is a faithful and loving provider, yet he has no hands but our hands.

Luke 16:10 has always been the guiding light for Jerry and me concerning stewardship of material goods and spiritual truths. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." Jerry sees us as a couple of "two talent" believers striving to be "four talent" people for the Lord, faithful before him. We are very aggressive in our investment in this ministry because of our desire to support the Lord's work. We both know that we are first caretakers for the Master, and we strive to have no fear and believe in his limitless supply. The Lord has always been our source and not ourselves.

Jerry and I look at giving as a privilege to honor God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Where we are today is because the Lord has poured great blessings upon us, and our heartfelt response to this can be expressed only from the Word of God:

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

- (6) Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.
- (7) Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
- (8) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.
- (9) As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."
- (10) Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.
- (11) You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.
- (12) This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.
- (13) Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.
- (14) And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.
- (15) Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Mark, as we both know, God looks on the heart of every person who gives. He is looking for those who will honor him with a joyful and loving heart, testifying to his great grace and abundant blessings. It is not about the amount one gives, as Jesus made clear in Mark 12:43 and 44 when, speaking of the poor widow who gave only a little, he said, "...I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on." That record reminds me of Exodus 25:1 when God spoke to Moses about the building of the Tabernacle: "The LORD said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give.'" Isn't it amazing that the sanctuary for God was to be built by those who gave from the heart?

Jerry and I were deeply touched by what was shared in *The Sower* concerning Camp Vision, and also by your Nov. 04 tape of the month "The Blessing of Unity and Connectedness." What these things said to us was that you saw and understood our hearts and that God would and should get the glory for His gracious and unlimited ability to provide for us all. Our hearts are locked into yours and the vision you have for Camp Vision and the work of the ministry. May the response of all those who support Spirit & Truth Fellowship International be like Israel in Exodus 36.

Exodus 36:3-5

(3) "They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning.

(4) So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work

(5) and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done."

We desire to believe the Lord to give abundantly as long as we are privileged to do so. We see this as only the beginning.

The future is as bright as the promises of God!

We love you,

Janet & Jerry Paulsrud
San Antonio, TX

Financial Stewardship - God's Heart Concerning Money And Possessions (Jan 03)

What is God's heart concerning man's relationship to money and material possessions? If you've ever desired freedom in the area of finances and material possessions, this 80 minute teaching is for you. Dan Gallagher develops the concept of Stewardship as the biblical balance between the Poverty and Prosperity extremes taught by some Christians. He also looks at the biblical concept of ownership and property rights. This most practical teaching sets forth nine principles of godly financial stewardship by which you can really get a handle on this critical area of life.

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THE VINE

RUNNING A FELLOWSHIP

By Dan Gallagher Adapted from the Book, *How to Lead Small Groups* By Neal F. McBride

Know your purpose

What type of fellowship are you forming? There are many different types of fellowships, and usually the type of fellowship is described by the group's main activity, such as, prayer, teaching, study, outreach, etc. A fellowship can focus on numerous activities or it can specialize in one type of area. The success of your fellowship is greatly determined by knowing the need in your community and attempting to fill it. Know your goals and then set attainable objectives that you can measure your progress against.

Decide on your fellowship's format

Having identified the fellowship's purpose, you can turn your attention to the specific format options that are available. Specifically, this includes the what, when, and where. The following are some format questions that must be resolved:

When do we meet?

The best time and day are those that encourage maximum attendance. The most successful fellowships usually meet on the same day and time of each week. For instance, they meet every Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. This prevents confusion for members by eliminating any uncertainty as to the time.

Where do you meet?

The ideal location is in the home. Some small groups like to rotate among the members' homes. Use caution if you select this alternative, for the same reason that you want to be consistent about the day and time of meeting. You risk confusion and poor attendance when you change locations.

Who is meeting?

You must know your group members. Each person brings to the meeting a set of experiences, opinions, ideas, attitudes, and expectations. A fellowship consisting of primarily adults over the age of fifty will, and should, look quite different than a fellowship of mostly teens or young adults.

What are you going to do with the children?

Children add a lot of flavor and warmth to a fellowship, but be alert to the fact that having them in the group significantly changes the role and potential benefit experienced by the adults. In one word, they *complicate* things. A small fellowship that meets in the home usually lacks resources and may not be equipped to provide a full time teacher for the children. Take care to analyze the specific situation to determine which option(s) best meets the member's needs. Some options are:

- Include the children for a part of the meeting and then let them leave to do children's activities.
- Provide adult supervision on a rotating basis.
- Have one adult who demonstrates a calling for children's fellowship oversee them.
- Hire one or more sitters to care for the children. This can be provided from the funds collected in the offering.
- You can also have a "Family Fellowship" that is centered on the care and nurture of the children.

What do you do when you meet?

The question of what to do when you meet can vary greatly, depending upon what stage of development your fellowship is in (See *The Sower*, Mar/Apr 2005, p. 6, "Developmental Stages of a Fellowship" or visit www.TruthOrTradition.com Topic:

Community). Typically, most fellowships are structured around a four-fold structure; nurture, worship, community, and mission. Specific group activities are planned around this structure.

When you begin the fellowship it will help to bear in mind the “Law of Inertia.” Simply stated, this law says that an object that is set in motion tends to stay in motion and continue in the same direction. In other words, if you start the fellowship and don’t take an offering, have manifestations, etc., from the onset, it will be difficult to change course and put them in place later. This especially applies to your decision to be a Spirit & Truth Fellowship.

Fellowship activities include:

- Prayer (Community prayer, silent prayer or meditation on God)
- Praise
- Worship
- Music (Use of songbooks, live musicians, or recordings)
- Teachings (Live, tapes, or video presentations)
- Scripture memorization
- Bible study groups
- Discussion & Sharings (Testimonials, the week’s victories or struggles)
- Community bonding (Meals, snacks, and time to just hang out)
- Casual fun
- Outreach activities (Group evangelism)
- Children’s fellowship
- Receiving an “offering” for the fellowship

What size should your group be?

Care should be taken to limit your group to a size that allows for maximum communication and relational development. There is no set rule as to the size of a fellowship, it should always be the focus of the group leaders to continually be raising up new leadership. This allows you the potential for spinning off or forming a new fellowship when the committed attendance reaches a point that it is not being effectively served.

The larger the group, the more easily a member can hide. In larger groups it is much easier for the quiet member to remain silent, and the vocal member to dominate, the less committed member to find excuses to not attend, and the fringe members to remain on the periphery. If a group has twenty-four committed and faithful attendees, why not consider forming two groups of twelve? These two groups can reunite on a regular basis to provide support for each other.

Where do you go from here?

We would love to help you in any way we can and have you join us as part of the Spirit & Truth Fellowship Community. For additional information or assistance with any difficulties you are having in the formation or running of a fellowship you can reach me at Dan@CESonline.org

FUEL FOR THE FIRE

Fuel for the Fire is written by the Teens and Twenties of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International.

GOSSIP

by Matthew Johnson

God bless you,

If you received the last issue of *The Sower*, I hope you had time to read the questions concerning gossip and take some time to consider them. Before looking at those, however, I would like you to think about the following word—*unity*. What do you think of when you see this word? Well, let me first propose a verse for you that I think exemplifies unity.

Romans 12:5

So in Christ we who are many form one [unified] body, and each member belongs to all the others.

If you know anything about the human body, you know that when one part suffers, the rest of the body responds to help the suffering part cope and heal. The human body is a perfect example of how unity should work, so it comes as no surprise that God chose this metaphor to explain how Christians should interact with one another.

Good old Mr. Webster (American Dictionary) does a great job of explaining Christian interaction when “he” describes “Christian” as “oneness of sentiment, affection, or behavior.” Simply put, in sentiment and affection, we are to be unified in our treatment of one another (physically and emotionally), and in behavior, we are to be unified in our mission to “...make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19).

The Devil kicks himself everyday because he made the mistake of crucifying Jesus and now must deal with millions of holy spirit-empowered Christians instead of one man from Galilee. But Satan, who was never one to lose gracefully, has made it his personal mission “...to kill, steal, and destroy...” (John 10:10a) all he can among mankind. And when it comes to Christians, he loves nothing better than to wreak havoc in relationships. He loves to see churches separate, to see people divided, and especially to hear Christians slander and gossip about one another. He knows that if he can divide the Body from within, he prevents us from being effective outside the Church.

Gossip is certainly not a new idea, and Solomon wrote powerfully about it.

Proverbs 26:20

Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.

The Hebrew word for “gossip” means to murmur, which can be summed up with one word, “indistinct.” When we gossip, we paint a picture of someone that is very unclear. We usually hand that picture to someone else (in the form of gossip) who generally does little to clear it up. In fact, more often than not, the person you talk to will add a smudge or two to the picture before handing it off to someone else, and so on. The image painted of the person is quite often undistinguishable from the original, yet people believe it to be true, never once questioning how hazy it has become. This brings up a very important point about communication, which is:

If you hear something about someone that you are not certain is true, always be mature enough to go to the person in question and ask him or her to directly clarify the issue at hand. For more on clear communication, I encourage you to read the *Communication Agreement* on our website, www.TruthOrTradition.com under the community topic.

My space is limited, but I feel compelled to comment on something that I have seen at Spirit & Truth Teens & Twenties events, and that is people’s tendency to pick out negative aspects about someone else and then talk about them with others rather than the person himself. Need me to break that down a little for you? I see people “ranking” themselves and thinking that they are somehow “cooler” than someone else. When I was in high school, I did my fair share of that, and I wish now that somebody had taught me the love of Christ back then so I could have seen each believer as a son or daughter of the Most High and not elevated myself over another person. We should have an accepting and loving attitude toward everyone, and although you need not become best friends with everyone, you may be surprised at what you gain by seeing people through Christ’s eyes.

Lastly, be filled with grace, both toward the person you hear gossiping and the person being spoken about. Take it from a judgmental person, it pays to give people the benefit of the doubt. Remember that we are to be peacemakers and to work toward

forgiveness and reconciliation. In such a process there is no room for something as ugly as gossip. When you hear someone gossiping, you can interrupt it with a simple request that they stop, and encourage them to go to the person in question and clarify if what they heard is true. Remember, we are called to be a unified body that shines forth the light of Christ, and gossip only dims that light.

THE POWER OF GOD IN MUSIC

by Jonathan Fleisher

What does music mean to you, and what part does it play in your life? Consider what a great song can do for our emotions. From an outward grin, to the deepest parts of our soul, music has the power to reach us wherever we are, and to reach us in whatever we are feeling. It has the power to turn moods and soften hearts. God created music with this in mind, and He has shown up in music for men and women throughout history.

When Joshua led his mighty men of valor to lay siege at Jericho, God's battle plan did not consist of normal tactics. There were none of the unseemly warlike gestures usually involved in a siege. Instead, God said, in essence: "Hey, Joshua, what I want you to do is take all your mighty men of valor and march around the city, but don't attack it. Instead, **play trumpets** really loud, and shout and make a bunch of noise. I'll take care of the rest." When Joshua and his men did this, the walls of Jericho fell to the ground!

What about when the apostle Paul and Silas were being held captive in prison, with their feet in stocks. Acts 16:25 and 26 (KJV) says: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and **sang praises** unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed."

Wow! How awesome is that? I'm not suggesting that it was the music alone that enabled God to do what He did, but rather the willingness of the men's hearts enabled Him to get involved. The men in both of the above accounts shifted the focus of their hearts from what **they** could do to what **God** could do.

All throughout Scripture men realized this truth. In most of David's psalms [**songs**] he shifts his focus to God and His glory and His power. He gives God his burdens and concerns, and he does this in song. Psalm 3:5 and 6: "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me. I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side." Psalm 9:1 and 2: "I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will **sing praise** to your name, O Most High." Psalm 118:14: "The LORD is my strength and my **song**; he has become my salvation."

Wouldn't we be more blessed, and more willing and able to live our lives for God and His people if we could shift our focus from the concerns of this world, forget about our sin and inadequacies, and wholeheartedly give them to God? This is what God wants us to do, and music is one way He has provided to help us. Godly music enables us to draw closer to Him and move farther away from the world. Music is obviously very important to God, as the countless Scripture references to it show.

In Ephesians, a book written to the Church in the Age of Grace, God makes this clear. Ephesians 5:19 states: "Speak to one another with **psalms, hymns and spiritual songs**. **Sing** and **make music** in your heart to the Lord."

Enter modern praise and worship music. The same idea of shifting our focus to God and the Lord Jesus is behind most of the praise and worship music we hear today. There is an enormous amount of music written that can help us set our hearts on God and His power, love, and glory.

My hope is that in the course of future articles we can explore a variety of Christian music genres. From Country to Rock, Hip-hop to Jazz, Bluegrass, Folk and others, I guarantee there is a genre of music out there that will help you draw closer to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Music is a phenomenal and beautiful creation of God and something everyone can tap into. As a musician, I have found inspiration in almost every form of music I have heard. As Christians, we owe it to God to find inspiration toward Him in every avenue possible. Music is out there waiting. So is God.

GOSSIP POEM

My name is Gossip.
I am a direct descendant of the father of lies.
I have no respect for justice.
I maim without killing.
I break hearts and ruin lives.
I am cunning and malicious and I gather strength with age.
The more I am quoted, the more I am believed.
My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.

To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become.
I am nobody's friend.
Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.
I topple governments and wreck marriages.
I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartaches, and indigestion.
I make innocent people cry in their pillows.
I make headlines and headaches.
Even my name hisses. I am called Gossip.

Before you repeat a story, ask yourself:
Is it true?
Is it harmless?
Is it necessary?
If it isn't, why repeat it?

Author Unknown

THE CONTENDER

GIVING—AN EXAMPLE FROM THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH

We can give like the first century Christians

BY JOHN W. SCHOENHEIT

Much has been written on the subject of financial giving, because it is an important topic. What we give reveals the true posture of our hearts, despite what we say or even think. The Word of God has a lot to say about giving, but some of it has been hidden in the history of the Church, a history that must be woven together from Acts, the Epistles, and records from the Roman Empire. This is not an easy task. Why did God make it so challenging, you ask? Actually, it was not nearly as challenging to those who were living through the events themselves, for the most part unaware that their experiences would become part of the very Word of God itself. If we, however, are going to really get a feel for what was happening at the time of Paul, we must take some serious study time and learn Acts, the Epistles, the geography of the Mediterranean world, and some Roman history.

The year was 56AD. Christianity was barely a quarter-century old, and Paul was already on his third missionary journey.¹ While visiting Macedonia, in what today is in northern Greece, the Word of the Lord came to him and he penned 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5).² The Lord covered many subjects in the epistles to the Corinthians, and one of them was giving.³

The writing of an epistle, or any part of the Word of God, is a team effort. Rarely does God or the Lord Jesus inspire the writer to put on paper something about which he is totally unfamiliar (although it does happen, especially in prophecy). Usually the Lord works within the heart and life of the writer such that he is like-minded and of the same passion. Then the words on the page are the heart and Word of God as well as the heart and words of the writer. The apostle Paul was passionate about the Church at Corinth, and for good reason.

Corinth was one of the three major trading and transportation centers of the Roman world at the time of Paul, the other two being Ephesus and Antioch. Corinth had a population of well over half a million people (slaves included). Paul had traveled through Corinth on his second missionary journey and established the Church there. In fact, he lived there for more than a year and a half (Acts 18:11), and got the Church of Corinth off to a flying start.⁴ Crispus, the synagogue leader, was one of his converts (Acts 18:8), and it is almost certain that Sosthenes, Crispus' replacement, although he started as an ardent opponent (like Paul himself had once been), also became a dedicated Christian (cp. Acts 18:17 and 1 Cor. 1:1).

Paul started his third missionary journey from Antioch in Syria (Acts 15:35, traveling on foot though the Roman provinces, including Galatia (in what we now know as Turkey), "strengthening the churches" (Acts 15:41). It was on this third journey that he stopped at Ephesus for about three years, and taught at the school of Tyranus for two of those. His ministry there was so effective that word of his teaching reached out all over what we now know as western Turkey, the Roman province of Asia (Acts 19:10).⁵ It was during this three-year stay in Ephesus that Paul penned the epistle of 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:8).

In 1 Corinthians, Paul urged the believers to give regularly, every Sunday.⁶

1 Corinthians 16:1 and 2a

(1) Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.

(2) On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income....

Paul had just traveled through Galatia, and now, from Ephesus, he wrote to the Corinthians and told them to do the same thing he had recently told the churches of Galatia to do—give every Sunday. He told them to give on Sunday "...so that when I come no collections will have to be made" (1 Cor. 16:2b). The apostle Paul (and Jesus) both knew what anyone who has tried to give knows, that if you wait until you have "extra" money to give, you will seldom give. People who wait until the end of the month to gather their money will find what the ancients found, that their money "...will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle" (Prov. 23:5b). The only way to consistently give financially is to make up your mind that you will give, and then give regularly. That applies to then and now.

Believers were coming from Corinth to Ephesus to see Paul, and he was sending messengers to Corinth. In fact, many churches stayed in contact with Paul, who consistently sent information and greetings to those he knew, encouraging and helping them from afar (Rom. 16; 1 Cor. 16:19-24; Eph. 6:21-24; etc.). Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus came from Corinth to Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:17), and likely brought the letter from the believers—the one with questions—that is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:1. After Paul

wrote 1 Corinthians at Ephesus, it was taken by believers to Corinth, where it was read and acted upon. The strong words of 1 Corinthians “hurt” the believers (2 Cor. 7:8), but with good results. There was repentance and a readiness to see justice done (2 Cor. 7:9-11). Among other things, the man who was sexually involved with his father’s wife was put out of the church (cp. 1 Cor. 5:1-13 and 2 Cor. 2:5-11).⁷ Also, the believers began to collect money on a regular basis, every Sunday, even as Paul had directed (cp. 1 Cor. 16:2 with 2 Cor. 8:6 and 11).

Paul urged Titus to organize the weekly giving (2 Cor. 8:6) so that a gift could be sent to Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3). This is a good example of how it takes careful reading, sometimes between the lines, to see what happened in the Church. We know from 1 Corinthians 16 that the church was exhorted to give weekly, but who was in charge of overseeing the collection? That is not written in 1 Corinthians, but anyone who has tried to get a job done knows that important tasks do not get accomplished without organization and leadership. In this case, the Lord graciously lets us know in 2 Corinthians that Paul had sent Titus to organize the giving and the gift for Jerusalem.

It is not clear why the Corinthians stopped giving to the believers in Jerusalem. What is clear is that Titus oversaw the money they gave. The believers gave to the church leaders, who had the responsibility for properly managing the funds. It is the responsibility of the church leaders to make sure the funds go where the Lord would have them go. Church leaders, guided by prayer, wisdom, and revelation, are to use the funds wisely so “...that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us” (2 Cor. 8:20-KJV). They are to provide “...for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21-KJV). This principle still holds today. Believers give to the church leaders, who are responsible before the Lord to handle the money honestly and wisely.

We can imagine some scenarios as to why the Corinthians stopped taking collections for Jerusalem. People may not have been available to make the journey to Jerusalem and back, which would not only have taken six months or so, but, because they would have been carrying cash, would have been extremely dangerous as well. Or Titus may have been waiting for Paul, and when Paul stayed in Ephesus the enthusiasm and urgency for giving to Jerusalem dissipated. Or the situation in Jerusalem may have changed, making the Corinthian believers unsure of the need. Or the original funds may have been tapped, especially since 2 Corinthians mentions the “extreme poverty” of the believers just to the north of Corinth in Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:2). In any case, the Bible does not tell us, so we do not know.

After staying for three years in Ephesus, Paul traveled north through the province of Asia, and then sailed west to Macedonia, in northern Greece, where the cities of Thessalonica and Philippi were. He had told the believers in Corinth he was going to travel to see them via Macedonia (1 Cor. 16:5). When he got to Macedonia, he encountered something that probably surprised even him—the desire of the believers there to give, even out of their poverty.

As we noted above, many people came to see Paul, and many left his presence with information, encouragement, and greetings to Christians in all parts of the Roman world. In a communication with the Macedonian churches, Paul had boasted about the Corinthians and their giving to help the believers (2 Cor. 9:2). The effect of this boasting was very powerful, and inspired the believers in Macedonia to give also. As Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

2 Corinthians 9:2b

“...your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.”

When Paul got to Macedonia, he found that the believers there had been inspired by what the Corinthians were doing, and they were also taking up offerings and desiring to support the Church. We today can and should learn from this. When we give, it inspires others to do likewise. When we see other believers giving, then we are inspired. The Church is a Body, and every part affects all the other parts.

The collection of money specifically mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16 was for the believers in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3). However, offering money was used to help the believers in many ways. It supported the ministers (1 Cor. 9:11; Phil. 4:14-18), the poor (Gal. 2:10), widows (1 Tim. 5:9-11), and supplied the needs of God’s people (2 Cor. 9:12; Acts 11:28-30). The money people lovingly give to Spirit & Truth Fellowship goes to many causes as well. We support ministers both in the USA and overseas; help the poor and widows; supply needs to God’s people; support live teaching, tape, internet, and video outreach, and much more.

The Macedonian believers gave with the right attitude, as the following verse shows:

2 Corinthians 8:5

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.

Christians who share of their finances should do so cheerfully, from the heart. If one's heart is in the right place, and he is dedicated to the Lord, he will give money as one part of the greater giving of his life in service to the Lord.

The seven Church Epistles are arranged in a very specific order. Romans, Ephesians, and Thessalonians are doctrine. Corinthians and Philippians are reproof, and Galatians and Colossians are correction.⁸ It is significant that the three doctrinal epistles do not put an emphasis on giving money. Romans says to give your body as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). Ephesians says to live a life worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1). Thessalonians says we are to "...live in order to please God..." and the Thessalonian believers were doing that (1 Thess. 4:1).

It is in the reproof and correction epistles that money and giving are specifically mentioned. In a sense, God says through the reproof epistles, "If you aren't giving your life (and money) in service, at least give money." When our heart is right before the Lord, then we give money along with the rest of our resources, talents, and energy. Giving money is the "proof" of our love (2 Cor. 8:24), and tests the sincerity of our love:

2 Corinthians 8:8

I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

One thing we learn from the Epistles is that because giving comes from the heart, it is not dependant on having "extra." The Macedonian believers, inspired by the giving of the Corinthian believers, reached deeply into their souls and gave out of their "extreme poverty."

2 Corinthians 8:2

Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

This is a wonderful truth; you do not have to have a lot to be able to give, you have to have desire. An example of this in the Gospels is the woman who gave only two copper coins, but like the Macedonians, she gave out of her "poverty" (Mark 12:44). You may be one who has talked himself out of giving because you do not think the little you can give will make a difference. Not true! It makes a huge difference to God, who will reward you richly. Also, it will make a huge difference to you, because you will know in your heart that you are helping the Church, laying up treasures for yourself in Paradise, and enabling God to richly bless you. Also, it makes a difference to the people you set an example for, and God has a way of making even small contributions do big things. Never hold back on giving because of the amount you have. Look what the Macedonians did!

2 Corinthians 8:3a

For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability...

How could they give "beyond their ability"? By giving money that they really needed. They were willing to be uncomfortable so others could be comforted. And that's not all. They begged, but not for money. They urgently pleaded for the privilege of helping other believers.

2 Corinthians 8:3b and 4

(3b) ...Entirely on their own,

(4) they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

What amazing love! Not only did the Macedonian believers give, but they considered it a privilege to do so. What a wonderful model for us to follow. How many people today plead for the "privilege" to give? Not many, it is sad to say. But the Macedonians did, because they had the right attitude. Giving is a privilege. There are many people who are completely broken in body and soul, and destitute in life. They cannot give. If you are able to give, you should consider it a privilege. It is safe to say that most Christians will give only as long as it does not make them uncomfortable. But not the believers in Macedonia. They were on fire, and looked to getting their rewards in Paradise. They were giving their lives to the Lord (1 Thess. 4:1), and they were awaiting the Lord from heaven, who would reward them in Paradise (1 Thess. 1:10).

We Christians need to take seriously the biblical injunction to "...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven..." (Matt. 6:20). God will repay us many-fold for what we give now. Many people will stand at the Judgment Seat and think back on how they spent their money in their earthly life and wish they had given more for the work of the Lord. Let's not be among them. The Macedonians will not be. They considered it a privilege to give. Is it any wonder that 1 Thessalonians, the first Church Epistle Paul wrote, and the one

that sets forth the Rapture, was written to believers in Macedonia? They were blessing the Lord, and he blessed them back with that wonderful doctrinal epistle setting forth our future hope.

The epistle of 2 Corinthians reveals that the tables had turned. A year earlier the Macedonians had heard of the giving of the Corinthians and were inspired to give in spite of their circumstances, but now the giving of the Macedonian churches was helping to rekindle the passion for giving in the Corinthian Church. Paul wrote and told the Corinthians that he wanted them to know about the situation in Macedonia, about their poverty and their giving (2 Cor. 8:1-4). On that basis, Paul urged the Corinthians to “finish the work” (2 Cor. 8:11). How did Paul urge the Corinthians forward? By the epistle of 2 Corinthians, surely, but also by sending believers “...to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised...” (2 Cor. 9:5b).

Once again we see that Paul knew that if great works were going to be done for the Lord, someone has to organize and spearhead them. He did not just send letters to the churches and hope they would have an impact and be obeyed, he made sure the believers had leadership who could get the job done. Paul had been boasting to the Macedonians about the church at Corinth. He knew that if what he so confidently had said was wrong, he, and the southern believers, would be embarrassed, especially if believers from Macedonia traveled south to Corinth with Paul.

2 Corinthians 9:4

For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident.

We all make mistakes, but Paul had spoken so confidently about the giving of the Corinthians, and they had been so willing, that if when he arrived there was no money ready, it would really have put a damper on the enthusiasm of the believers in Macedonia.

What would the giving of the Corinthians do? Many, many things. Here are some of them. It would supply the needs of the believers (2 Cor. 9:12). It would ensure that the Corinthians would “reap bountifully” from God (2 Cor. 9:6). It would help the believers be “enriched in everything” (2 Cor. 9:11-KJV). It would cause “thanksgiving to God” (2 Cor. 9:11-13). Believers blessed by the giving would pray for those who gave (2 Cor. 9:14). These are some wonderful reasons to give, and they still apply today.

There is no specific record stating that Paul took the financial gift to Jerusalem. However, the fact that he traveled from Corinth to Jerusalem with nine companions (all but Luke are listed in Acts 20:4) is good evidence that he did, and it would also be why the believers in Jerusalem, though still zealous for the Law of Moses, received Paul and his companions “gladly” (Acts 21:17 KJV). The fact that the financial gift was not specifically mentioned is explained by the fact that the rift between the Jerusalem believers and Paul and his companions about the importance of the Mosaic Law took center stage.

Financial giving continued to be important to the believers in Macedonia. From prison in Rome, Paul would later write to the Philippian believers: “...it was good of you to share in my troubles...I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent...” (Phil. 4:14b and 18b). May the generous and regular giving of the Macedonians, an example in their day, continue to inspire us today to give regularly and generously.

(Endnotes)

1. The exact year is debated by scholars because most of the New Testament (NT) is not precisely dated, but the date would have been 55-57. The dates in this article are either correct or close.

2. His first missionary journey was Acts 13:3-14:26 (47-49 AD). His second was Acts 15:40-18:22 (49-52 AD). His third was Acts 18:23-21:8 (53-57 AD). The paths of his journeys can be mapped by reading Acts and following where he went in *The Oxford Bible Atlas*. Also, many research tools, such as Bible atlases and study Bibles, already have the journeys charted out.

3. The word “epistle” means “letter,” from the Latin *epistula*, which was from the Greek *epistole*, “message.” The “Epistles” are letters.

4. It is because we can date the term of office of the Roman Proconsul Gallio to 51-52 AD that we know when Paul was in Corinth on his first itinerary journey.

5. “Asia” was the name of the Roman province that is now western Turkey. Because Asia was the dominant province, the name eventually was used of much larger areas. The term “Asia Minor” was not known during NT times, and the first recorded use is by Greeks in the 2nd century AD.

6. Christians were already beginning to meet on Sunday, not Saturday, this early in the history of the Church. Different theories have been set forth as to why that was and how it developed: it differentiated them from the Jews who kept a Saturday Sabbath, or it allowed Christian Jews to travel to worship, or it celebrated the resurrection appearances of Jesus. The exact reason is unknown.

7. Although we cannot absolutely prove that the believer mentioned in 2 Corinthians 7 is the same as the one in 1 Corinthians 5, the fact that in all of 1 Corinthians there is only one believer expelled from the community makes him the only reasonable choice, and also makes for a happy ending. The reality of being expelled from fellowship hit home with him, then he, like the Church in general, repented. God bless tough love!

8. For a short explanation of this, see Mark Graeser, John Lynn, John Schoenheit, *One God & One Lord: Reconsidering the Cornerstone of the Christian Faith* (Christian Educational Services, Indianapolis, IN 2003), Appendix “J.” Or see, E. W. Bullinger, *The Church Epistles* (Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1905).

PARTNER PROFILE

Dave and Carol Demars

We learned long ago that the integrity of the Word of God is always at stake. With that in mind, how many ministries clearly set forth the magnificent truth of the administrations in Scripture, in particular this current Administration of the Secret and the uniqueness of our salvation and who we are in Christ? How many teach the great truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and not God the Son? Or our true Hope? Or that God is not in control of all that happens? These practical truths are what set people free.

For our money (pun intended), there's no other place it should go than to Spirit & Truth Fellowship, because, as we see it, the integrity of God's Word is at stake. Without that, we have nothing to stand on, and would be like the grass of the field, here today and gone tomorrow. Praise God for His wonderful Word! We pray that you will continue to be a beacon of light piercing the darkness of religiosity, speculation, ignorance, and whatever else is holding people in slavery.

We are very blessed to share our hearts about what you mean to us. We've been supportive since your inception when John Lynn traveled the country "living by the can," Mark Graeser was a "window man" in Florida, and John Schoenheit was selling stocks and bonds. Both Mark and John S. worked the Word in their "free time" after their day job was over. It's been a wonderful blessing to see the growth that's happened during the past 17 years.

1 Timothy 5:17

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

Considering the above verse, we believe it imperative that we support those who are diligent students and doers of the Word of God. This ministry has always been a blessing to us because of the uncompromising teachings that have come our way by books, tapes, and seminars, and led us into a closer walk with our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus.

One of the first teachings from this ministry was the truth about financial giving--that tithing was specifically for Israel in the Old Testament, and that we are not under that obligation in this administration. Years ago we were taught the great truth about financial sowing and reaping, which is the metaphor God uses to describe how Christians should relate to giving. It has since become a habit pattern in our lives—thank God!

2 Corinthians 9:6 and 7

(6) Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

(7) Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

At the beginning of this ministry, we gave sporadically, but as we saw what the ministry was doing, and learned what its needs were, we started giving regularly, even before the Partnership Plan was initiated, which we think is a great idea. God's Word is true; we are to give from a "cheerful" heart so that others can hear the truth. It takes money to spread the Gospel, and when you give some of the wages you earn, you are giving part of yourself.

Our favorite event is the Servant/Leadership Conference each Fall. There we find out a little more about the heart of this wonderful ministry, and we are able to offer suggestions or just pray about what is being considered. We don't like to think about what we would be doing without this ministry. It has been a rock for us, and helped us stand on The Rock. We believe this ministry is worthy of our support, and we know that God honors our hearts and will multiply His goodness back to us.

We know that throughout the Word, true believers have been a minority in this world. We pray that all who "hunger and thirst" shall be filled and all who seek shall find.

Dave & Carol DeMars
Pleasanton, CA

Is it Necessary to be Motivated by Rewards?

The article below was taken from our book, *The Christian's Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*.

There are many Christians who have never been taught about rewards in the future Kingdom, but who do the will of God for other reasons. Some are so convinced of God's love that they are filled with thanksgiving and are motivated to love and obey God. Others obey God because they are convinced "it is the right thing to do" or "just because He is God" or "because they will be more blessed if they obey." To these people, it seems more pure-hearted to obey God because of love rather than to obey in order to receive rewards in the Kingdom. Certainly love, thankfulness, duty, and being blessed are noble motives, and they *are* valid reasons to obey Him. Christians should love and obey God because He is God and because of all the loving things He has done for them. People are more blessed in this life if they obey God. But one of the goals of this book is to help people see that God does promise rewards to those who obey Him, and those rewards are designed to be a major motivation for godly living.

It also needs to be stated that the things Christians do need to be done in love. It is possible to act out the requirements of the Word without any love in the heart at all. The Pharisees did that quite often. Scripture teaches that people only benefit from their actions when they are done with love (1 Cor. 13:3). It is important to understand, however, that the love of God is not just a "warm fuzzy feeling." It is accompanied by godly action. In fact, a loving action sometimes is accompanied by no actual desire at all, other than the desire to do God's will and bless people. Christ showed supreme love when he went to the cross, even though he had asked his Father repeatedly to take it from him.

People usually appreciate it when they are treated with love and kindness. So too, *God* is appreciative of Christians who express their love for Him through obedience in their daily walk. But Christians cannot ignore the words in the Word. God made the rules and set up the entire system of rewards. Working to receive rewards in the future is not wrong—it is part of obeying God. Rewards in Paradise are designed to be part of the Hope that anchors the Christian's soul.¹

Knowledge of rewards keeps Christians from being blown outside the will of God by the storms of life or from drifting away from Him, lured by the attractions of the world. It would be nice if love for God kept Christians firmly on course all the time, but experience tells us that the realization of the consequences of disobeying God is often what it takes to help make decisions to stay holy and obedient.

While it is wonderful to obey God simply out of love for Him, it is not wrong to see the value in obeying Him to obtain a reward. God did not have to mention rewards in the Kingdom, but He did. The fact that He speaks of rewards in verse after verse should speak loudly to those who are wise. God wants to reward every believer richly, but He is just, so He will pass out rewards that have been *earned*. It is up to each Christian to be wise in his walk and obey our heavenly Father. Christians can be assured that obedience will be very much "worth it" in the end.

(Endnote)

1. For further study on the subject of "Rewards" and "Paradise," visit www.TruthOrTradition.com Topic: Christian's Hope or see our book *The Christian's Hope*

Live Longer!

What have you done recently to give yourself more energy and live longer? Adjusted your diet? Gone to the gym? Taken some walks? These things are all good, but they won't give you more than a few more years. What if the local health-food store was advertising a pill that would give you everlasting life? Would you beat a path to their door and fight the crowds to buy one? You would if you knew that the pill would not only give you everlasting life but would change your body so that you were never sick and would even change the world around you so that it was a great place to live.

Okay, there is no such pill. But there is something that will give you everlasting life in a new, healthy, energetic body, and in a world so wonderful that the Bible calls it "Paradise." What is that "something"? It is salvation through Jesus Christ. God wants everyone to be saved, so He has made salvation easy and the directions clear. Romans 10:9 says, "**That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**" Salvation is free for the asking to us because it was paid for by Jesus. If you have not taken Jesus as your Lord, don't miss out on the chance to live longer. Get saved today!

Camp Vision in Bloomington, Indiana—Paid in Full!

God's Blessings Abound!

How awesome it is to see the hand of God at work. Many times we read and sometimes even hear how God works in peoples lives but to see a miracle is truly impressive. Three years ago when Camp Vision in Bloomington, Indiana became available no one knew how the ministry would be able to purchase the camp, but we did know that if God was behind it then it would happen.

Not only has the ministry purchased the camp, it has been able to pay for it in full. That's right, we now own the camp free and clear. (The above photo was taken at the time John Schoenheit took possession and ownership of the camp, on behalf of Spirit & Truth Fellowship International, from Dan Gallagher). What an awesome God we have. Thank you for your incredible giving.

There's no need for you to feel left out and without a place to sow because the camp is still in need of many repairs and improvements. If you would like to financially sow or bring your gifts and talents to the improvement of the camp then please contact Dan Gallagher at DAN@CESonline.org

FAMILY NEWS, VIEWS, AND FEEDBACK

Dear Sower,

Last year, perhaps the year before (time sure slips away) we were able to attend a regional conference in Atlanta. At the time we had just begun trying to do some real estate investing. This past summer we were able to purchase a house that we did all the remodeling on. Going in, we thought we might make 15-20K on our efforts. However, our market is so hot that the property increased while we were doing the rehab and we were able to make about 40K! Thank you, Lord.

Well, I always thought I believed in abundant sharing, bragging to others of God's goodness to us for giving. The truth is that my husband being the one employed (I'm a home school mom) is the one who does all the abundant sharing. It was my husband's faithfulness and not mine that was being blessed.

Let me explain. Whenever I wrote a check giving 10 percent of \$400.00, that was not hard. That's only 40 dollars; even giving 10 percent of a thousand dollars wasn't hard, but that extra zero, jumping from giving hundreds to thousands....well that was when it got hard.

I found out I had not made abundant sharing my own. I found out I wasn't trusting God in this area of my life and I came to the sad realization that I was acting greedy, thinking of what other investing I could do with the four thousand dollars instead of sowing to the ministry and trusting God to open the windows of heaven for me.

Michael said write the check – I procrastinated. Finally, not wanting to disobey Michael and knowing full well I needed to give, I sought the Lord's help. I prayed for Him to change my heart, to show and help me make the decision of giving and trusting Him.

Watching a Christian teacher on TV brought confirmation on the need to give and I knew God was working on my heart. Over a matter of days, and with much prayer, I was finally able to give and wrote the check.

No, I've not won the lottery and real estate properties at half off have not dropped in my lap, but there's something peaceful and satisfying about working through an error in one's life with God's help. There was something sad in seeing the ugliness in my life and yet something wonderful realizing my heart's desire was to do the Father's will, even when it wasn't easy.

I saw the spiritual growth in my life as I tried to be obedient and a heart seeking to do The Word. Make no mistake, I'm not trying to compare myself to Jesus, but when he went on his knees to seek help to go to the cross, I think I have a fraction of understanding what it takes to get to the point where what you know and what you do are one.

I'm thankful to Spirit & Truth Fellowship International for the right place to abundantly share of God's bounty. You and the others make it easier to give because Michael and I know you will utilize our gifts to their fullest benefits and not squander or misappropriate funds.

We love you,

Michael & Robyn Riddle
Niceville, FL

[Their gift was designated to website outreach and helped us to reach out to 40,000 people over the Internet.]

Dear Sower,

I am a 40 year old male, was saved when I was 16, and have been discipling after the Lord since I was 25 or so. I am a Sunday school teacher and Deacon at our church, which is Southern Baptist in denomination. I attended Bible College for several years in the evenings, which was a Baptist doctrinal school. I was taught in college that the gift of the tongues was a sign that the Spirit was given, but it was only for the times of the apostles. I have prayed several times that I would speak in tongues if God would have me to, with no such experience ever happening, yet always believing that it was a gift to some.

Reading your article today on the TruthOrTradition website, I realized that tongues was a manifestation of the Spirit. I also realized that when I had asked previously, I had asked with doubt and never stepped out in faith and just opened my mouth. Today I spoke in tongues, and the Spirit witnessed to me that it was of Him. I have always taught that we have to believe to see, not see to believe, but had never applied this simple principle to tongues. I am excited about how this added proof will strengthen my faith and my prayer life. I am excited to see the additional ways God will work in me if I lose all doubts and just step out and believe Him. Praise be to God. Thank you for allowing God to work in you to write the article.

Bobby

[To read an awesome article on "What is Speaking in Tongues and Why does God say to do it," visit www.TruthOrTradition.com Topic: Manifestations.]

Dear Sower,

I had the privilege of participating in the first Spirit & Truth Dating Conference, taught by Adam and Nancy Berwid. Our Home Church is made up of mostly singles, and it became clear during fellowship week after week there was a need for these teachings. Most importantly, we wanted an environment where we can speak openly about our past experiences, pre-marital sex, and our fears.

In California, our lawmakers incorporate into our schools teachings about "healthy, enjoyable sex" rather than teachings about abstinence. These "courses" are quite graphic and it's reached a crisis level within the Christian community. I went to the three-day Dating Conference to sit back and learn. I was not prepared for the type of fellowship I found, which bonded us together. We opened up about abuse and humiliating regrets, which of course in this part of the country is considered normal. I left with a game plan that includes boundaries, respect, a dose of pre-marital counseling and improved knowledge when counseling young women.

Catherine Tropiec
Burlingame, CA

Have you read:

Available in our bookstore

[We also have available our May 2002 Tape of the Month by Nancy Berwid "The Joy and Rewards of Sexual Purity."]

Dear Sower,

Thanks for putting on the Dating Conference in San Jose, California. Honestly, I didn't have that much expectation going into it, thinking it would be like a tour guide on how and what to do on a date. And what could I possibly not know because Nancy Berwid had been coaching me on the sidelines about dating anyway?

I'm glad I did get up that morning and drive down there. It was so spiritually uplifting. Hands down, it was the most exciting and intense weekend ever. We talked about boundary issues, the do's and don'ts, the red flags. It was just awesome, and Adam and Nancy Berwid's experiences are just so deep and personal and connect with you on every angle.

We also had small groups with people of our age group and gender. As far as I'm concerned, it was one of the most groundbreaking experiences I have ever had. It made me take a chance and dive into issues that I was ignoring before, and I was not judged by others in my group.

I can't wait until the next Dating Conference. I think there are a lot of other issues that weren't covered due to time. Let's make it longer next time, and go into even more about dating. It was a great experience, and one I highly recommend for any single person.

Allen Theosky Rowe
Cupertino, CA

[To purchase a 2 1/2 hour seminar by Adam and Nancy Berwid on "Dating, Courtship, and Engagement," log on to www.CESonline.org and go to the seminar section of our online catalog or call us toll free at 1-888-255-6189.]

Dear Sower,

God bless the growing staff at the home office !! I just taught a men's bible study group from the booklet *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a tremendous resource that booklet is and many in the group had eyes opened about the integrity of the Word. Praise God for the work and materials you are making available to those who seek the truth !!

John VanDerAue
W Bloomfield, MI

Dear Sower,

Here is an update on the TV show Fred and I do.

We have been doing this for over a year and a half, a live show and then re-play every week. It was first called Family and Relationships. As we were teaching, we realized it was going another way, where we believe God was leading us. We then decided with prayer to name it Truth or Tradition. We use the website on air for people to go to. I can't begin to tell you the number of people who have called into the show or e-mailed me to tell us they went to the website. We believe this will open up a new avenue for the people we reach. We pray that it changes their lives. We believe going to the website and us handing TruthOrTradition business cards out everywhere will help people network and link into Spirit & Truth, and come to a greater knowledge of God's Word and His son, Jesus Christ.

God Bless,

Fred & Joanne Wolfe
Tuscon, AZ

Dear Sower,

I just wanted to say a special THANK YOU, to all of you from the Home Office who came to San Jose, California to help with the West Coast Conference. It is always a special treat to get to meet you, and you serve many needs (i.e., work very hard) to make everything run smoothly. It is a blessing for us to just show up and enjoy the fellowship. I am sure that most of you work harder than I

do everyday, so I do appreciate the extra time you took to travel in order to be with us. I wanted to add a special request, which is that the teaching by Billy Darr be a Tape of the Month. I had not heard him teach before. It was very powerful and contained the most Bible of all the teachings I heard.

Being an old timer (in more ways than one), I am happy to see “new” people rising up. I agree with Nancy Berwid: “The conference would not have been the same without Billy.”

Keep up the good work!

God Bless,

Debbie Lambeth
Reno, NV

WEBSITE FEEDBACK

Dear Sower,

My thanks to you all, whoever you are that put this website together. The articles are fantastic. I have been looking for others who believe as I do, and now I have found some. It is interesting that many of the things you have written are the very things I have said myself. I can't help but keep coming back to get more articles. I think your statement of faith is absolutely wonderful. I believe exactly as you do concerning Jesus and the Holy Spirit. WOW! I am praying that God will help me start a fellowship in the Boise area. God bless you all. I will be praying for this truth to reach many people.

Cory C.

Dear Sower,

I really love your website. It has been so beneficial to me. I was 40 yrs old before I really understood what people actually meant by the “Trinity.” I was shocked and dismayed. Your site [www.BiblicalUnitarian.com] has given me a clear perspective and understanding of the scriptures, especially those that are difficult to comprehend. I have a notebook binder with all your articles, and I have e-mailed many to my friends who think I don't know what I'm talking about.

You would be amazed (but maybe not) to realize just how many people, young and old alike, are clueless about the Trinity. They really believe it is scriptural, and much to my surprise many refuse to even listen when I try to explain. It has been very difficult for me.... believing something which appears so obvious in the Bible, yet no one believes. Their whole belief system is based on a few verses—what they have always been taught or grew up believing, yet not knowing why. The going really gets rough for me sometimes, but your site has been a Godsend to me. God bless you, and please keep up the good work!

Priscilla J.

Dear Sower,

I thought I would write a brief note to tell you how helpful your website has been to our house church (called “Spirit”).

We started meeting in our home approximately two months ago. At our first meeting we discussed the topic, “Questions we never really got answers to in our church.” What came out of this was a list of questions ranging from “Is my shaky faith a lack of faith or no faith at all?” to “Is Jesus God?”

We continue to ask questions and seek honest answers, which usually leads to more questions. Our latest question is: “Is everything that happens in the world God's doing?” We've had interesting discussions, and there are more to come. What is most exciting is the relationships that are forming in our group. The level of transparency is simply refreshing and we have all commented that the Son has set us free indeed!

Thank you for the study information and articles on a variety of subjects. We usually send out articles to our group that shows differing views of the topics we're discussing. Truth or Tradition articles are sent to the group regularly!

Lastly, I want to encourage other house fellowships to remember this: We don't study in order to be built up in knowledge, but rather that we might view God properly and thus view ourselves and others the way He views them in hopes that we might be the greatest blessing that we can be to those around us.

Wade T.

Dear Sower,

Recently, I had been struggling with the act of tithing, so much so that I was losing my faith in being healed. I once read a book (*Six Keys to Break Through in Healing* by Bill Prankard) that helped me tremendously. However, the last "key" was to tithe. After building such hope and belief in God's healing me, I became discouraged. I thought, "If I don't give 10%, God won't heal me because I'm robbing him. He blesses me with the strength to work, but I don't give him back what he asks for."

I prayed to God and to Jesus to help me with this dilemma, and that's when I found your website [www.TruthOrTradition.com]. I read the article on "Tithing vs. Giving" and immediately my faith to be healed and my excitement were restored. I understand the Bible better now too. I love to help others. I also love to give (especially to God) and will continue to do so, but I will pray for guidance from God with our family finances. Thank you for helping me overcome a true turmoil in my life! God bless.

Edward K.
Glenville, NY

THANK YOU, RON & JANE!

Some people give money and some give of their time, but in the case of Ron and Jane Bickel, they give their lives. For years Jane had prayed for Ron to find his place in ministry. A few years back Ron came for the first time to Camp Vision in Bloomington, Indiana to assist at a Men's Camp. It didn't take him long to catch the vision for his own life. He knew that God was calling him to the camp, the only catch was would Jane feel the same about uprooting from Ohio, selling their family home, and leave their friends and loved ones behind for this new adventure. After a night of prayer Jane awoke knowing that God had indeed called them to the camp.

How thankful we are to their lives of service to the camp and this ministry. They are the unsung heroes who work behind the scenes faithfully attending to the many details required to keep the camp running so that the Body of Christ can come and be blessed. They are first rate givers! When you come to the camp be sure to say hi to them and like us say, "Thank You, Ron & Jane."