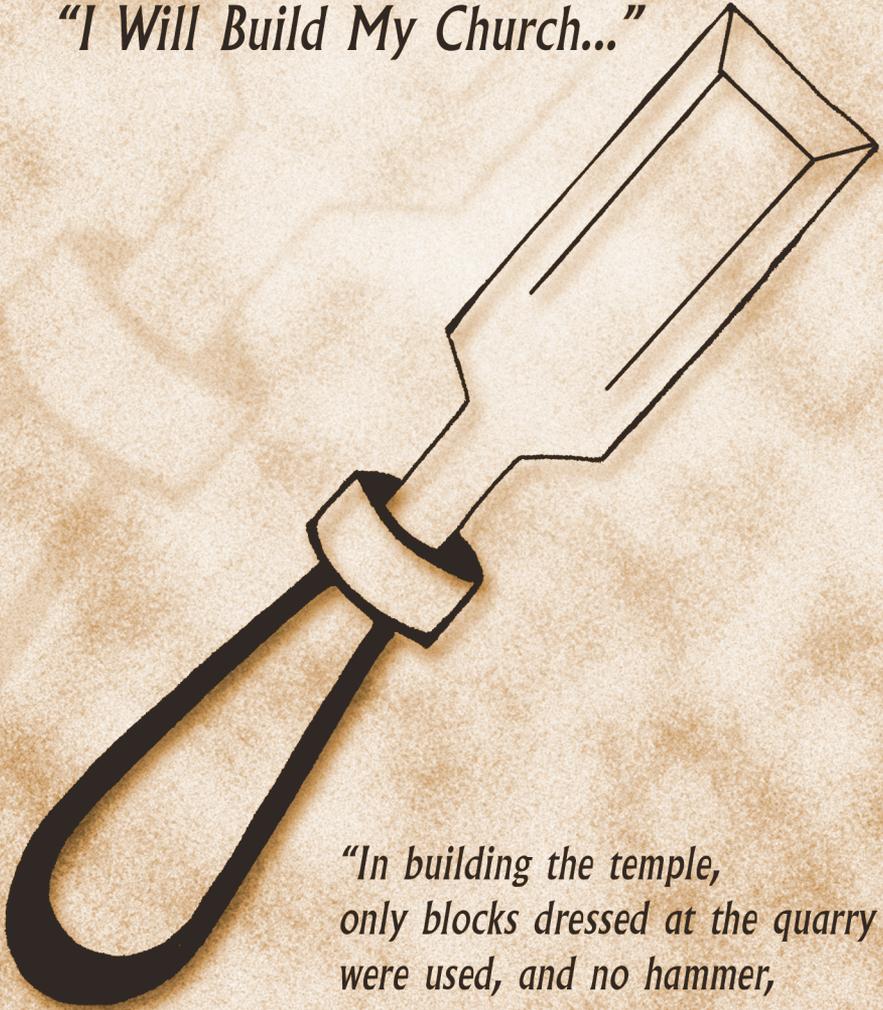


# The Chisel

*“I Will Build My Church...”*



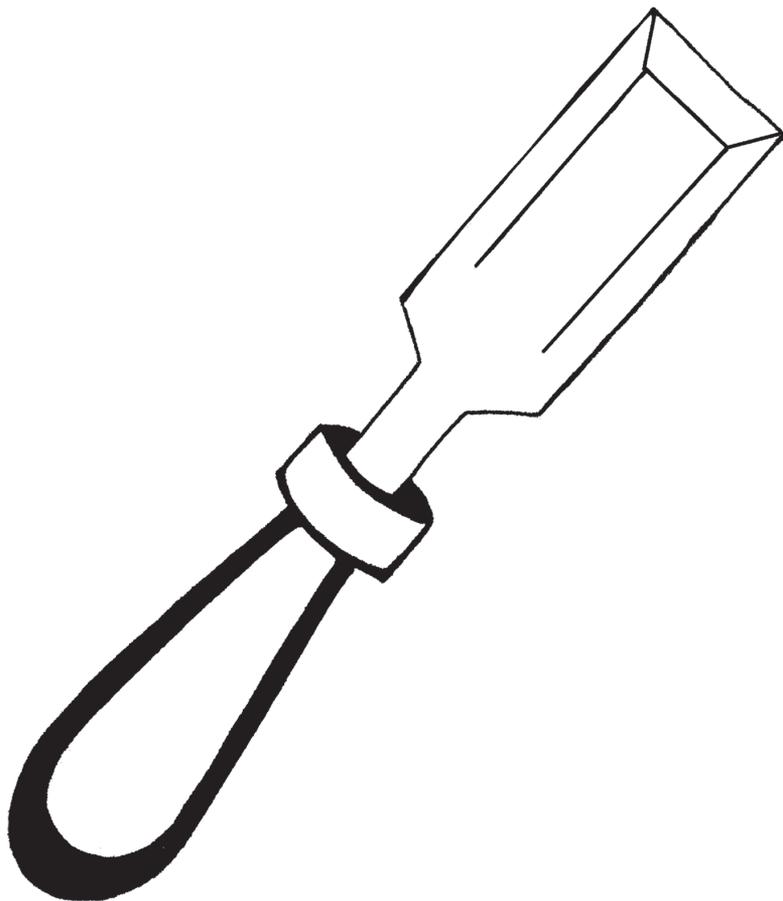
*“In building the temple,  
only blocks dressed at the quarry  
were used, and no hammer,  
chisel or any other iron tool  
was heard at the temple site  
while it was being built.”*

1 Kings 6:7



# The Chisel

*"I Will Build My Church..."*



As always, if we can help you in any way, please contact the church here at  
P.O. Box 68309, Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA.

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# The Chisel

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*Below is the list of titles in a 10-part series of books about Foundational Issues of the Kingdom of God and the Bride of Christ.*  
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**THE HAMMER**—*Breaking Down Misconceptions*  
“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” Jeremiah 23:29

**THE PLOW**—*Planting Hope & Vision*  
“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.” Amos 9:13

**THE SCALES**—*Holding to God’s Standards*  
“The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.” Proverbs 11:1

**THE CRUCIBLE**—*Refining and Melding Relationships*  
“The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.” Proverbs 17:3

**THE SICKLE**—*Clearing the Land and Harvesting Change*  
“As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” Mark 4:29

**THE TROWEL**—*It Matters How We Build!*  
“This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” Hebrews 8:5

**THE SWORD**—*Cutting Through the Fog*  
“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Matthew 10:34

**THE CHISEL**—*“I Will Build My Church...”*  
“In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.” 1 Kings 6:7

**THE ANVIL**—*Forging Out a Life*  
“See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work.” Isaiah 54:16

**THE PLUMB LINE**—*True Foundations*  
“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty... Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God Bless it!’... Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.” Zechariah 4

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# God's Kind of "Unity"

*1800's*

**"**In former days, the argument used against reformation was the necessity of maintaining unity. The argument went something like this: 'You must bear with this ceremony and that dogma, no matter how anti-Christian and unholy it is. You must endeavor 'to keep the spirit of unity and the bond of peace.' That is what the old serpent said in those early days. And the argument continued like this: 'The church is one, and woe to those who create division! It does not matter that Mary is set up in the place of Christ, that images are worshipped, that rotten rags are adored, and that pardons of every kind of crime are bought and sold. It does not matter that the so-called church has become an abomination and a nuisance on the face of the earth. Still, you must keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." You must lie down, restrain the testimony of the Spirit of God within you, keep His truth under a bushel, and let the lie prevail.'

"...The following things are evil: 1) restraining the witness of the Spirit of God within us, 2) concealing any truth that we have learned by the revelation of God, and 3) holding back from testifying for God's truth against sin and folly of man's inventions. This is sin of the blackest hue.

"We dare not commit the sin of quenching the Holy Spirit (1Thes. 5:19) even if we are trying to promote unity. The unity of the Spirit never requires any support of sin. This unity is maintained, not by suppressing truth, but by publishing it abroad.... In order to create lasting, spiritual peace, the concord of evil must be broken, and the unity of darkness must be dashed to pieces. I pray that God will always preserve us from a unity in which truth is considered valueless, in which principle gives way to policy, in which the masculine virtues of the Christian hero are supplemented by an effeminate, fake love. May the Lord deliver us from indifference to His Word and will....

“There is a unity that is seldom broken: the unity of devils, who, under the service of their evil master, never disagree and quarrel. From this terrible unity keep us, O God of heaven!....

“May God perpetually send some prophet who will cry aloud to the world: ‘Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand’ (Isa. 28:18). May there always be found some men, though they are as rough as Amos, or as stern as Haggai, who will denounce again and again all league with error and all compromise with sin. May they declare that these evil alliances and compromises are abhorred by God.

“We must destroy every union that is not based on truth before we can enjoy the unity of the Spirit. We must first sweep away these tottering walls of untempered mortar—these tottering fences of man’s building—before there can be room to lay the strong stones of Jerusalem’s walls. It is these walls that will bring lasting prosperity.”

—*C Spurgeon*

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# Entrances and Exits Part 1

*Monday Morning, December 7, 1998*

## God's Awakening Call to Be the Body Of Christ, Rather Than to "Attend" Something

It has become more and more obvious to God's Chosen, worldwide, that the typical expression of what is known as "church" has been influenced by the enemy, and through worldly culture. Our understanding and expression of "church," in generation after generation, around the world has been led down a Machiavellian path of shallowness, pride, greed, lukewarmness, worldliness, and Ishmaelic infrastructure. In the institutions of today, the quality of the sermons and teaching is sometimes good. I hesitate, after visiting many hundreds of "services" of every conceivable denomination and "non-denomination," to say that "most" teaching in these assemblies is Truth-filled. But, certainly some of it is quite good. Sometimes the "worship time" is "encouraging" or "inspiring." We need to add, though, that accomplishing this has often required Spiritual prostitution to acquire "talented" musicians to "lead"—in spite of the fact that they may have little or no real relationship with Jesus. Their unregeneracy, or worldly life is often overlooked in order to accomplish our desired *end* of a wonderful worship experience to attract larger numbers. Frequently the "programs" of modern religious assemblies have targeted "worthy" objectives, such as feeding hungry unbelievers, building homes in Nicaragua, or distributing tracts to passers-by in an urban area. Many groups have a formidable number of creative efforts ongoing, many or most of which may be good things to be involved in. And yet...

And yet the quality of *DAILY LIFE* of people in these organizations is what it's all about. *THIS* is the *TRUE* measurement of how much of what is going on is really of Jesus. The lack of the daily application of the Word of God, by the Priesthood of Believers with one another, is cataclysmic. In most religious assemblies, only the 5-10% "committed

nucleus” (a number offered by many “pastors” as the norm) even TRIES to be involved in each other’s lives on a visible daily basis as Jesus commands, and demonstrated. And this number is still fairly accurate, even with the “cell group” programs that have sprung up everywhere as an acknowledgment of this crisis. Even within these cell groups, the stories of surprise suicides, rampant concealed pornography, love of the world, gossip, unforgiveness, pride, ambition, and general shallowness are legion. Simply changing the size of the group, “assigning” a less experienced leader, and trading the religious facility and seating for a home and a sofa...doesn’t change its DNA.

By the way, running away from “institutional religion” so that “you don’t have to answer to anyone but GOD!” is usually a deception as well. Caution and wisdom, and learning God’s Ways are in order here. You *cannot* just run out and “start a group” (the way men typically do such things) and expect to find much more than heartache, confusion, division, and a colossal waste of time and emotion. Ask most of those that have tried it! Let’s proceed carefully with such delicate and Holy matters as Jesus’ Church!

Laying down their lives for one another, being involved in the homes and work places, sharing in the children’s lives together, living in vulnerability, “confessing sins one to another,” “bearing one another’s burdens and so fulfilling the Law of Christ,” the mutual Life and dependency and Priesthood of 1 Corinthians 12-13...these are almost unheard of as a description of an entire congregation of Believers. And such a congregation, Biblical and mandatory as it might be to live this way, would be viewed with suspicion and called names. Yet, the rampant lukewarmness and leaven amongst the general population of most congregations is forbidden by God. It is only “preached to”—rather than resolved. The insanity of deception and worldliness amongst the teenagers of these organizations is beyond words. I could refer you to folks from any number of the most highly-respected congregations anywhere that have been totally devastated by what has happened “backstage” at their congregations. All of these tragedies and fatalities, and more, simply say what Jesus said: “You know a tree by its fruit” and “Wisdom is proved Right by her children.”

There is (as hundreds of thousands are now shouting from the mountaintops in every language) something fundamentally wrong with the understanding and expression of “church” as has been so frequently practiced for the last bunch of years!

HOWEVER! This is still worth saying: Though most churches bear precious little resemblance to the Life-filled Church we read of in the Bible (in spite of their good teaching, good worship, and good programs), most who energetically participate in the organizations of today have had only the highest motives all along.

So, why the “wake-up call” now? Why haven’t we seen all of this before? Some in previous generations have, of course. But most of them were martyred, as Jesus predicted. Some were martyred physically, some by slander and libel and politics. Those with something to lose have suppressed God’s prophets in every generation. Why are multitudes in ever-increasing numbers and courage raising their voices as One today? Perhaps, the “Two Witnesses” are ready to stand, and the Bride is sensing that the time of preparation for the Groom is growing short. Perhaps “the Spirit and the Bride,” discerning the Hour to say to Him, “COME!” is drawing near. And still there’s so much lacking in this Preparation!

Too often, we have been hypnotized by the immensity and traditions of the religious world as we’ve known it (“It’s everywhere, and all we’ve ever known!” “Mom and Dad were good folks. They ‘loved the Lord,’ so what’s the problem?”). We’ve been decoyed by men’s religious sentimentalities and emotional devices (“It’s all so nice, so sweet, so moving, so soothing, so fulfilling....”). We’ve allowed ourselves to be threatened and blackmailed into subservience to it. (“You don’t want to oppose GOD, do you? Touch not God’s anointed!”) Sometimes we’ve even been seduced by promises of advancement within it. (“You could be a leader one day! You have a true calling and gift from God! You could have your *own* ministry one day! Just ‘work from within’ and you can really help us.”) “Pinnacle of the Temple” stuff, for sure.

Yet most of us who have offered our involvement into typical church situations around the world, “staff” or not, have had only the best of interests in serving our resurrected Messiah, Jesus. We have rightfully chosen and attempted to serve Him within a relevant and Biblical expression of His Body, the local visible Church.

The good news: On a level of global magnitude—stuff’s getting better every day. Many everywhere have been awakened by the Holy Spirit to His Call for the Life of Jesus to be lived out DAILY in the local Church, reflecting His Glory and Wisdom and Holiness. Though we get letters literally every day in this season of Awakening, there is undoubtedly

far, far more than we could ever be aware of. Even the letters we receive come from a cross section of many countries and languages and cultures, crying out to know about Jesus and the daily Life of His Body in the local Church. I mention this to you for a reason. Many times the letters or telephone calls we receive are moistened with tears. “I’m so happy! I’ve been told my whole life that I’m crazy. I’ve been told that I’m a troublemaker and just looking for perfection that I’ll never find. I should just be content with things as they are, and try to make them better. But I’m *not* crazy, and God *does* want to build a VISIBLE Church that lives every day as His Son lived every day!”

He *does* want a Church that, while not “perfect” of course...still “everyone, from the least to the greatest” loves Him and knows Him and “*loves the light!*” We mention these other folks out there, because we want you to know that you are not alone, and you are NOT crazy. Or maybe you are crazy like Enoch, like Abraham, like Moses, like Elijah and Jeremiah, like Paul...and like Jesus. So maybe you’re crazy, but you’re not alone.

In Malawi, Africa, a very dear friend and brother (native to Malawi) has likened the Call of the Holy Spirit regarding the functioning of Jesus’ Church to this: “David Livingstone brought to Malawi the Good News of Jesus (in 1859). David Livingstone’s Gift to us is like Life-giving Bread in a basket. And now, the Good News of the KINGDOM, and the LIFE of the Body of Christ as a daily Priesthood is giving us another companion Gift. This Gift has given us the ability to truly take the lid off of the basket, take the Bread out of the basket, eat it and be nourished to the full!” Precious insight.

In spite of what we have all been conditioned to accept as “church” for so many, many years, many people now know that the Bride of Jesus must be “making herself ready.” And this real Church is unrelated to sitting in a pew, on a bench, or folding chair, or even in a home or living room. Involvement in a setting constructed and controlled by mere men is still *not* what God intends. Even if some “amateur talent ‘specials’” are permitted, or some filtered teaching or utterances are allowed in some controlled settings (so that all the “laymen” feel involved), this is not the Real thing—born of, sustained by, and defined by Relationship with Jesus and His Body. A *Kingdom of Priests*, daily *LIFE* involvement by 100% of the “members” of Jesus’ Body, with one another, breaking down hell’s gates—this is all that will ever satisfy His Heart and fulfill His Prophetic Teachings. And the Valley of Dry

Bones, touched by the Wind of the Spirit that brought Jesus Christ back from the dead, shall arise by His Grace and Mercy! I love it. Stuff's getting better every day. ☺

## Working Out His Dream!!

And so. An inner call of God's Spirit is precipitating a coming "outside of the camp" to fellowship in His Sufferings and BE His Body—instead of just "studying" about it, or singing about it. DAILY. The Church *really* becoming the CHURCH! As so many are in a Holy pursuit of His Holy City descending from Above, it is increasingly more important to speak, as Paul did, of "the administration" or the "practical working out" of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. 3:8-10). In other words, there are some really practical issues that come up as we move towards BEING the Church on a daily, interactive, "joined and knit" basis.

They are, of course, mostly irrelevant to those who try to center Christianity around meetings, buildings, hired clergy, and programs. To those religious organizations that have little difficulty or discomfort with known or unknown "leaven in the batch," there is not much to think about. If someone wishes to move in and "place membership" at such a place, they are always most welcome. At an institutional assembly, the questions are fairly simple. If they'll "tithe," have some talents they can offer, and have a commitment to attend regularly, that would nearly universally be sufficient. They would be more than welcome to move and "become a member." While there are surely many true Christians who are part of these groups, that is not to say that Jesus is happy with those organizations, or that much of anyone will reach their full potential in a place where "a little leaven leavens the *whole* batch." Just as Uzzah discovered, when we use the Philistine's ways to accomplish God's Purposes, people get hurt and people die. In a Church that is not building God's Way, even the true Christians will suffer loss. Don't mistake anything here for saying, "So-and-so can't be Christians." We're not discussing that. This is about how we build. It is shameful that many will never reach their potentials for Jesus because we've "tried to grow an orange tree at the North Pole." It really does matter how we build.

*"If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the*

*Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If what he has built is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames"* (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

Now, for those that want to build out of Relationship—rather than org chart hierarchy, programs, forms, traditions, and calendarized times, places, and events...there is much to talk about.

It is vitally important, within the body of Christ outside of institutional religion, to have an understanding of what we'll call here, for reasons soon obvious...Entrances and Exits

*"As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan. If they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write it in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes and do them. This is the law of the house: its entire area on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of My House"* (Ezekiel 43:10-12).

*"The LORD said to me, 'Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears all that I say to you concerning all the statutes of the house of the LORD and concerning all its laws. Mark well the entrance of the House, with all exits of the sanctuary. You shall say to the rebellious ones, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel. When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, even My house, when you offered My food, the fat and the blood; for they made My covenant void—you did this in addition to all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have set foreigners to keep charge of My sanctuary. Thus says the Lord GOD: No one uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary'"* (Ezekiel 44:5-9 NAS).

*"The LORD said to me, 'Mortal, mark well, look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of the LORD and all its laws. Mark well those who may be admitted to the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary'"* (Ezekiel 44:5 RSV).

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# Entrances and Exits

## Part 2

*Tuesday, December 12, 1989*

*Some tongue-in-cheek, and some VERY serious thoughts, written in 1989... These are suitable to offer to anyone that would want to move to, and “join” any legitimate expression of the Body of Christ and “local Church” in any city or village...*

### How To Be Joined to Jesus’ Church

This was written primarily to clarify some important matters for those that have expressed an interest in the Church of Jesus Christ, and what constitutes the Church we are a part of here in this city. It would not be necessary to write an explanation of what “Church” is about if the religious world of these past generations had not all but entirely lost sight of several overwhelmingly important issues.

Why have we, those that wear the Name of Jesus, often lost sight of what the Church of Jesus Christ is called and empowered to be? Let us suggest what we have seen in our own lives and in the parts of christendom that we have been a part of in the past (many of us were leaders of these assemblies). The religious world has been impotent and ransacked with lukewarmness, sin, and general unfruitfulness due to at least seven enemies of the Cross and the Loving Reign of Jesus:

- 1) Little true intimacy and fellowship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Usually programs, “scholarship,” legalities, temple exercises, or pep rallies replace the genuine friendship that our Father, our Brother Jesus, and “the Lord who is the Spirit” long to have with each of us.
- 2) A distinct absence of interwoven lives, “compacted together” as a family, as an organic “body” where the hand would never say to the eye, “I have no need of you until next week’s meeting” (1Cor. 12:21).

- 3) The blinding effect of the traditions and “expedients” of men that nullify the true current Headship of Jesus Christ in His Church.
- 4) A famine in the hearing of the “living and active Word of God” (that lays bare and “judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart”). Most have never encountered the Truth of Jesus on this level, but have only been supplied sermons and lessons that instruct the mind or tickle the emotions.
- 5) Undealt-with personal sin in the congregation, in disobedience to Jesus and the Scriptures.
- 6) A faulty definition of what a “Church” is, what a “Christian” is, and what makes one a part of Jesus’ Church.
- 7) Man-made qualifications for “Leadership” in the Church, the Kingdom of God. So much of what we’ve held up as “church” has been “non-Prophet organizations” with “Staff infections.” God is calling out, with the “certain sound of the trumpet,” for men of God, not hired speakers, junior-scholars, or church MC’s and CEO’s.

Without these issues resolved by God’s Grace, the “church” will go on in its way, continuing to demonstrate a Gospel that “is no Gospel at all.” Our Jesus deserves better! Remember that expression of Jesus’ Life flooding out from His People in the first century Church? How they rocked the Roman Empire and the status quo religion of their day? With men and women just like us? Jesus will have that glorious, victorious Church again—with you (or me), or without you (or me)! He will make a great Name for Himself!

(Eph. 3:10, 21, 5:27; 1Cor. 15:24-25; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 16:20; Rev. 19:7; Ezek. 18:30-32, 20:9, 22, 44, 36:20-32, 37:1-14, 38:23, 39:7-8, 23-29; Dan. 9:17-19; 1Sam. 12:20-23; Josh. 4:24; Ps. 25:9-11; Isa.48:11!)

Let’s all go back to the Word of God for our understanding of what the Church of the Living God is, what a “Christian” is, and what “Leadership” is, OK? For too long we have defined these things by what we’ve seen for generations around us. And, speaking in general terms, almost everything around us is a re-worked roman catholic “form,” rather than the Kingdom of the Living Christ, “on earth, as it is in Heaven.” Fortunately for us, the Truth about these areas is very, very clear in the Word of God. As an added encouragement to us, to prove that it can be done, Jesus’ Life was lived out, a long, long time ago. A multitude of “unlearned and ignorant men” experienced true Life from

Heaven, and God recorded this for us in the book of Acts. The only questions that remain are, “When,” not “If,” and, “Will you and I pour out all of our heart, soul, mind and strength to be a part of it? Will we be willing to be emptied of pride, fear, worldly ambition, laziness, idolatry and lust of the flesh, in order to be in on it?” By His grace and my full, undivided will—count me in! How about you? And now...

To those who would consider joining themselves to the vision, purpose and organism of the Body of Christ, the Church of Christ, here (or anywhere, according to the Word of God):

1) First and all-inclusive, all who would be members must be “bought by the Blood of the Lamb.” Place your full weight on this truth, as the precious blood of the Lamb of God is our only hope. But, OH, WHAT A HOPE! It will never be anything that we do that will persuade God to overlook our selfish, wicked lives. It is the Father’s relationship with His Son Jesus, and our Faith and Trust in His Work that “sets captives (that’s us) FREE!” Now, go live the Way that demonstrates your gratitude to Him. Respond to His Call to you: Repent and be baptized in water (Acts 2:36-47; Mk. 16:16; Gal. 3:16-17; etc.). Tell the world of His Love and His Lordship (Rom. 10:9-10; Mat. 10:32). If you are a Christian, you have truly met a LIVING Jesus and declared Him with your lips to be your Lord from that moment on, the decision maker and priority of your remaining life (Lk. 13:3, 14:33, 9:57-62). You have made a covenant with Jesus to leave your ambition, materialism, defensiveness, family or job or knowledge idolatry, fleshly demands, lust, and everything else that is not of Christ on the Altar (Rom. 12:1-2; 2Cor. 5:16-17, 7:9-11). It is your full will to love, honor, and obey absolutely Jesus Christ and the Word of God with all of your heart (Mat. 10:32-39; 1Jn. 3:1-10; Lk. 10:27-28). These things are the very definition of a “Christian” according to Christ Himself (Lk. 9:23-62, 13:3, 14:33).

The true Church of Jesus is only for Christians. And, of course, some will be joyfully “hanging around” pursuing the possibility of embarking on this Journey with us! Obviously, this is no place for pretenders. If these things aren’t your heart, please do not even consider joining yourself to the local Church—you’ll only hurt yourself and others. You may have been fooled by the prevailing religion of our day into thinking that you are a Christian. For your own benefit, please look into these verses and call out to Jesus. He’s a wonderful friend who longs to help you. By God’s great mercy and grace we are all learning to walk in

Him more perfectly every day. Unfortunately, we do botch it up from time to time. Yet the conviction on each of our hearts “from the least to the greatest” (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-13; Mat. 13:44)—not just a “committed nucleus”—is the same in each case. Each of us is undeniably and observably hungry to be all that we can be for our Lord, without defensiveness. This is not for the “elite” or the “spiritual,” but the norm of Christianity. Who says? The only One who can make the rules: Jesus Christ. The response of a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, to even the most difficult teaching or rebuke is always craving and loving the Truth, regardless of personal cost (2Thes. 2:9-12; Mat. 7:21-27). That’s Christ-ianity! Remember even weak Christians’ response to the living Word of God? “Observe what godly sorrow, what eagerness and earnest care to make it right, what indignation that this sin was yet undealt with, what alarm, what yearning, what zeal, what readiness to deal with the evil! At every point you have cleared yourselves in this sin that you had tolerated” (2Cor. 7:8-11). The people who Paul was writing to when he said these things were about the most carnal group in the history of the New Testament Church! Yet even they demonstrated clearly that “from the least to the greatest,” by definition, every truly regenerate man or woman (in other words, every true Christian) hears and obeys the Word of God. As they clearly demonstrated, no matter how far off base in the beginning, a true Christian will TURN when the Word of God is spoken regarding their sin. I’d like to write that sentence again, but I guess you could just read it again! As Jesus taught: “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets (The Word of God), they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!” (Lk. 16:31). ALL the “sheep know the shepherd’s voice”; “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1Jn. 3:9). Are you anxious to “walk in the light as He is in the light,” and to “LIVE for Him who died for you”? If so, come along on the Journey with us—it’s exciting to get out of the theoretical realm into the very Courtroom and Council and Purposes of the Most High God! If that’s not you, please don’t wear Jesus’ name until you have given your life to Him and become a Christian. He wants to redeem you and set you free. Will you bend your knee to the Lord of Glory?

2) Because the above is true for all of our number, “from the least to the greatest” (Lk. 13:24-30; Heb. 8:7-13), you must know this: We’re playing for keeps. You cannot, once united to any true Church of Jesus Christ, float in and out, “do your own thing” as an isolated “spiritual

christian.” The Father of our Family in Christ hasn’t called any of us to pursue our own course or “ministry” apart from the leadership and relationships in the local expression of God’s community (“church”). So many well-known leaders have discovered their need for intimacy and accountability in relationship as they have plummeted into sin. No one can have, in truth, the “Head” (Jesus) without being intimately “joined and knit together” (Eph. 4:11-17; Col. 2:19; Heb. 3:12-14; Php. 2:1-5; 1Cor. 12) to the other members of the “BODY,” the Family of God that shares daily life together. Your participation cannot be theoretical, as in simply a “universal body of believers” anymore than our relationship to the living Jesus can be theoretical. This is not a doctrine, but the very essence of our existence here as the corporate life of Jesus Christ. “This is how all men will know that you are My disciples,” that this is from HEAVEN and not simply a philosophy of living. How? It is “by the love (that is patient, kind, does not envy or boast, is not rude or self-seeking or easily angered, that is always protecting, trusting, hoping and persevering! [1Cor. 13]) that you have for one another.” The world must see the reality of the corporate Life of Jesus, not simply hear us tell them about it. Based on all of that (Thank you for your patience, but this is essential to communicate somehow!), we will not be a nice little social church with a Wednesday and Sunday “serve-us.” Rather, we are joining ourselves to God’s fullest intention for His Church. We have set our sights unswervingly upon “becoming, with ever-increasing GLORY, a habitation of GOD, by the Spirit,” “the Pillar and Foundation of Truth.” We will, by His Grace and stated Decree, destroy the strongholds of the serpent and the very “gates of hell” itself (Eph. 2:21-22; 2Cor. 3:16-4:7; Mat. 16:18-19; 1Tim. 3:15; 2Cor. 10:3-6; Rom. 16:20).

I recognize that this has probably not been your experience of “church” as you grew up, but it needs to be from here on. Even the “angels long to look into these things” and the demons are awestruck and trembling at the infinite wisdom of our God (Eph. 3:10, 6:12). How could He possibly use mere humans such as us to publicly humiliate the principalities and rulers of wickedness in this life and bring about their final defeat?! The demons hate it, but THERE’s a MAN (Acts 7:55-56; 1Jn. 4:3; 2Jn. 7) in heaven! And worse yet for them, He’s only the first of a whole new Race! (Php. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14,17-18, 4:15; Eph. 3:10,20; Col. 1:15-20, 2:15; Rom. 16:20; Jos. 10:24-25; Jn. 14:12; Mat. 16:18-19; 1Pet. 1:12-13). Not only will our God obliterate the hateful uprising of satan and his disciples, but He will even use mere mortal men, created

“a little lower than the angels,” and build them into His stature and character and fullness, to bring about the shellacking of the enemy!

*“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 3:10).*

*“I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).*

That’s God’s Heart and Purpose. Is that your purpose as well—to glorify your God by walking in the Power of His Spirit and, by Faith, overcoming the world and its slavery? Will you commit yourselves to seeing “on EARTH as it is in Heaven” and in this way “serve the Purpose of God in your generation”? (Mat. 6:10, 16:19; Acts 13:36).

My intentions here are not to make some kind of doctrinal statement, but to let you know that in any Church that God would be pleased with, things do not revolve around a meeting or two each week and a few neat programs. Satan is devastated and humiliated only in the daily expression of Life and Koinonia and sacrificial love. He is thrashed only by those that are truly taking up their crosses daily for the sake of others. (Crosses are never “taken up” in a vacuum. They are taken up for others.) If we’re His Followers, these are the crosses that Jesus told us to take up: Unexplainable love of brothers and sisters and others, devastating the adversary. You’ll discover, therefore, in a Church that is doing a number on satan, that it is observably “daily in the public arena and from house to house.” All are “devoted to the teaching, and to fellowship” (“having all things in common”) as an attitude of the heart—a simple response to the teachings and Spirit of Jesus. This Life in Christ is not legislated, but also it is not theoretical and invisible. God’s People truly are devoted to “the breaking of bread and to prayer.” We do, in reality, gather continually as the Family of God to share Life. In reality we “serve one another,” “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the Law of Christ.” We “confess sins one to another” as God has clearly instructed us would be the norm in His Church. Truly this kind of Church would be an uncomfortable place for anyone who does not crave to “walk in the Light as He is in the Light,” would it not? Ananias and Sapphira discovered as much about God’s Church filled with God’s Glory. “Everyone who does evil hates the Light, and will not come into the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the Truth comes into the Light,

so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God” (Heb. 3:12-14, 4:12-13; Jn. 3:19-21; 1Jn. 1:5-10, 3:1-10; 1Cor. 5:1-8; 2Thes. 2:11-12). God’s People long for the transparency and honesty and freedom of that kind of Church (scary as it is!). Can you see yourself living out the above, in reality?

3) It is truly clear in the Word of God that, if you are a Christian, God has called you to a special place of service in His Kingdom. He has most certainly uniquely gifted you and each of His children to contribute to the building up of His body. Our God builds with “Living Stones,” not with uniform, cloned “bricks” as the Babylonians do (Gen. 11). We’re called to celebrate uniqueness and giftedness in its many forms in the Church. There must never be the defiling sound of man’s chisel in the temple courts. It is our loss if we demand the “easy way” of trying to conform each of the members of the body to the same function, personality, calling, or perspective. While we love and enjoy the above truth in the Churches of Jesus, it is also safe to say that it will likely be a period of time before you will be exercising any type of leadership in any Church of Jesus that you may want to become a part of. Of course, many religious organizations of today may be glad to “give you a job” right away to stroke your ego and keep you from going somewhere else. God, on the other hand, said, “Lay hands on no man suddenly,” “Let him first be tested,” “Test everything and hold on to the good.” In the Church of Jesus Christ, only a man that is tested and observably “full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom,” can even be utilized in the Church to be over the matter of “waiting on tables”! The key word is “observably,” as was the requirement in the Church that was walking in God’s authority in the Bible (Acts 6).

If a person has no authority in the unseen world and hell itself, he will fail and hurt others as well in a position of responsibility before his time (Acts 6:3-7, 19:13-17; 1Thes. 2:4; Rom. 10:15; 1Sam. 10:6-7; Ezek. 44:7-9; 1Ki. 13:33-34; Ps. 78:72; 1Chron. 15:13). Therefore, the Church here, or any that you would seek to be a part of, is not a new platform for you, or anyone to jump on the “stage.” As one brother here said of his early days, “No one was impressed!” when he expounded on his doctrines, types and shadows and illustrations. “The LIFE becomes the Light of men.” The Bride of Jesus, His Church, is not a platform to flaunt superior spiritual vocabulary or “knowledge” or experiences. It is a place to express His Life that pays a price to ransom others. In other words, please try to keep a bit of a bridle on your tongue

during gatherings or in smaller group or private situations, unless you are convinced that you truly are saying what God would have you say. Please do not “bury your talent,” but likewise it seems that it is necessary at this point to make mention of this. It has been, over time, such a common trap of the devil for some to fall into. Some have proven by their actions that they are not seeking to serve and love and “consider others better than themselves.” Though these would deny it, the fruit of their actions is that they have instead sought to promote themselves and do God and everyone else a big favor by riding in on their white horse to save the day. Don’t you be in that category, OK? To say it one more way: If one is truly walking in the Light, it will easily be evident to all. It will not be by your knowledge or experiences that your “spirituality” will be seen, but by your humility, your quiet heart and your tangible, measurable service and outreach to others. In short, take your time. You have nothing to prove before our Lord or men except your debt of love. “By their *fruit* you shall recognize them” is the means of discerning where a person’s life really is, according to our Lord (not knowledge or age or previous accomplishments or anything external—[Gal. 2:6]). This will take some time to live out, so be patient and humble for the sake of Jesus and His people here. Thanks.

4) Another word about the nature of the Church that our Lord brought down from Heaven to us. These next few thoughts concern how we as God’s People are to relate to one another and how we are to go about the work of the Kingdom of God. Ready? The same “sarx” nature that tragically birthed Ishmael into the world, also longs to have a program or some kind of “crutch” to help us “do the will of God.” Funny thing is, the Church that Jesus founded wasn’t, and isn’t like that. The Church has its roots in the way Jesus imparted Truth and Life into the first disciples, and how that impartation of Life continued in the book of Acts. No amount of scholarly study of the Bible has ever revealed Jesus, or the Apostles, or any man of God in the New Testament turning to man-made “expedients” as we have today. None of the letters of the Apostles to the new Churches of their day in need of direction even vaguely refer to programs for “church growth,” “benevolence,” “Sunday school and Worship Services” (as such). There was no “visitation,” leadership “training,” or “discipling” others via assigning people to each other to police them into maturity. Even with as many as 20,000 “members,” as was likely the case in the Jerusalem Church, there were no such external props.

It seems that the religious world has adopted the methods of corporate America (some of the IBM executive and marketing school of thought, and others the Amway pyramid school of thought) to try to accomplish God's objectives. It also seems obvious after these hundreds of years of lack of depth and power in the church that systems and programs aren't God's way. (Bear in mind, though, as in any "sport," "growth" and enthusiasm can be produced in spite of the fact that God has not endorsed it. See Genesis 11:1-7). As the Holy Spirit said through our brother Paul, "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by *sarx* (man-made, "logical," natural, ordinary human effort and means)?" (Gal. 3:3, 4:29-30; 2Cor. 10:4). Has "Sunday school," an innovation of the 1800s that we now cling to, produced "spiritual" teenagers? The evidence says, "No way!"

I only mention all of this so that you might be aware, in advance, that we don't have any of those kinds of things in the Church here. Why not? The Bible, history, and our experience have bore out the fact that these things *block* true Life rather than enhance it, as they were intended to do. Here is a challenge to our carnal natures that arouses every fearful or ambitious or impatient area of each of our hearts: *If you will simply "live life" in the presence of the Lord, and daily in the commonness of purpose and true relatedness with His lambs, you will have your true needs met.* All that Jesus desires to do in you—to purge, instruct, equip, feed and care for you and your family, will be supplied in a way that you would've never imagined possible. Organizations must do business via systematic externals and hierarchy. Families don't lean on such things.

5) We and every Church of His must, in obedience to the Founder and the Head of this Church, remove from our midst those that will not submit to the Word of God. Of course, I am not referring to purging those that are weak and truly are "hungering and thirsting for righteousness," but have been so sapped of strength by the pressures of the world that they need help to stand. I am speaking of those that are defensive or apathetic when the Word of God comes to them. There are some issues that the Word of God lists specifically as areas that we are to "expel the wicked man from among us," and, "With such a man do not even eat." We are commanded by God Himself to deal visibly with those that "call themselves brothers or sisters" and are: sexually impure, accumulating and/or driven by material things, or those that allow job or family or recreation or anything else to divert

their attention from the Kingdom of God. (This is idolatry.) We are commanded by Jehovah God to deal with the one who has a critical heart, or with unwholesome speech (secretly, on the job or with worldly friends of course—never “at church”), or one who is idle and will not work, or one who is divisive (1Cor. 5:6-13; Mat. 18:15-18; 2Thes. 3:6; Tit. 3:10; Heb. 12:14-15). If we claim to be the Church of Jesus Christ, we certainly have no right to disregard these passages simply because it is heartbreaking and very delicate to do and no one else seems to be functioning this way. Don't you think God knew that it would not be an easy thing before He commanded it? As God said (and Ananias and Sapphira bear witness to [Acts 5]) to His people who had one man in their midst with a hidden, willful disobedience in his tent:

*“Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. That is why my people can not stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except you cut off the defiled from among you”* (Joshua 7:10-12).

Therein lies the reason that so many groups of believers are functioning in emptiness and going through religious exercises and “the empty traditions handed down by our forefathers,” rather than in the Glory of God. The curse of God's Absence in Power is not because of sin (certainly this will happen from time to time), but because the sin is undealt with face to face. (Of course, it was preached at during a speech or two, but not dealt with honestly.) God give us grace and mercy and wisdom to uproot every stronghold of the evil one in every man, woman and child, while never “breaking the bruised reed” or “embittering the child.”

6) How does one know when they are a part of the local Church? In the religious world, the organization can identify its members by attendance statistics and donations. Not so in the Kingdom of God that is “not of this world,” “neither here nor there,” “not in Jerusalem or on this mountain” at some certain time and place. In the Kingdom of the Beloved Son, “the Lord adds” to our number. It happens, not by vote or by “placing membership” when you hit town and find a convenient building to “attend” that believes basically the same as your parents. If we gave you a gold-embossed certificate, a placard, hung a banner on the wall, took your picture in your “Sunday best,” put a sticker on your windshield, and threw a banquet for you, it would not make you a part of any true Church of Jesus. Scary, huh?

Only by your commitment to obedience to the Word of God in every “secret” area of your life, by your sacrificial love and service of the Saints, and by your priorities fully governed by “seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness,” can you be melted into the Life of the Church. Only by the forsaking of the idolatry of your secure lifestyle, and uniting your heart to the Purposes of God in His local Church on a daily basis can you be a part of the Body of Christ.

*“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:5-7).*

It is in walking together in the light of exposure that we have real fellowship with one another. Any other kind of “fellowship” is a counterfeit. And in an environment of true Life, you will stand out like a sore thumb continually if your life is not right with Jesus and is not committed to your brothers and sisters in service and transparency. His Kingdom is manifested in the unseen realm (Eph. 2:4-6, 6:12; etc.). It is truly “not of this world,” “neither here nor there.” Consequently, the way to be “joined and knit” to the Body of Christ is to be one in heart and life with them as you are fully submitted to, and in love with, the Head of the body, Jesus. Simple enough, right?

We fully recognize the danger of embarking on such a Journey as the one we’ve just given you a glimpse of. But it’s GREAT. Join us on the Adventure, no matter where geographically God sends you to be equipped. Time is short, Family! Please feel free to ask any questions, voice any concerns, or fears, or anything else. We’re not trying to “be anybody,” just to walk as close as is supernaturally possible to our God, to one another and to His pattern for the spirit and visible life of His Church. He purchased Her with His blood to reign with Him in Glory. That means everything to us, and we hope to you as well. If this description on these pages doesn’t sound like (and look like, if you were to spend time with us) the Church that you read about in the Bible, then you shouldn’t consider and act on the thoughts included here. Or if you’re not really interested in the vulnerability that all of this leads to, you’ll be very uncomfortable trying to hide in the shadows when the Light of a true Church is “getting brighter and brighter unto the full Day.” If you love your “rights,” surely the Church of Jesus Christ

is not the right place for you to be. Unfortunately for the Cause of Jesus and for you and for all of us, I know that if you do not desire to walk in the Light of exposure and on the “Highway of Holiness,” you still will be welcomed gladly at many, many other places that do religious things in Jesus’ Name. Whatever you choose to do with your life, know that a compromising “church” is the last thing on earth that you should be yoked to if you love Jesus and long for His Appearing. On the other hand, if fully immersed in the Work of God as He builds a Habitation for Himself in His Church, by His men and women, you will grow and blossom into “the unity of the faith and the full intimate knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Can’t beat that!

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# Short-cuts Into His Glory?

*Visiting, Moving, Spiritual Growth, and Other Stuff*

*Friday Morning, October 18, 2002*

## Part 1: An Honest Look

### Way Weird

So, we're a little weird. We'd like to invite you to be a little weird, too. Oh, there are many ways to establish our weirdness, but the topic of the day has to do with "visitors" since it comes up for discussion with us fairly often. "But wait—there's more!"

On a more general level, we could ask this: Isn't it worth considering a different course in your Christian life and Church Life than what "everyone else" is doing? And obviously (of course!) there is no reason to change anything in our approach or decisions—if we desire to end up where "everyone else" has ended up. There would be no further consideration or change needed in that case. And yet, if you DO know of the deep need for Change in His Body worldwide, then this may be an important few moments for you to think and pray clearly, as you read what follows. Your call. But as a man once said, "INSANITY is to do all the same things—and expect things will change anyway." Or something like that.

This writing is an *invitation* to come to Higher Ground in your personal and Church Life than you are likely to have ever previously experienced. Acts 2:42-47 stuff. For JESUS' sake—not our own. Even if you have not personally been around the world, most still are aware there is very little with the appearance of Jesus—His Church "that the gates of Hell cannot prevail against." Good things, good people, and Jesus' Hand in many places? Of course! Yet, much of the good is harmed and wasted, as unbefitting leaven and disobedience and "strange fire" compromise the "radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but

holy and blameless.” Jesus has made His Desire for this clear. And His People will always die, if necessary, for what pleases Him!

Does our lukewarmness in most local congregations in this generation break your heart, as it does His? Then, let’s take a look together at how we’re approaching His Life together. It’s not a time to judge or to worry, but to CHANGE! If you are hungry for Him and passionate that He would “have the Reward of His suffering”—a “Bride who has made herself ready”—then let’s ponder together some of our foundations, personally and in His Body. Bear with some of the challenging thoughts that follow! Why not? If we know we need to change, why not?! It’s for His sake that we must all be willing to question and change, that we might also experience the full brunt of His Life and demonstrate His Testimony again. Like “stars shining in the universe” we will again be broadcasting His Glory, even “to Principalities and Powers, now, through the Church.” And the world will see the “THIS is HOW” of Jesus: the Together-Life and love His People exhibit in their daily lives with one another, shining “brighter and brighter unto the Full Day!” Worth “changing” for? I dare believe so, and say so.

## Philo-xenos

Yes, we’re guilty. Weird. ☺ How so, you ask—besides what you were already thinking? Well, here’s a part of our strangeness: We have actually asked many, many hundreds of people over the years NOT to move here, or not to visit here as soon as they had planned. Weird. When christianity is even famous amongst the pagans for “sheep stealing” and “recruiting”—we do exactly the opposite. Why? Well, there are several crucial reasons for answering that question thoroughly.

Why did Jesus, the rightful Head of the Church, turn people away in John 6? He had all the tools to “recruit” numbers, and He intentionally did the opposite? But, think how much good He could have done with numbers and resources! You’ll see, if you’ll stay with us a bit, that there is an “inner” world far more important, and far more powerful, that MUST COME FIRST.

## Visitors.

Yes, we have always had our share of visitors over the years. We have visitors from the four corners of the earth in our homes any given week. So, it’s not about that. Truly it has been a gift from God that we’ve

had these hundreds and hundreds of very special Saints, of various tongues and ethnicities and religious backgrounds, staying with us and involved in our lives.

Even beyond that level of interaction with “visitors,” we have welcomed troubled couples or families to come and live here at times, for periods measured in months and even years. Several examples of difficult situations come to mind. In one case, the unbelieving husband was caught deep in sin, and the wife was not willing to live with him any longer—unless he sought help. We allowed them to move here for quite a long time to share the daily Quality of Interchanged Life, while he was in the Valley of Decision.

We have given refuge to people previously living in shelters or under bridges, and to homeless carnival workers. We have offered Family Life to young people from other cities, staying with us at the request of their parents. We have extended Jesus’ love and provision to “derelicts” and alcoholics, and to clergymen repenting of man’s religion. We have answered the cries of families despairing the leaven and rote of canned attendance—who were unwilling to lose their children to sin in “youth groups.” We have entertained both devils, and angels “unawares.”

Now, why did I say all of that? I guess it just seemed right, for the sake of those we’ve asked to *not* visit us, to illustrate the incredible “hospitality” of the Believers here—in every measurement of the word. I can’t say enough about the Faith and sacrifice I’ve seen demonstrated by so many here, for so long. Kindness, self-sacrifice, risk, and generosity are not lacking in the slightest, from what I have seen here and elsewhere in the world. And, it has been a joy to meet so many true Disciples of Jesus, indwelt by the Son of God, from so many places and backgrounds, both in our homes and in theirs as they’ve asked us to visit.

## Listening, Not Logic

I still contend that we’re weird, as far as this subject is concerned. We just DON’T and WON’T “recruit” or be casual or sloppy. It’s an important issue to us that it be Father’s Timing for any visits or moves, either direction. “Unless the Lord builds the House, its builders build in vain.” And “building in vain” would be a colossal waste of time and energy, as well as dangerous, for those “the Father HAS given us” (John 17). As

His “slaves” (doulos), it is not our prerogative, of course, to do anything other than “what we see the Father doing,” no matter how good the idea may seem.

There was a time that the “newly converted” Roman Emperor, the reigning Caesar, was allowed to be viewed as a Christian “leader”—rather than the Spiritual “baby” he actually was. The Christians of that day were “flattered” by their success in “converting” someone of Caesar’s celebrity status. They had, unfortunately, fear and awe of him as a human, and the predictable lust of immature Christians for Rome’s influence and wealth. These sins of the flesh contributed to this terrible and costly mistake of calling the Roman Emperor a Christian “leader”—before he knew God well, or at all. Today, celebrities, musicians, sports stars, the wealthy, and human authority figures who are “converted” encounter the same gruesome error of reverence and promotion by shallow or ambitious believers—to everyone’s detriment.

Allowing Caesar Constantine to be considered amongst the “leaders” of the church seemed like a good idea to those fourth century (and formerly persecuted) Christians. History shows that the Spiritual degradation and devastation of much of Christendom was the cost of that blunder. We’re still paying a price for that one, with icons and holy buildings and clergy and holy days and rituals Caesar “normalized” and institutionalized for Christians so as not to alienate the false god worshippers in the Roman Empire. While this worldly wisdom was “politically correct” of course, these things were and are foreign to the spirit and teaching of the Bible and Life of Jesus. These Constantinian fourth century additions to Christianity have inebriated multitudes that have lost their taste for the Real thing—having been fed the superficial. Many honest people and families have been robbed of their Highest Destiny by the “empty traditions handed down by their forefathers.” This is just as the Apostle Peter warned. And the sort of thinking that created THAT 1800-year-old (and very serious) mess is what we are discussing—and are committed to avoiding—like the plague.

## **I Can’t Think of a Subtitle, But the Spacing Works**

Anyway, we should dialogue a bit. This whole discussion is really about how you view your life—not just about visits and moves. It’s about getting deep into the heart of God, rather than taking shortcuts... that will only prove to be dead-ends. We have other choices!

I know this writing may be slightly l-o-n-g for those of us trained to talk on a cell phone while driving in the fast lane, while eating a fast-food burger, while reading an e-mail. Thinking and reading and pondering and praying often find little place in lives more easily filled with changing screen savers, tweaking software, altering passwords, watching television, or risking lives and futures on the www expressway and with dangerous hours in the “spiritual” chat rooms.

Still, we are Called! We must must must retain and refine our ability to prophetically project our hearts and minds into deeper places! Please take adequate time with this short read (as the Hebrews writer called his letter)? This note is about drawing near to God and deepening our relationship with Him. This is not just about “visiting”—though we’ll start there. You’ll see why. It illustrates the point, though it is but one method of our “short-cuts to Glory.”

## Testing the Spirits

It has come as a bit of a surprise—an offense to some, but a pleasant distinguishing mark to others. When folks ask to move here, or to visit from other cities or countries, instead of being “flattered” by the attention, we actually first hope to get to know them before any “visiting,” in most cases. Getting spiritually acquainted first just makes sense. We want to understand our motives and theirs, as far as able. It’s just so essential that all focus and honor are on Jesus—not just words and concepts “about” Jesus. If we can’t get comfortable that a trip either direction is His Timing, we’ll always want to postpone until the motives and timing all make sense from His perspective, as nearly as it can be discerned.

In a world of drive-thru fast food, and drive-thru relationships... this IS weird. Why not just let ‘er rip? Whatever pops into anyone’s head, anywhere anytime—that should be fine, right? I guess that’s what you do in your family, too? Anytime an unknown neighbor wants to take your children camping for the weekend, it’s automatically got to be fine, right? Just whatever they think is peachy with you. Ummmm. Probably not. REAL Life and Love aren’t like that! You know that. Family, whether five or five thousand, 100% devoted to Daily intimacy with God and one-another in His Body, is just very different than your average “attendance-based” “shake the hand of your neighbor” institution. It just is. “ALL the Believers were together, and lived totally

intertwined lives,” saith the Lord. In a family and Family, whether camping or “sleep-overs,” we give it all some thought and a lot of prayer. So do you. ☺

Regarding “visits” and “moves,” some have stumbled over our passion to first seek Father’s Face, and our consequential unwillingness to instantly yield to every offer or request (or subtle demand). On a few occasions, someone has actually become highly agitated or indignant when we’ve pursued prayer and life a bit with them, rather than the “just say yes!” they had anticipated. This reaction, of course, confirmed the Wisdom of our prayerful reluctance to receive them at that season of their life. A few over the last two decades have actually sought revenge for their “hurt feelings” by changing their whole attitude towards the Church here, in a heartbeat. These, who had previously been energetic and documented admirers (“too much” so, it would have seemed to me)—became creative, relentless slanderers faster than you could hit “Send” on an e-mail. It has been intriguing to watch. “Hell hath no fury as a woman scorned.” (Surely that’s in the Bible somewhere.) Although this pithy proverb has contemplated “a woman,” no doubt for tempo and poetic simplicity—the reaction described is certainly not limited to the female gender, we’ve noticed.

Gladly, that sort of person and situation are rare. Better still, there is always that “other side” of life, isn’t there? When asked to reconsider the timing of a visit, others have expressed joy at this surprise Light. Some actually welcome and appreciate the “laying bare the thoughts and motives of the heart” in their lives. Our willingness to “slow down,” and to “watch and pray” and dialogue a bit... is an unexpected fresh Breeze to some. Our desire to get to know them has confirmed their desire to spend time with the Church here, gathered around Jesus and His Ways. These “Light-lovers” (Jn. 3; 1Jn. 1) actually enjoy the fact that we would want to get to know them and a bit about them—rather than just immediately recruit them, enlist them, or use them. “Relationship” is not normally how it’s done, we’re told.

## **Nicolaitanism Devastates the Work of God**

Unlike Jesus, and unlike the Spirit of those who followed His Leadership in the First Century, it seems that false leadership and false movements in the religious world today are generally “recruiting” people from other places. Why? One older brother has written that 1) a marketing

and sales job, 2) a soft message that does not challenge sin in anyone's life in any practical way, 3) sensual appeal by program, personality, and music, and/or 4) recruiting flattery... are used as the means of *increasing* "nickels and noses" for their locale and "ministries." I know that's sad to say. But, when the curtain gets pulled on the wizard of ozzzzzz, it does turn out there are a lot of "secrets" backstage. We could forward you a few hundred emails from every sort of denomination and non-denomination, large and small, institution and "house church" you can think of to demonstrate the point. But, we're really far more interested in the Solution here than we are in discussing "the problem." The only reason I can think of for talking about the problems first is, as Jesus said, no one looks for solutions when we aren't even willing to acknowledge that there IS a problem. So, we'll bump into this issue for another minute or two, and then on to some other Things. ☺

The word "ministry," mentioned above, is a grievously man-centered and poorly translated word, and its abuse is an illustration of some of what needs to be laid aside if we will ever see Jesus' Life amongst us, in our congregations and in our lifetimes. "My Ministry" is a dangerously abusive and ego-centric concept in today's church world. It propagates and fuels Nicolaitanism—quenching the Spirit's Gifts amongst the Holy Nation, the Kingdom of Priests, the local Church. Clergyism and Nicolaitanism are forbidden by Jesus, the Rightful Head of the Church. The Greek word "Nicolaitanism" used by Jesus in the letters to the seven Churches, means "conquering the people" and "creating laity." Jesus says He "hates" Nicolaitanism; He "hates" the system of religion that allows mere men to "conquer" His People and make them what we would call "laity"—instead of a Nation of equally-active Gifted servants. He "vomits" lukewarmness, and certainly 1900 years have proven that Clergyism promotes laziness and lukewarmness amongst His People. "We don't want to face God ourselves, Moses. YOU do it, and let us know what He said." "We want a king—like the other (denomi)nations."

## Samuel, Not Saul, Is Jesus' True Leadership

Now don't misunderstand. "Leadership" and "Gifts" are *very* much a part of God's heart—and a necessity for any Body of Believers to receive the nine or so beautiful Assets mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-16. You want, I assume, those nine things, such as "the unity of the Faith, the full knowledge of the Son of God, and the full measure of the stature

of Christ!” Well, GOD says you don’t get those nine things from your prayer closet or your personal commitment. They are granted to the Body of Christ *through* the Gifts He pours out amongst us. That’s just His Plan—and you and I will never get away from the necessity of Gifts and Leadership in our midst! And yet, there is a *huge* difference between Saul’s “leadership”... and Samuel’s leadership. The pagans have their ways, which work fine (most of the time) for IBM. But in GOD’S House and “from the Beginning it was not so.”

[*Pretend this is a footnote, but I won’t make the typeface microscopic:* What’s the big deal with mimicking man’s ways of leadership and system? For one, pride is the end result of man building man’s way—with marketing, recruiting, demographics, “special speakers” and advertised “artists” and “automatic” or “official” ANYTHING in meetings and amongst God’s People. That fleshly human approach to system is Babylon’s, not God’s, and to “leadership” is Saul’s, not Samuel’s. Furthermore, man’s “way” to do “system” and “leadership” births Ishmael, not Isaac. Pride is the natural byproduct of man’s way of collecting “audiences” to gather before today’s spiritual hero or talking head. God’s way is that ALL are “brothers amongst brothers”—PERIOD (Jer. 23; Mat. 23; 1Cor. 12-14). God’s way is about Gifting and relational Life—Jesus’ current Headship—not “position” and form and marketing and choreography amongst mere men. Regardless of a man’s Gifting, “when Revelation comes to the second, *let the first sit down.*” Jesus indwells ALL His People (Rom. 8, Acts 2:16-18), and the Spirit Gifts *all* of His People with a “part of Jesus”—various Gifts “as He wills.” Consequently, God Designed the times that Saints gather together, and their daily lives together, in such a way as to vastly diminish the threat of sin and pride. 1) God commanded us to build out of daily relationship and intimate involvement of 100% of those who call themselves Christians—baring and melting our LIVES together in Koinonia, “confessing sins one to another,” “bearing one another’s burdens,” “submitting one to another,” “loving one another”—not “attendance” amongst relative strangers, and 2) God’s definition of “decent and in order,” and “everything to the building up of the Church” is not the assignment of (or capitulation to) “automatic” speakers or stars or performers. God’s Way is that JESUS Himself will make decisions in a gathering of the Saints, moment by moment, regardless of what mere mortal is present (1Cor. 14:23-30). End footnote. ☺ ]

Jesus' Way is *very* different than that of the Gentiles. "Not so with YOU!" "Call NO man leader, father-so-and-so, brother-so-and-so, pastor-so-and-so, reverend-so-and-so... for you are ALL to be 'brothers amongst brothers'—or you will be allowing humans to usurp MY place as your Head. By giving men titles and positions, and 'automatic' teaching, worship leading, or leading privileges you are robbing Me, and My People! Current *anointing*, not position, is My way in MY Church! 'When *revelation* comes to the second, let the first man *sit down*.' I AM to be the only 'Automatic!' As a consequence for ignoring this Instruction of my current Headship, 'the gates of Hell' will prevail consistently in all such places. You will witness the darkness of sin over your teens and marriages and businessmen. That's one way you'll know."

"Samuel leadership"—leadership by Gift and *current* Anointing... is SO different than Saul's "automatic" positional and pre-planned "leadership."

As Paul said, in response to the same root topic, "It is the same now." Truly, "the child born in the logical way *always* rises up to persecute the Child born of the Spirit."

## The Not-Wanted Poster: Recognize the Face

One downfall of these unBiblical and faulty paradigms of Nicolaitanism, "my ministry," and "official pastor in charge" is this: a periphery quickly develops (this is disobedient to several clear Commands of God), problems arise and are "brushed under the rug," and choreographed form replaces spontaneous reality. If an official or automatic holy-man-medicine-man, or CEO-in-charge, or "author" is not particularly "deep" in the person of Christ Jesus, and their carefully crafted words are more spiritual than their actions, heart and mind—problems arise. You will recognize these men by the advertising in their newsletters and speeches and websites of the latest greatest things they have done. Their pictures and biographies will adorn the back flap or back cover of "their" books without conscience. They may often be found inadvertently promoting themselves, by font size and frequency of mention, as larger than Jesus. They will speak of their innumerable "church plantings" or degrees or accomplishments, and their websites will advertise their agenda of "speaking engagements." They solicit funds for advancing their exposure and power, and flatter "key" contributors, the "influential" and the "known," towards their own ends.

While some have adopted the aforementioned “style” innocently because it’s all they’ve ever known, those truly innocent will abandon these ways when the Light is shone upon it—regardless of personal cost or financial risk. We’ve seen it many, many times. Meanwhile, the guilty will attempt to defend the undefendable by diverting attention, name-calling (“cult! cult!”), or twisting and controlling perceptions by misquotes, and dishonest “information” solicited from others with sins to hide. Jude speaks of these sorts of people in the religious world. You’ll recognize them. Watch for those who react sternly to sincere and humble questions (right or wrong) about what they’re doing. Instead of “loving the Light” (or patiently trying to help the misinformed or immature), they will retaliate—with sarcasm and power plays from their “bully-pulpits” and pens. Their “successes” make them untouchable in their own eyes. The ivory tower and celebrity worship of today’s christianity have become quite a trap for “the man of power of the hour”—the special guest speaker, “author,” or advertised musician. There is quite a crowd up there at “the pinnacle of the Temple” listening to satan’s offers of fame and fortune. Wonder if the roof will hold.

## Whose Agenda?

Another way to recognize a very serious problem and flaw in the way men build is this: Frequently and revealingly, the “stars” and “recruiters” show little hatred of sin as Jesus did and does (Heb. 1:9; Jer. 23:16-22). Well, maybe occasionally, from a few—but only even then sprinkled in a detached-from-real-lives speech or “sermon.” Those who Walk with God will always be characterized as those who “love righteousness and hate wickedness.” Like Phinehas (Num. 25:7-8; Ps. 106:30), it “will be credited as righteousness” when we DO something about sin, rather than just talk about it or ignore it.

A recruiter in the religious world is driven by his own agenda, however, and not by God’s Agenda. He will gladly ignore “leaven in the batch” in his dangerous prelapsarian disobedience to God, if it serves his own temporary goals. He’ll sing a plausible love song to the leaven, and heap guilt with the cry of “legalism” upon anyone who would dare make the scriptures (1Cor. 5) their guide in such matters. Instead of spending his life and reputation to resolve and redeem and restore—a torpid “counseling session” is all he can or will muster. Like the monkey of fame, he “sees” it not.

Some “recruiters” prey on fears and emotions and previous disappointments in order to win others to themselves. Some exalt themselves freely. They line their pockets, marketing and selling God’s word and their “books” or “christian music” with smooth words to incite fleshly excitement or emotion, or dreamy stimulation. They prostitute and recruit to increase their wealth. Or sometimes they recruit, or market and sell to build up another currency—the currency of the ego. By increasing their personal power and influence and by placing themselves at the front, bloviating of their exploits and travels, they can dull the pain of their own moribund lives. They have not seen change in their own lives, or in those around them particularly, due to their faulty paradigm and ways and separation from Jesus. So, “It can’t be done.” They accept the somniferous state of God’s Testimony in His Church and “get on with making a name and a living”—and say, “We’ll leave the rest to God.” Oh, the loss to the honor of Jesus Christ and His Word and Ways.

But, enough of that! You’re big. You can see it easily enough, if you care to. And if you WANT to embrace or “move up the ladder” in that sort of thing, then that is where you belong. Not a problem. As Smith Wigglesworth said, “If you can, you should.”

But now, let’s get back to “visits” or “moves” or “relationships” and how all of that relates to our hearts and how we approach our God.

## Sorting It Out

The frequent letters we receive asking to visit are obviously welcomed by the Believers here. It is continued, encouraging proof that there are many many Saints who CARE about Jesus and His Life. There are easily “seven thousand,” and many more, who sacrificially thrill for “the Bride who has made herself ready”—and her Returning Groom! There would be no satisfaction in minimizing the delightful and relentless search that many worldwide true Believers are making in the spirit of “father Abraham.” As did “the father of *our* faith,” many are willing to leave all to please Him, “without wavering, fully persuaded.” The Pearl of great price is worth “selling everything.” There is true liberty “outside the city gates,” away from leaven and compromise that is by definition controlling, “attendance-based” christianity. Too many wonderful Believers have seen their Life-blood drip slowly from their cups, year by year, and disappear between the institutional cracks,

with the droning, flagitious rapine, “Work from within,” “Work from within,” “Work from within” ...as the cadence of the death drip. Lives and youth and marriages and opportunities are destroyed or atrophied needlessly, generation after generation.

How does this happen that so many spend twenty years or more as Christians, and are LESS in love with Jesus and LESS passionate and sacrificial about His Purposes than they were eighteen years earlier? We all know it happens that way 90% of the time, not “once in awhile.” How does it happen?! Many are duped by fear of the unknown: “What I’m doing is questionable, but I’m told it is ‘safe’ compared to the boogiemán ‘out there.’” Some are held hostage by guilt imposed by artificially placed leaders: “Touch not god’s anointed!” and, “If you really loved people you would...” Many are captive to their own weakness for spiritual sensuality and emotional appeal: the adrenaline rush of flattery and hope, or of manipulative music, lights, and words. The generations are thus leavened into submission, shorn of power, and left in nursing homes, or the poverty of aloneness to rot. Finally, they have learned not to question or provoke change, nor do they have the energy or resources left to do so.

### **“NOW, Through the Church!” (Eph. 3:10).**

No, this disconnectedness, aloneness and relative fruitlessness was never God’s Intention. If you remember, Jesus started at “thirty-fold” when He was discussing the minimum fruitfulness of a healthy Christian “abiding” in the “true Vine.” His way is not aloneness and fruitlessness. He said it was His CHURCH that the gates of Hell could no longer prevail against—and that He would set the lonely in *families*, not pews and folding chairs, or even sofas. So when people see His Plan, and CARE, how could this be less than encouraging?! It truly is a wonderful thing when His Chosen muster the courage to question and seek. It is rarified Air!

### **But It Can’t Hurt to Ask ;)**

Since we are not always so good at knowing (even) our own hearts, it has been beneficial over these many years to ask some questions of

those who have wanted to visit or move here. Oh!! The immense grief Father has spared us with just this one little point. Just as Apollos had “letters of recommendation” from trusted brothers in Ephesus when he journeyed to Achaia, and Barnabas cleared the path for a Saul of Tarsus in Jerusalem and Antioch amongst those who did not know him, perhaps asking a few questions and getting to know someone’s heart before they spend days with our brothers, wives, children and new converts is not such a bad idea? This time and dedication to building an understanding first, couldn’t be more important. It is a catalyst to spur growth and love and purity towards Him. Risking for Jesus is easy, but to be careless in such things is a sin of foolishness and poor stewardship of those Father has entrusted to us. These sins are certainly no better than sins of self-preservation or inwardness and selfishness. None of them are Jesus, and all have to go from our lives. God’s House “is built with Wisdom.”

Below is some real-life correspondence, which will help to show you what we mean. Imagine you had asked to visit a Church somewhere, and you had penned the request below. Shortly thereafter, you received the reply further below. How does this make you feel? How do you respond? Do you shrink back? Lash out? Cry? Shout? Do you persevere or quit? Love or hate? Reflect or defend? Now remember, you have a lot of emotion and desire and perhaps past hurt wrapped up in all of this, as well as a desire to protect your family from the lukewarmness of the Laodicean church world. How could that be so wrong? Jump into this e-mail correspondence with us...

---Original Message---

From: Andrew

Sent: Friday, October 11, 2002

Subject: Possibility of visiting the Saints there

*Dear Brothers, do you folks ever have believers come to visit in order to see what the Lord has done among you? And, do you have Saints there that the Lord has used to visit other places to equip and*

*strengthen Believers? Some of the brothers here would like to come and visit, and witness what God has done there. Would that be okay? Thank you very much, Andrew*

——-Original Message——-

From: Mike

Sent: Friday, October 11, 2002

Subject: Possibility of visiting the Saints there

Hi Andrew. ☺ Of course we do have a flow of Family from other parts of the world stay with us rather frequently, and there's no reason to think that we wouldn't also enjoy your visit. And yes, we do frequently visit in other cities and countries when it seems "the Grace of God is evident" (as in Antioch in Acts 11), and the foundational Gifts here would further serve God's Purposes in a place. Yet, we don't instantly assume anything, either. We desire to put some effort into "watching and praying" and discerning who is seeking "the Pearl of great price," and who is simply treating it all as a hobby or pastime. What price will this person pay for Jesus and His Truth and Kingdom? Is it "part" of their lives, or their sole reason for living? Why do they want to visit? Or, why would they like someone to come and help where they live? Do they want a "teacher," that they might receive "a teacher's reward"? There are "ten thousand teachers." Or do they desire something more? What is in their hearts? If we don't know them, then it could be most anything!

We are "not ignorant of satan's devices," and we're aware of the "wicked and adulterous generation" we live in. We know that the Scriptures are true, and therefore Jannes and Jambres, Balaam, Korah, Cain, Alexander, and Diotrephes still live on in today's church world. So, for obvious reasons, we do want to get to know folks a bit.

If your "church world" is a "daily" Family, this will all make sense. If you are a Saint amongst even hundreds who are living daily as "we being many are One," "contending as One Man for the Faith," "from the least to the greatest"—instead of "attending" an institution (whether in a building or in a living room)—you'll know just what I mean by this need for discerning love and care.

The kind of questions we've asked to get to know folks a little bit before they've come are scattered in the correspondence below. Andrew, could you ponder them, too?

——Original Message——

From: John

Sent: Wednesday, October 9, 2002

Subject: a brother visiting

*One of the brothers here has a little time off and wants to come and visit you this weekend. Could you e-mail me an address and phone number so he can locate you when he arrives?*

——Original Message——

From: Mike

Sent: Wednesday, October 9, 2002

Subject: a brother visiting

Hi John, Of course it's not clear from your note exactly who it is who wants to visit, why he wants to visit, or whether it will eventually work out, but I probably ought to mention that we don't do a lot of "tourist" things here. Certainly, we have a lot of visits from Saints, "great and small," from various places and of innumerable backgrounds. But, with someone we don't know at all, with no communication from him or knowledge of him, or even his name, let alone whether he lives in an accountable, tested, committed, abandoned life in Jesus (or even desires that), or know anything about his reasons for wanting to visit... well, it's pretty hard to say "yes" under the circumstances!

This is certainly not an insult to him (he may be a fabulously obedient servant of Jesus), but out of Principle, it really isn't likely that he should come until we know him a bit, and something of him. This wouldn't be a great weekend anyway, since we have a number of brothers who will be out of town. Even if everything were built Right, this weekend likely wouldn't have worked out. Hope that's okay.

I'll trust you, John, to pass this all on to him in a way that won't hurt his feelings. And, I know this isn't necessarily "easy to swallow." No doubt, the more likely scenario he might have expected to receive would have been recruitment to "come look at us" for "show-and-tell." I am sorry if it "stings" a little for plans to fall through, but pleasing God always comes first, of course (Gal. 1:10; 1Cor. 4:2).

If there had been a chance to get to know the man who wants to visit, there are obvious things we probably would desire to know about his reasons for wanting to visit. As I said, I'm sure he's fine. But often, reasons for wanting to visit or move are quite suspect. Can you believe it? 😊 Perhaps a sinful motive drives them, such as "curiosity" of what is happening in the Church here. (Curiosity is carnality.) Sometimes it is mate hunting, which is disgustingly dishonest, misguided as such, and abusive of Truth and Life. Sometimes one would want to come under the opaque cloak of skeptical judgment: "I want to see *this* for myself," or, "I have some *questions* about *that*," blah blah. Some are recruiting for their own movements. Something of a franchising or imperialistic visit. Some are "pastor wannabe's" and pursue a platform for themselves—to "be somebody." Some are looking for monetary security, amidst the large number of sacrificial and deeply loving Saints. Some are looking for a "home school" coop. Or is that "co-op"? Some seek free, "trustworthy" childcare or someone else to cover for them (or to blame) for their poor parenting. Some are lonely and seek a social world. Some are movement drunk, or perhaps "against" something else. Some are looking for a hobby. Some are rebels in their previous worlds—running fugitives. Some are spiritual "street people" because they despise authority or are too lazy to invest in lives. They wander endlessly, of their own volition—claiming they want to "settle down," but truly cannot be satisfied or love. Some, due to lack of accountability or submission in their lives, or a grand ego have hallucinated their way into thinking they are "prophets," and they need to straighten everyone out. Some desire to come because their spouses or parents want them to come. Some are looking for a "dog-and-pony show" so they can "take back ideas" to "use" in their worlds. Some play a "chess game" with Truth and enjoy the challenge of trying to dissect Truths. It's a game. It's just that when you attempt to dissect LIFE for enjoyment's sake, you create death rather than "finding answers." All are deadly, but this one deserves further discussion. Later. 😊

While many wonderful things happen, "angels-unaware," when we Build Jesus' way and enjoy the company of Saints of every background, it is equally true that harm only comes when "Jannes and Jambres' folly" is not dealt with properly. It's not wise for servants of God to allow themselves to be a spiritual "tourist trap" for Christian "Bermuda shorts, Nikon cameras, and a Holiday Inn" for the curious, the critics, the vacationers, or the ambitious. Our focus and resources must be available for what He has Called us to be and to do—rather than simply

reacting to the myriad of scattered situations that are not His Thought. Of course! You knew that. You have to deal with that in your own personal life every day. And the true Body of Christ is an *organism*, not an organization, in its Highest form!

John, I know that this all must be fairly obvious, having said it—but I just think it's appropriate to talk it through and be certain that we're filling our plates with Jesus, rather than religion or expectation or technique. We do, and always will welcome visitors in His Timing, when the motivation is gathering together around JESUS. THAT'S what it all has to be about, rather than the sideshows of the other junk! I trust we'll all be much better off for having taken the time to get it Right. ☺ Agreed?

Give our love and apologies to the man you spoke of, and perhaps he can correspond with the Saints here and we can hear one another's hearts. Let's do that. ☺

*For His Sake, and His Glory,  
mike, with the Chosen here*

## Part 2: Shortcuts Will Steal Our Life

So, there it is. Stripped back, laying bare bone from marrow. But, let's go deeper still. Some of the possible "secret intentions" of "wanting to visit" are obviously sinister (though not uncommon). But at least one of the reasons for wanting to "come visit" doesn't sound SO bad! The "seemingly" good motive of wanting "to come 'to see' to get ideas to take back with us to where we live—why is that such a problem?" *That* one sounds rather noble, actually! What's so wrong with that idea?!

Well, for one, check this out: It's not possible to take back ideas to "use" anyway! At least, not if it's the Real thing. The Life of God cannot be bought or duplicated, nor imported or exported by information or idea. Information, ideas, and ways, much to the modern (western) world's surprise, have very little to do with experiencing the Life of God, or being a true Church, a Lampstand, in the eyes of God. "Implementing ideas or techniques," or copying anyone or anything will only result in a nightmarish and temporary placebo for God's People, and somewhat

of an ego trip for the one who borrowed the ideas and “took them home.” Often the plagiarists will return home claiming “credit” for the “good ideas.” But now, of course, to gain full personal reward amongst their peers, they must *also* attempt to cast enough doubt and aspersion on those from whom the ideas were taken to secure their own personal place as “spiritual”—rather than as a religious cribber. “Well, they were nice people, but \_\_\_\_\_. Well, some good things could be said, but \_\_\_\_.” The oldest trick in the book.

## GIFTS: His Way

A true and deep daily experience of Jesus’ Life Together never springs forth out of such pride or dishonesty. Even beyond that obvious point, hear this one too: Neither can the Life of true Church spring forth where you live from “perfect knowledge”—or “dedication”—or even because you “love the Lord!” Strange, eh? His ways are *HIS* choice, and that’s not how *HE* chose to do this Holy thing called Koinonia and Ekklesia. So, if not “personal dedication” and “knowledge” and “love of God”... WHAT then??!! Much of God’s Plan is fully dependent upon specific Gifts abiding in relationship (though not necessarily proximity) with a local Body of Believers. Gifts are nothing more and nothing *less* than “parts of Jesus Himself, distributed as the Spirit wills,” functioning in the places where God’s People live. Fifty carpenters and fourteen plumbers and seventy-six electricians all individually gifted still cannot build a house without the other gifts, and without those Gifted in blueprint reading (1Cor. 3:10, 12:4-31, 12:17) and “katartidzo,” “mending together” of the other gifts (Eph.4:11-16, 2:20-22). That’s just how it is. His Plan. The “whole body is not an eye” or “a hand.”

That, by the way, makes it all totally mutual and equally true the other way, too.

## A “Church for Dummies” How-To Manual?

But, let’s say (though incorrect and destined to disappoint) that we could simply capture ideas and concepts and truths, and maybe even a technique or two of “how to do it,” and “any good christian can start a Church and experience Life—if they know enough.” Let’s say that Gifts, specific Gifts and Assignments given by God, were not truly required to see the Together-Life of Jesus Christ manifest on a sustainable basis in a place. Let’s say that we could experience a sustainable Fellowship

for decades in a place—a Together-Life of intimate relationship in the Father and the Son and the Spirit by having enough information and commitment and love. Let's pretend that with sufficient information and prayer and commitment we can have "Church" as God Intends (Eph. 3:10, 2:20) and have "daily" (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 3:12-14) Intertwined Life in the Body of Christ "from the least to the greatest." We can experience His Plan in all of this, as He Intends—with no periphery or undealt-with leaven issues "leavening the whole batch" (1Cor. 5:6-12). Also, of course, no legalism or power structures or cliques or politics. Only love and Relationship. Sustainable and Alive.

Let's say information, effort, and commitment—rather than Gifts—were the key. With this information on "how to do it," we wouldn't be destined to "morph" into yet another religious mess... another ritualized, fossilized, clergy-ized thing.

Let's say that our control of information, and "how to," did allow us to "capture" what Church can and should and must be. We've visited churches, and we've bought the magazine subscriptions and the latest fad book on the topic. We've "visited" the websites and signed all the guest books and spent hours gossiping and reading gossip in the forums and chat rooms and discussion lists. We've invited in the ten thousand tutors to give us pep rallies and speeches. We're ready now. Let's pretend that Foundational Gifts in ongoing relationship have nothing to do with "starting a church"—or helping a group of Believers experience the Quality of Life found in Acts 2:42-47.

Do you realize that even IF Father's Plan didn't involve the parts of Jesus (His various specific "Gifts" deposited into various lives) specifically, each playing their own parts in the Building of the House, that we'd still be in trouble? Even IF that were true... Father would still never allow information or love or commitment to resolve the Issue of "*How To Start A Church*," or "*How To Live A Life*," or "*How To Encounter True Daily Relationship And Fellowship*." God would still never allow it. Why?

## **The Kingdom Is Entered Through Much Tribulation**

Being conformed to His Likeness and encountering the Fullness of His Indwelling—"together with all the Saints"—REQUIRES that we share in the fellowship of His suffering. It never has been about technique and information. Oops.

While we can't "get there" through information or method—I must say adamantly and authoritatively that Jesus Commanded that the "traditions of men" will *quench* our ability to find Him. Don't think you can skip this point and slump into ritual, rote, program, hierarchy, and predictability as you've been trained—and still Encounter much of Jesus or His Life. While we've surely pressed to perspicacity the case that Life is not "achievable" via information and technique, it remains true that we still may *ruin* our opportunity to find Him and His Life by clinging to men's "empty traditions handed down by our forefathers." Jesus did not stutter or waver: Men's ways and "traditions nullify the very Words of God." Rote, predictability, and form deafen us to the Father's Voice. Written to Christians, God said that embracing man's wisdom is "unspiritual, and of the devil." Something of this magnitude would be worth watching out for, I would think. Looking for a "way to do something" will get us nowhere. Neither did God ever say, "Do whatever you want, and I'll bless it regardless." Wow. Not a chance. Uzzah, Ananias and Sapphira, Nadab and Abihu, and the vast majority of the religious world today (Mat. 7:13-23) have all discovered God's Thought on that one! They've found, at best, that doing things men's way will only birth Ishmael and "lead to death."

## I AM the Water of Life

The irony is this: Though having the "right information" and "doing things the right way" profit us nothing, it is equally true that defending the practices and traditions of men is fatal, according to Jesus Himself. As subtle as that may sound, it all comes back to this: He wants us to find *HIS HEART* and *LIFE*, and both things just mentioned above quench the Spirit. He seeks to drive us *deeper* by not allowing us to fall into rote patterns, traditions and liturgies which only touch our flesh and emotions. Nor will He allow us to replace Him by the embrace of stimulants: cleverness, personality, charm, technique, talent, knowledge, forcefulness, or showmanship. Nor by sensual music or mindless, throbbing beat. He's just so far past all of that; we cannot find Him there. *It's not EVEN a shortcut.* It's a lousy and powerless substitute.

When we seek the answers as to "HOW?!" things can be done, we are damaging our ability to hear Him, and to learn in the inner man all that He wants to teach us. We can destroy our ability to hear HIM by choosing a path of traditions, hierarchies, programs, liturgy, and

attendance-based religion (as opposed to daily, deep, relationship-based true Christianity, Heb.3:12-14, amongst the entire Church, without exception. “See to it.”) But we can also destroy our ability to hear Him by wanting to be “copycats,” and by “taking shortcuts”—borrowing words and information and ways! The true Knowledge of God and House of God are matters of the heart and soul and Spirit—and “you can’t get there from here!”

In attempting to approach Him and His Work and His Body by asking “HOW?,” we have only limited and set boundaries that will invariably rob us of the very Cross He meant for us to join Him on. And on the cross alone are principalities and powers utterly conquered and humiliated! (Col. 2:8-15; Gal. 2:20, 6:14) If only looking for ideas—to control our destiny and escape our fears—we will NOT find Jesus, or Life in the Body of Christ. We will ultimately only concrete ourselves into the sarcophagus of our own limitations and the finite gray jelly between our ears. And we will sadly seal others’ fates with our own. We are bound in the graveclothes of the faulty concept and deception of the ages, from the Garden of Eden until present: “The only thing that keeps me from having what I want or need is some missing information or elusive method of accomplishing the task.” Knowledge is power, “they” say. “We’re one program, or staff member, or sermon away from the greatness we all seek. For Jesus, naturally.”

Then there must be some accountability program. We must ensure that no one is questioning or non-compliant to our idea and “vision” and plan. Gasp.

It is a terrible, fatiguing, and ruthless cycle—when we build man’s way.

## And God Is Not There

When we attempt to skip the Cross, and find “the key” or “the answer” or “the how-to” and find Life without Jn.12:24—we never find God at all. Certainly we think we desire to do all we do FOR God, but our motives remain shallow and suspect, and our honeymoon successes blind us to the fact that nothing has changed, at its core. The second law of thermodynamics will have its way with such building around ideas, methods, type of edifice, personalities and the like... and it will erode and repeat the dreaded and desperate cycle once again. The failure of man’s religion “for” God (this Life-scarcity obvious to all except those who are drunk on religious merchandise and pay) will

then spawn a new generation of “rebels” such as yourself—to rise up against you and your new fortress.

If, on the other hand, we are not asking “how-to,” but rather, “What’s wrong with me?,” we’ll find a Cross and opportunity to become nothing. When we press our own motives and ask ourselves, “Why does this matter to me, *really*? Why do I *care*?”, and accept no shallow platitudes in response, we are closer to Reality for having tried ourselves, honestly. If instead of “What’s wrong with them?,” and, “How can I ‘do’ it?,” I ask, “How must I change to be like Jesus?”—perhaps there is progress towards a SUPERNatural Life. Will I ask myself, “Is this just superficial ideology, and the fluff of habit or hobby or inheritance?” Will I examine and refine myself with something beyond the externals, and “what I can get” pathetic nature—and ask, “Is this Life in Him, and His Together-Life something and someOne I would pay any price for?” Will I mine the depths of my soul and probe with the question, “Am I doing this for ‘me’—or for HIM?” If the Cross, our cross, never takes us to *that* place, we will never have more than a cheap and lifeless similitude in our lives, fueled by flesh, not Spirit, and a fading Glory, rather than “ever-increasing Glory.” Is there someTHING we desire? Or do we truly desire death on a Cross—the Place where Life begins (Jn. 12:24; Gal. 2:20, 6:14; Lk. 9:23-26, 57-62). There is “an idea that seems right to a man.” But, we’ve tried that.

## “They” Need Fixed!

There’s still more implied in the idea that we can experience Together-Zoe-Life, God’s true Intention for the Church, through acquiring knowledge or by commitment.

By the way, keep proper definitions of terms in mind as you assess your world: Legitimate “born of Heaven” Church Life is the shared Life of Jesus—with daily interaction amongst His ten thousand Gifts. It is a Life in the joyous Commands of “bearing one another’s burdens,” “loving one another deeply from the heart,” “submitting one to another,” “confessing your sins one to another,” “admonishing one another daily,” “bearing with one another,” and “having all things intertwined.” Church is “Together-Zoe Life.” (“Zoe” is the Word Jesus used to describe the “Eternal” and “Indestructible” Life and Glory of God Himself, imparted and shared with those abiding “in Christ.”)

That was fun. Now where were we? Oh yeah...

Also implied in “I can get what we need, if I just know more, or try harder, or acquire the proper ideas and means” is, believe it or not, the idea that “others have let me down.” Take a deep breath and think with me here. Somewhere underneath, way down deep, if we are “seeking ideas” or “ways,” we are probably not *really* asking, “Where has my heart gone astray?” More often, we are asking, at the core of it, “How can I get these other people to change?!” We have missed the Point in “seeing” things this way. And we have missed the Cross. And we have missed all hope for true and permanent Change into His Image and Glory. It’s subtle but Essential!

“Changing people”—is that really what we need to do? Is that really what it is? Better that others are loved into greatness, and see an example of change in *you*. Jesus never coerced people to go where they did not already desire to go. He just went. Come what may. Go and do likewise. You’ll find out who His true Disciples are, unmasking the pretenders and the unBorn by Changing yourself. True Disciples of Jesus always “love the Truth, and so are Saved,” and “love the Light.” “This is the Verdict.”

True Disciples may well resist coercion, repression, and bludgeoning—but they will not resist Truth lived out before them. Pretenders are leaven, yes. But the weak or unknowing may well be the Mighty Men of the future. By implementing “ideas,” or seeking “information” or “methods” to “solve a problem” or to “promote Life”—we miss the very fount of Life itself: a willingness to die to help others who may not yet even realize they need help. Some will love the Light. And these are not the obstacles and the problems—they are Opportunities.

It is not in “getting what we want” that we get what we need.

## What Guarantee Can You Make Me?

We are forever, in our fallen state, our natural minds and our carnal tendencies, wanting something to measure and something to prove and something to “have.” We think if we can’t measure it or prove it, then it must not exist.

“Prove you love me.”

“Is this a Lampstand, a true Church? Yes or no. If not, when will it be? How will I know? How do we get there? What changes once we are a Lampstand?”

“What is my Gift, and how can I know? Can I take an ‘ink blot test’ or something so I can be sure? How should my Gift look, and what should I do now? And now that the results are back from my psycho-gifting test, I should start a ‘ministry,’ shouldn’t I? Well, if you won’t make room for me on the stage, I have every right, don’t I?”

“Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and a bunch of those guys in the Bible couldn’t have been legit, since they didn’t do any miracles. I want to see miracles if I’m going to ‘believe.’”

The quest for the tangible, the provable and the measurable is always the quest of the Nimrods and Judas’ and Korahs and Cains and Uzzahs and Sauls of our day. “‘Show us miracles, and then we’ll believe,’ saith the wicked and adulterous generation.” Entertain me. Prove it to me. Give it to me.

## **But Does It Work? and Other Miserable Questions**

“If this is Truth, where has this concept ‘worked?’”

(“If I can stick my hand in the hole in His side, then I’ll believe.”)

“What will it cost me?”

“How long will it take?”

“What will happen if we fail? What is our contingency plan, and who can we blame?”

“How will we get ‘them’ to change, so we can get things on the right track?”

“What’s in it for me?”

These are all questions that imprison us in the chains of mediocrity. Sadly, many have relegated themselves to this birth and death habitat of the unremarkable and unChristlike. Lack of courage, lack of honesty, and unwillingness to place Jesus (and His Priority) first in their lives and hearts have done them in. The faithless continue their incessant whining for the above-listed assurances. And the exhaust pipe smoke-screen cry for “more information” and “perfect understanding” buys more time and diverts attention. But why do all of that?! Why would we want to hide under a wet, moldy rock with invertebrates?!

A willingness to risk, a willingness to live, a willingness to “share in the fellowship of His sufferings,” a willingness to be used, rejected, and

killed...these are marks of those who will “See the Kingdom” and “See the Lord.”

Information and Formation are not the same. As we’ve said, the first, information, is frequently a diversionary tactic and excuse—for a fear of the second, Formation. “Fast” and “guaranteed” are the seductions of the “virtual” world of television and the internet. But Spiritual Depth and Quality of Life plummet out of reach and disappear when we sell out so easily as that. We don’t need to be afraid of One so committed to us as Jesus!

But, we’re not done yet finding ways to short cut our potential Life in Christ and His Church! “Who will take me there, and therefore take responsibility for the outcome?” Seeking to copy another’s experience as a template of “how to,” or to saddle them up to make them take you to Glory? Is there any hope that this sort of costless, Cross-less shortcut will allow us to “accomplish” our goal? Noper. ☺ Does someone else’s life or a Church somewhere inspire us to learn “how” ideas or techniques, or does their experience of Jesus live to give us HOPE? Oh, what a difference! Is Life a source of information, or is it a spring of Hope and fountain of Gift? The answer to this question in one’s heart will lead one of two places. I know this is tough to grasp, but try. We can, by our choices, either experience the Ishmael fruit of a “sperm donor,” or we can Encounter relationship in the Isaac-Life—born in the testing of Holy Flames and Skandalon.

While Gifts *in relationship* across the cities and continents is a Biblical mandate to fulfill His Purposes on earth, it is also true that men generally WANT a “sperm donor”—not a father. The former brings ideas, and is “for hire.” The latter is as priceless as the cost of Love. *The first scenario will not call for the loss of “control”—as the second always will.*

## Saccharin Is Not Sugar; Saccharin Is More Like $C_7H_5NO_3S$

There is a time honored ritual dance in the business world. When you can’t get the job done yourself, hire a “consultant.” It’s said that at the end of the day, the only ones who benefit from consultants depositing ideas, strategies, teachings, and methods—are those who do the depositing: the *consultants*. Certainly the consultants make the bucks, but the consultant “hire-a-gun” strategy works well for the

little bosses, too. The company may not change or grow, but the little bosses aren't so concerned for the larger picture that isn't about them, necessarily. The little bosses, jealous for control, esteem, and promotion for themselves, more than for the betterment of the company, are not threatened by the "experts" and consultants. Why? Because the way it is set up, the consultant is only a guest with words. The little bosses can diminish, ignore and insult the "hired gun" once the consultant steps out the door. They were visitors who "don't understand us," and now they're gone. Even if the consultant is really good and everyone gets "pumped" while the "consultant" is there... nearly every time, little to nothing changes in the end. Everything reverts back to the comfort zone.

The same is true of the "ten thousand tutors, but not many fathers" in the religious world. The temptation of the little bosses, mini-popes, is to bring in a scapegoat hired gun, while maintaining "control" in themselves. When their esteem or ways are threatened, they resort to belittling, contradicting, scoffing at...or ignoring the "sperm donor" after he is "gone." They would never say it, but, "Relationships are dangerous—they threaten me! But if we can just stick with ideas, motivation, technique, methods, structure, franchising and branding identity—those have some value. Let's stay with those."

Here's one that happens a lot, too. Perhaps the "event" becomes the focus. The consultant's great "teaching." "The Meeting!" We celebrate the moment and content of the "teaching"—rather than participating in and demanding change in the Quality of daily Life. If the "teaching" is any good, the temptation will be that the memory of the "teaching" event or "service" becomes a substitute for Reality. "Remember four years ago when Brother So-and-So said \_\_\_\_\_? Wasn't that AWESOME?" *But, LIFE DOES NOT CHANGE.* That, truly, is worse than a placebo. This world of spiritual consultants "hired" to dispense memorable, cleverly presented information and a short-term adrenal rush... is an anesthetic—a morphine. It not only dulls the pain, but worse—it also clouds the perspective of what can be, what *should* be. The seeming "safety" and "control" of this "predictability-with-no-accountability" makes for a very sad tradeoff.

"Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?"

## Purging

You see, if we won't endure the process of the Abrahamic faith (a life of "no guarantees")—where Truth and obedience and relationship with God are worth more than our physical lives to us, we'll miss it all anyway. Since Jesus IS intertwined intimately with both Truth and His Body, then this must also be True: If we won't persevere and risk when there is no easy out and patented method, then we won't ever even know our own motives in the first place. How easily will we give up? How much inconvenience, or embarrassment, or rejection will we endure? Are we willing to disappoint other folks who live in that gray, twilight world we are stepping out of—long-time companions, mentors, employers, or physical family we have cared about? What cost of finances or sleep or confrontation will we endure?

Do we really want "it" because it cost Jesus His life? Or do we pursue feebly, and are easily sidetracked or dissuaded because it is only a matter of curiosity or hobby, or because it pleases our spouses or parents, or because of its social benefits? Perhaps we're just complying—not dying?

Is the "cost" of reconsidering our life and beliefs and practices too high? WHY do we do what we do? WHY are things around us not Changing towards Him, if they are not? Self-deception, illusion, and blame shifting all make for a rather bland and useless and dishonorable life. If we live in cynicism, or approach God and His Church as if it were religious forensic pathology, we must admit that we are NOT as honorable or wise as we had imagined in our self-flattery. It bears no fruit! It wounds the Father deeply. Let it go.

If "trust" and "faith" are not synonyms, then every dictionary—Greek, English, or otherwise—is in error. Christianity can be defined in no other way. "Those with the Faith of Abraham are sons of Abraham," and "children of the Promise" in Christ Jesus. Let's let Him purge us, as we face Him with open hands. Sure, it's risky. But what is the alternative?

We can trust HIM to take us Home, can't we? YES! He, His Oath, His Covenant, His Blood... make it sure. Faith. Trust.

## Billy Bob's Burger Barn

Our “basket case” pasts, and the irresolvable betrayals in our childhoods and church lives (real or perceived), have put us all in that same heavy boat. We want to protect ourselves from the unknown.

When traveling down the highway in an unknown part of the country, and faced with a choice between “Billy Bob's Burger Barn” and McDonald's... what do you do? What can you “know” for sure? Is “Billy Bob's” the E. coli capital of the world? Are their sandwiches an ongoing salmonella-culture experiment? How can we know? *Maybe* Billy Bob's is the home of the most perfect hamburgers in the western hemisphere. How do we know? Meanwhile.....we DO know about McDonald's. Golden arches, relatively clean bathrooms. A very predictable greasy taste, and a pungent aroma that will adhere to your clothing for three washings. All of this, added to that famed poor nutrition, and more calories per ounce than crude oil. McDonald's is to vitamins what anti-matter is to matter, and a black hole is to a star. It is the white noise of carcinogens. No matter if we are in Moscow, Sao Paulo, Beijing, or New York...a Big Mac attack gets you exactly “that” every time.

But we'll go to Mac's anyway, virtually every time, rather than attempt a Billy Bob's surprise. Why, oh, WHY?!

Simple. Because it's KNOWN!

“Knowing” the terrible is so much easier for us than to be “out of control” by “not knowing.” We're so weak, and so compliant, aren't we? ☺

Human nature is generally *so afraid of the unknown* that most everyone will settle for *known* poverty, rather than risk the unknown. And this same very weak and human character trait carries over into far more important decisions than our lunch options. It happens to us again and again in life-and-death Spiritual decisions, as well.

We hate risking what we think we “have”—no matter how it has proven itself inadequate and unBiblical. We will defend it to the hilt, jealously guarding its dark secrets and lack of Life, *just because of the golden arches*. Sunday and Wednesday and the music and the programs and the lack of intrusion are predictable. It's “right” because I understand it and control its relationship to me. I can “wear” it like a shirt, and

discard it as I please. And from one city or country to the next, the food tastes the same. No matter its content—if it is acceptable to my palette and comfort zone.

As a child is often afraid to turn the light out at night... many Christians are afraid to turn the light on.

Consequently, to protect ourselves, we keep asking questions, demanding proofs, scientifically establishing “orthodoxy according to grandma and what everyone else is doing.” We’ll easily close our eyes to what surrounds us as it compares with the Quality of Life of Acts 2:42-47. We’d sooner eat junk food our whole lives, than risk. We’ll procrastinate and hide behind our “questions”—just to draw attention away from our own doubts and fears, and the sins we don’t desire to eliminate from our lives.

That, we think, puts us “in charge” to test others, instead of ourselves. It’s more gratifying to our human flesh to evaluate and judge what we don’t understand, and to desire “how-to’s” and methods and “ten thousand teachers” and authors and musicians, than to go to Him “outside the city gate,” “outside the camp”...and risk.

We guardedly acknowledge our need for Change, but desire to hedge our investments by sticking an old tennis shoe in the back door—to keep it open for a hasty exit if we feel threatened.

Yea, but!! Why protect what “works” to make us comfortable, when often what “works” has little to no value—at least compared to what could and ought to be?

## **If Jesus IS Truth, Is Truth REALLY “Optional”?**

With hamburgers, it doesn’t matter all that much where we decide to stop for lunch. But when we treat Truth and Life in this manner, we are only proving that it is all very optional to us, very expendable or replaceable. If we treat the Truths of Jesus and His Church and Kingdom as optional, we’re saying that our personal comfort has more value to us than pleasing Jesus in the Highest possible way, and Changing at the fastest possible rate. We often allow the world, “and how everything is,” to define and control us, rather than us defining the world around us—and calling it to task for the contradictions between it and the Ways and Life of Jesus.

The consequences of not wearing our chameleon-colored Sunday outfit? We might get eaten if we don't blend in. Is it worth the risk to question what we KNOW is mediocre? Can we, for Jesus sake, shove off into the deep—willing to face our own weaknesses and now-obvious limitations and lack of Spiritual depth? You bet it is.

Not that anyone will make it easy for us to jump off of the marionette stage. “Simon says, ‘Dress up.’ Simon says, ‘Lift your hands.’ Simon says, ‘Sing this song.’ Simon says, ‘Shake hands with the marionette next to you.’ Simon says, ‘Repeat after me.’ Simon says, ‘As we all stand and sing.’ Simon says, ‘Every head bowed.’”

Not that God gives guarantees to children of Abraham. Not that He won't ask you to kill your Isaac. Not that you'll avoid a cross.....

## Heisenberg or Hindenburg?

BUT, it's pretty important how you face this thing called “Christianity” and “Truth.” And, if you ever were to visit here, don't expect us to make it easy for you by letting you borrow an idea or two to take home with you, so you can have what we Have. ☺ In fact, we'll probably make you miserable and confuse the daylights out of you with what you *thought* we were supposed to do and say, and how you *think* you witnessed us to be. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle of Subatomic Particle Theory applies to you, you know. But you already thought of that. ☺ The fact that you're present with the “whoever you are” you brought with you—means you'll never see “how things are” anyway! “IT” all changed to deal with your presence. If you're loud or obnoxious or proud, the home or the city park full of Saints are all affected by, and sensitive to your presence, and sobered by your Needs. If you're fearful or shy, judgmental or cynical, dull or lifeless, hyperspiritual or the antichrist...everything, everywhere True saints are, will CHANGE to deal with your presence. You'll *never* see anything you *think* you see, anyway! And it probably won't be any fun, either. Legalism in your bones and brain will be scandalized by our Liberty. Or your carelessness and lawlessness will be exposed and scandalized by Truth and our passion for obedience.

BUT, you can always judge us to make it easier to go back into whatever you *were* doing. That'll make it easier. Try that. ;)

## OR!!!

OR, we could always consider working together, falling in love all the more with Jesus, together, and living in the wonderful peace of His Light and Liberty... TOGETHER!

Oh, I have to admit... I'll be honest with you here. I like that better. 😊

*In Jesus' Love and Hope,  
mike, with the saints here*



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# CATALYST: A Priesthood, Living In the Light, Together, Daily

*Tuesday, July 23, 1996*

*The following is an answer to some questions folks had in another city, and a transcript of the answer (which I didn't realize was being recorded). Hope it is Helpful. It is, amongst other things, a discussion of the value of living close together—while avoiding a “religious” counterfeit!*

One mistake that I've seen people make is thinking that something one might call “communal living” has great spiritual value. I've seen enough attempts at “church life” on five continents to say that communal living is not the issue. What is the issue? If you really, really want to grow spiritually, there is much value in having people very near you in physical living proximity—true disciples of Jesus with whom you can interact spontaneously—those who can “see” into your life as they see into the eyes of Jesus.

While “communal living” is neither biblical nor valuable nor advisable, there is value to living in such a way that “things” can happen that you don't plan. There is powerful Opportunity in those times when you are seen when you don't plan on anyone seeing you (as opposed to “putting on your Sunday best” to go do “fellowship” or “bible study” or “Worship” or “home meetings” on some scheduled basis). If you really want to grow spiritually, proximity or geographic closeness in our living situations is of great worth. Yet, that is a totally different animal than “communal living.” One is very much in danger of being religious, and the other is (if invested in, with the right motives) spiritual. One says, “This is a neat way to live! Let's hang out together. Let's do spiritual stuff all the time—like a never-ending retreat or christian campground!”

Well, most folks get pretty sick of that after awhile. And even if it's somewhat sustainable, most of the saints' *lives* don't change measurably when "lifestyle" is the focus rather than Light. A true disciple of Jesus isn't much interested for very long if "externals" are the focus and the glue that holds "the group" together. But I'll tell you what you'll *never* get sick of if you are a true disciple of Jesus. That is bumping into people constantly, night and day, night and day, night and day that want to help you become more like Jesus. That *can* help expose things in your heart. That can essentially, be a catalyst to the Journey we are on toward Jesus and "on earth as it is in Heaven!"

A catalyst in a chemical reaction is when some chemical is added to another chemical reaction in order to speed up the process. The chemical reaction is going to happen anyway. It may take three years, but it's going to happen anyway. If you put these certain chemicals together, things are going to happen. When a catalyst is added, the whole process speeds up. Something that would have happened in three years, now takes perhaps five minutes. That's what living close together, and attempting to get employment together, and doing the "mundane" things of life together does for us (amongst several other wonderful things). It is a catalyst in our growth toward the Father, as well as precipitates a glorious opportunity to show all men we are His Disciples by the love that they observe that we have for one another. This physical proximity in daily living (neighborhoods and workplaces and evenings and travel and errands and \_\_\_\_\_!) brings us into situations every day (Hebrews 3:12-14 commands it anyway ☺) that are a catalyst toward all that we live for anyway: "We make it our goal to please Him" as we "live for Him who died for us."

The "communal" thing? We could live close together for years, and if we are not about the Father's business, if we don't cherish and value Christ's character, if we won't do the Work in one another's lives and families, it is only a fad for our entertainment. If we can "fellowship" with something other than Jesus (allowing unregenerate or unconsecrated flesh in the individualistic people's lives around us), and it does not bother us, we are serving only ourselves. If we're not going to apply the Word of God and do something about it every day of our lives, then living close together is but a religious commune, and little good can be said of it. On the other hand, if what you really want is the Word of God to fill and be applied to your life every day, then living close together, and having employment together, shopping together,

or anything else you can think of, will lead to “contending as one man for the Faith,” “one heart, one mind,” “of one accord,” “counting none of your possessions as if you are an owner rather than a slave.” If you cherish and value fellowship with God and you love others enough to want that for them too—and are willing to help them overcome the sin that limits their relationship with Him—then living close together and meeting “daily in public and from house to house” has great value. If you want to magnify Jesus in those that are part of the Church Jesus has placed you in, and are willing to “wrestle to present them perfect in Christ”—if that’s your goal, then proximity is an incredible catalyst toward that end. If it’s not that, we’d all be better off sitting in a pew.

If WE’RE not going to be the Royal Priesthood, putting men’s hands into God’s, then we’d be better off listening to someone give a speech on Sunday morning and singing some pre-arranged songs than to think that Ephraim’s cake in a home meeting or innovative “service” is of any lasting value. The adrenaline “rush” from “group therapy,” or the new dynamic of, “Now I get to have a turn saying something in the meeting” will be fleeting and not particularly life-changing as the years roll on. But we speak of something far greater. Not of informal, creative meetings. Not of a neato-keeno lifestyle of hanging out together in some sort of religious throwback to the 60s flower-child movement, where health food and home school are substituted for tie-dye and bellbottoms. But we speak of every person that wears Jesus’ Name being actively about the Father’s business—“in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed” in their brothers and sisters.

Unto “the full measure of the stature of Jesus Christ,” “no longer infants tossed to and fro.” That’s what we need to be after. Not a “movement” or a fad or an “alternate” way of having “church,” but “everyone members of one another, loving each other with God as our Father, Who loves us as a mother loves her newborn child.” The things that happen as we rise up, as we sit down, as we walk along the way (because we have *chosen* to get close and lay down our lives for each other every day), instead of the religious events that are on our calendar every Sunday or Wednesday or Friday, have great value in speeding up the maturity process in each of us. Being close to each other geographically has great value if you’re looking for opportunities to do God’s Work in and with others, and if you really want personally to become more like Jesus. If you don’t want to change and you don’t want to do the Work of God, then do not move close together, because it will be intimidating

or intrusive or annoying to you. If you do want to do the Work of God (and the Standard is that everyone that calls themselves Christian does—[1Jn. 2:6]), then a commitment to being close together through every process of living will speed up the process of your maturity. That mutual commitment to the daily lives, the hopes and dreams, the marriages and child-rearing, the personal character and priorities of all those “the Father has given” you, those fellow “members” of the Church you are a part of, that mutual commitment will be a catalyst that will multiply your personal growth, and theirs, times TEN, easily.

If your only goal in life is to be more like Jesus, and to help others to know Him better also, why wouldn't you pour the catalyst in? Why wouldn't you set aside your comfortable, convenient living situation and determine that GOD will determine the exact time and place where you should live? Why wouldn't you determine to live in a place, and in such a way as to “seek *first* the Kingdom” (His Kingdom is where His People are!) and experience the catalyst that will speed your fullness of Him? Why not put aside the reasons you live *where* you do and *how* you do? Those reasons are typically to be in some certain school district, or close to a job, or near parents, or in a nice neighborhood, or near a park, or in a city where you can make the most of your career or enjoy the weather—motives born out of self-life and love of the world. If you have other goals in life, other than to be joined to Him, then seeking the Kingdom first (rather than after you have what you want) could be an annoyance to you. And you'll do fine attending something in a religious facility or in a house. If you just kind of want to meter it out at your own pace, that's man's religion, and you really don't want to live close to people who care passionately about Jesus and His body. But if you don't want to meter it out, if you want to abandon yourself into growing as fast as possible, and everyone else in the Church does too, then it can be really, really special. Not inward-looking. Not chumming and warm fuzzies. Not a “pooling of ignorance,” or an amateur talent show on Sundays in a house. But a Holy Tool that will change, first the universe inside of you, and then the universe around you for the Glory of the Living Christ of God. A catalyst to your destiny and for those He has privileged you to care for. Please consider all of this? So many know “what ‘it’ isn't”—but few have found yet “what ‘it’ IS.”

Why should you devote yourself to being involved in the very details of each other's lives on a daily basis? Isn't that “nuking the proverbial gopher hole”? It is, as mentioned, a clear command from the Master,

for one. But, even more, it is motivated by His desire to win others. How does “wrestling to present one another complete in Christ” leave any time to try to save others? Isn’t having our own independent “ministries” the best way to use our gifts and do the Work? Nope. All of 1 Corinthians 12 is clear about the need for mutual dependency if we’re going to please Him and serve Him well. How do we reach others? “This is how all men will know you are my disciples...” By the good things you say? By your gift? *Or by the love that they see you having for one another?* They can’t see you having love for one another if you are always out there someplace doing your own thing, and then you show up for a meeting, formal or informal, and sing real well. For Jesus’ sake, people need to see you loving each other. “This is how all men will know you are my disciples.” It has great outward value to love on each other in your daily lives, and for men to *see* you loving on each other in your daily lives.

So again, I want to distinguish very clearly between communal living, which is generally appalling to unBelievers, and “wrestling to present one another perfect,” and using every available tool to do that, which has great value in God’s sight and in our experience. So Acts 2 was not simply a cultural phenomenon for then only. It was the product of people wanting to be like Jesus. It also was not religious mandate to live close together, and share money and possessions in a communal way. You need to know the difference between those two. (Peter was clear with Ananias that the land and money that was his, it was his—not shared. It was simply that those in the first century did not value material possessions as the world did, and “counted” those possessions, case by case, as of less value to them than to serving God.) It’s about your heart and your intent to be a priest on a daily basis, not about externals.

Don’t mess around with all of this as a fad or a way to be “heard” since the “pastor” wouldn’t let you before. Unless you intend fully on being exposed and doing the work of God in each other’s lives, you’re better off in a pew. Don’t move close together—you don’t want that catalyst in your life. It will annoy the daylights out of you if you don’t really love the Light, and want that level of involvement, and want to grow to be like Jesus in a rapid (and always humbling!) way. Hey, you guys are not young puppies anymore. For the most part, you guys have used most of your available man-hours already—a lot of you guys are getting older. The fact is, if I can dare to say this, you may have actually wasted a good

portion of your allotted days by not doing anywhere near what God intended for you to do with your life. Why not, if your sole purpose is to KNOW Him, be more like Him as a result of knowing Him, and to do God's Work...why not pour in every available "catalyst"? Why not spend the rest of your years available for something that's far more useful to God and others? It will show you who you really are—like little else can. Are you ready for that? There is a price, for sure. But, *OH, HOW IT'S WORTH IT!!*

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# Do We Need “Church Planters”?

*Saturday Morning, January 2, 1999*

*Here are some thoughts responding to a slew of questions about the gift of “church planters.” Below is a cut-n-paste merging of several letters and conversations with folks from a number of places...*

## Common Questions:

*“As we’ve reviewed reading material (from various sources) currently available regarding the ‘beginning’ of a local assembly of Believers, one thing is emphasized over and over again. This is the concept that success can ONLY be had when there is a planter. This is pretty disheartening to us, as we have no planter. If Father’s heart is for us to have eternal life, and ‘eternal life is to know Him,’ then isn’t a true body of believers simply a collection, or coming together of those who have seen (a revelation of) their Lord? If any collection of people wants to chase Him, desires to have Him, and is willing to follow Him, isn’t that a ‘church’—planter or no planter?*

*“However! I also have to admit that we have many, many problems in our band of folks here. Our group is really quite immature with lots of reactions and suspicion. Many (though not all) have been badly hurt in religious situations previous to coming together outside of the institutional setting. Sometimes things don’t look very saintly around here. There are folks that are lazy, and others with out-of-control families. Some like to dominate, and with others you would have to wonder if there is anything inside of them at all. Some are friendly and ‘would give you the shirt off their backs’—but are very shallow, at best. Some have agendas or talents or knowledge that they want a stage for. Others just want to do something spiritual while maintaining their worldly lifestyles—and WITHOUT anyone saying anything or touching it, or intruding into their evenings or*

*hobbies or occupations. Others may be in love with Jesus (everyone seems to be when we're worshipping, don't they?)—but the fact that they have no interest in living any closer than twenty miles to other saints makes me wonder what is really most important to them. Are they seeking first the KINGDOM (the expression of His Reign in His People), or just adding some form of weakly 'fellowship' to a health food and home school lifestyle—with time, attention, and affection dominated by their own biological family units? I know that's definitely not what Jesus taught us to do.*

*“SO, isn't all of that really a sign of a lack of devotion to Jesus, rather than a need for a 'church planter'? What good will a 'church planter' be if people aren't really sold out for Jesus anyway? And if they are sold out for Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit, then we wouldn't need a 'church planter' at all, would we? So, in either case, how would it matter if we 'had one' or not??”*

**G**reat question. Very important. I only have a few moments to offer some additional thoughts to you, but hopefully this will be helpful.

*YES, the gift of apostle is very important in God's Plan for a local assembly. Especially if many are lukewarm or confused or wandering. And especially if many are on fire for Jesus! Apostles are still extremely important!! The best masons, carpenters, electricians, and plumbers in the galaxy cannot build a house without the additional gifts related to seeing the design of the house in that locale. Paul called it the gift of “architect.” This gift can “see” how it all fits together. This gift helps give the other Believers the freedom to develop and use their gifts. The “apostolic” gift helps the other gifts to not step all over each other “laying dry wall before the plumbing is installed.” It really is an essential gift. Sure, folks can be Christians and enjoy Jesus and be saved and pray and worship together without this gift. You could compare this to the Jewish “place of prayer” by the river—where Paul looked for Jews who were “two or three gathered” in a city. This was where Paul found Lydia and a few others in Philippi. But an *Ekklesia*, a “Lampstand,” is a different matter. That gift of architect is extremely important if we want a *Home* for Jesus, a Bethany where He can truly rest, rather than having to fight His way through carnality day and night.*

The truth is, most folks, even if messy and worldly in their current lives, would *change* and give up their worldly priorities, their early bedtimes (when necessary for Higher things), their selfish habits and spending, and their family idolatry and other stuff...*IF* they had something clear in front of them to live *FOR*.

“*REPENT!*” Why? “*FOR THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND!*”

“*The people cast off restraint!*” Why? “*For lack of REVELATION.*”

Some people are surely religious pretenders that don’t WANT everything to belong to Jesus. Jesus will do as a figurehead, or a genie-in-a-bottle. But they “won’t have this Man to be KING over them.” However, there are *many* folks that are only messing around in mediocrity because they don’t have a revelation of all that can be! They “cast off restraint” and live like carnal men because they can’t SEE it. They don’t repent because they don’t experience much of the Kingdom “at hand.” Guess what? The Foundational gifts help folks make it that were meandering, and exposes those that just look good on the outside, but don’t “love the Light.” Without these gifts, it’s not too likely that these things will be resolved very well or very quickly—if at all.

(By the way, I don’t find “church planter” to be a reasonable or spiritually sound translation of the gift now often referred to in writings on the subject. I certainly DO understand why some would want to get away from the intimidating word that is translated/transliterated “apostle”—but “church planter” is far from the mark. It is too incomplete, and somewhat misleading, since the twelve were not primarily church planters, but were *clearly* apostles.

There is *much* more to being an *architekton*, a “wise master builder” than simply “planting churches.” There is a difference in how Paul expressed his Gifting, and how Peter, for example, expressed his. But in every case, “church planting” was not the primary issue or even the focus. It was often the product of what they were doing, or the starting place of what they were about to do, but not the goal. For that reason, calling this gift “church planter” instead of apostle, simply because a lot of folks are uncomfortable with this word, isn’t a great idea. It is too limiting. Jesus gave glorious new meaning to the word *apostolos*, as He did *ekklesia*, *agape*, and numerous other words that existed in His day. While we are NOT speaking of capital “A” Apostle—the Twelve—in what follows, I don’t want to trivialize or minimize anything God intends when He speaks of apostles, little “a,” either.)

Now, letting the Scriptures speak,

*“He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the shepherds and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.*

*“Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love” (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

To be perfectly honest, no matter what we’d want to believe about it, these gifts are essential for about *nine* different *extremely* important things to every sincere Believer. This “list” of incredible things to be gained, mentioned in the scriptures above, is the *result* of interaction with these “Gifts” mentioned in the first verse. HOW does one become “no longer an infant”? HOW does one grow into “the full measure of the stature of Christ” and become useful to God by being able to do *their* “works of service”? Not by personal desire or personal commitment, but by *relationship* with the gifts that Jesus ascended on High to give to the Church. (Obviously this is not referring to the original Twelve in this Scripture, since He chose those twelve before He “ascended on High.” There is much more that could be said to make this point about the necessity of the present-day Gift, if He would give it, but we won’t delve into that subject at this time.) This apostolic Gift (Gk. *apostolos*) will be needed “*until*” (Gk. *mechris*) we all reach unity of the faith, and all the other wonders mentioned. That would certainly include our generation. No doubt about it.

And the troublesome situations you mentioned certainly *would* be much helped and eventually resolved (one way or another) by involvement of the gifts that lay Foundations (Eph. 2, 1Cor. 3)—“the apostles and prophets.” This, of course is *not* about the charismatic movements’ versions of gifts: bending spoons, memorizing birthdays, and stained-glass voices prophesying flattery or doom. “Church

planting” is *not* the issue, really, either. But the GIFTS mentioned, “first apostles, second prophets, then teachers,” are necessary for the nine or so amazing and wonderful things God has listed. “Two or three gathered” can have a measure of good stuff going on. However, you will also find heartache, confusion, leaven, domineering flesh, and a bunch of other stuff—that can *rarely* ever really be resolved without these Gifts being involved. I wish it weren’t that way, but it is. Both scripturally, and experientially.

Let me give you an example from the world. A guy named Archimedes discovered, around 250 B.C., what is referred to as “the lever.” This “device” allowed a man to move objects weighing many times a man’s weight, from one place to another. He is quoted as saying, “Give me a lever long enough, and a place to stand, and I can move the entire world!” THIS is the awesome Gift of God in the “foundation of the apostles and prophets.” When a Foundation is laid in a relationship with Foundational, architectural gifts there is Spiritual “leverage” to move the ugly, complicated, unSpiritual problems that inevitably come up. There is *a place to stand* to resolve the issues and the challenges of daily life in the church. And they *will* come up! The apostle lays, as no other gift can, a foundation of “obedience of the faith.” Then, when the storms come, the house will stand. The gates of hell will not prevail. Now we *can* find answers. Now the “impasses” don’t separate God’s People. No longer is the only choice: “agree to disagree.” What a pathetic curse that would be.

When the Foundation of Jesus and “obedience of the Faith” is laid, the teens will *NOT* be lost to the world, and will *NOT* “sow their wild oats.” This is an incredible rarity, instead of the norm. There won’t be constant problems with out-of-control children, manipulative women, and spineless (or dictator-like) men. You won’t find yourself wondering if those that are part of the “fellowship” are even truly in love with Jesus and consecrated to Him. In most situations, without these gifts, you won’t even *know* if half of the folks in “the fellowship” lead worldly lives. There isn’t enough mutual daily relationship to even know. Leaven can easily coexist, against God’s clear command, in such a disconnected environment. Crisis after crisis, leaven galore—and little of it can be solved. (And nothing can be solved with legalism, obviously.)

*This is the dilemma* usually encountered when a group of Believers does not have involvement with the Gifts Jesus ascended to give to His church. Problem after problem. And you just can’t sing or preach

or program your way out of those kinds of things. Nor can you ignore the sins and problems and claim no responsibility (“The Holy Spirit will solve it”) without defying many, many commands and teachings from God.

As was said earlier, though, these problems of ongoing sin and devastation will *seldom* happen in an environment of LIFE, and a True Apostolic Foundation. And when the problems do come up amongst the new Believers or those that move in, or those that temporarily lose their way (and this will happen), the problems can be solved with Grace. Why? Because the Scriptures say that on this Apostolic Foundation (*assumed* in the New Testament beginning days), folks will “admonish one another DAILY...so that none will be hardened and deceived!” *Without* a proper foundation, dealing with problems cannot happen without all sorts of weirdness and difficulties. *With* a Foundation, and relationship with the Gifts Jesus ascended on High to give to His Church, problems can be addressed and solved with grace and love and prophetic Wisdom. “From the least to the greatest” they will *all* love the Light, and *all* KNOW HIM!

So, you really should build some relationships with those that MAY be able to help lay a Foundation there. You’ll likely lose some of the people that are self-centered and worldly. There are always the types that you won’t be able to Work with: Ananias, Sapphira, Alexander, Hymenaeus, Achan, Simon the sorcerer, Elymas Bar-Jesus, Jannes and Jambres, the oozing hyper-spiritualists, Demas (“who loved this world”), Diotrefes (“who loves to be first”), Korah (“But WE have the Holy Spirit TOO!”), Balaam (who is motivated to “serve God” by personal gain), Cain (who has his own way of doing things, and is crazed with jealousy, and mocks the idea of being his brother’s keeper) [these last three are spoken of in the book of Jude as *modern* assaults on God’s Plan]. And others (Tit. 3:10; 1Cor. 5, etc.). (Please take the time to consider the spirit of each of the men that I’ve mentioned above, one by one. You’ll see real people like them again and again in the years to come.) However, when there is a “Foundation,” these sorts of issues *can* be resolved. Where there is not an Apostolic Foundation and relationship, there will be confusion, and worse.

Frankly, I wouldn’t write off the necessity of foundational Gifts as essential for ongoing corporate Life. They *will* actually help solve those sorts of problems that you mentioned. They will do it by inspiration, by example, by supernatural gifting to expose and strengthen, and

whatever else is required. Biblically, spiritual growth is not simply about sincerity and commitment. Sincerity and commitment are greatly enhanced by the foundational gifts we've spoken of. And for those who are weak, but *want* to be fully given to Jesus, they will be tremendously helped (Eph. 4:11ff). The pretenders that love the world and the things of the world (while putting on a good external religious act, of course, and glad to "attend" something "cutting edge") will *hate* these gifts. Remember Paul said, with good reason, "We are either the aroma of life, or we are the stench of death." Does a man "love the Light" or "hate the Light" (to put it in Jesus' Words)? His receptivity to the Gifts Jesus ascended on High to give to His Church... ***will be proportional to how much he desires Light to expose him in the inner man.***

All over the world, literally, many, many attempts have been made to have meaningful corporate life. The motives are usually very pure: for Jesus' sake, and for the sake of His lambs. Some approach it innocently, in a misguided way: "We're all Christians and 'love the Lord' so we ought to be able to just love each other. Any good Christian should be able to have real church and real daily life. And we don't want any more 'clergy'!"

Clergy, an official "head of the meeting" (in a religious building—or in a living room), an "official leader of the church"—these are all serious mistakes (made by most religious groups on earth!) But it is also true that the foundational GIFTS Jesus gives are incredibly important. *Saul* was a "clergyman" (king) of Israel. He was the official main person. *Samuel* was a "brother amongst brothers," with a gift and relationship with God. He had no title, no office, no staff, no salary, no NOTHING. He was just a man who walked with God, and was gifted by God for the Tasks he was given. What a difference there was between Samuel and Saul, though both were "leaders of Israel." One was assigned and empowered externally, and the other just did whatever he did. Did Israel *need* Samuel? Of course Israel was infinitely better off with his gifts available to them. They would never know how much they needed him. But, a gift can never be replaced with a "position," as Israel attempted to do with Saul. Clergy? System? Scheduled visits of God? Gimmicks? NO, NO, NO!!!

Well, I've already said that I've never seen or heard of a, "We all have the Holy Spirit, so it's my turn" group of folks prospering for very long. "Let's make every Tuesday meeting 'African-American Day' where only they can talk. And then Thursday can be Ladies' Day. And Friday will

be ‘Happy Hour’ where people are only allowed to say ‘happy’ things. And, of course, when ‘revelation comes to the second’ (1Cor. 14:30), he’ll have to remember if he already has used up his five minute allotment for the week. There are rules that must be considered—before he decides if he can obey God and speak up and let Life flow from His relationship with Jesus and the saints.” I think it’s obvious that these silly things bear no resemblance to the apostolic and biblical story. They won’t be needed when Jesus is Reigning and His Gifts are finding their place, on a daily basis. Meetings are just “extra” anyway. Meetings are not the central feature of what Jesus has brought from Heaven to earth. Meetings are simply the overflow of what is already happening, daily, from house to house and workplace to workplace and errand to errand and chore to chore.

Days and years on end, those who are related intimately to architectural gifts are free to love Jesus, desirous of Light, and protected from the ambition and flesh of men. Given the chance to have relationship with Gifted men and women, and inviting them (as Epaphras did with Paul in Colosse) to have authority in their midst, I’d highly recommend the nine or so things in Ephesians 4 to anyone! (Be assured, though, that they will NOT function as mere men do as they exercise authority, or anything even *close* to that.)

Many are too ashamed to send some from “the household of Chloe” after Paul when the problems come. They have often been “blackmailed” by those with something to lose, locally. “You’re not going to call him again, are you? Shame on you. We can handle it—don’t always be calling them—we all have the Holy Spirit. You’re just being weak, and not trusting Jesus.” This is the song that some will sing that don’t love the Light and don’t respect the fact that GOD set it up to intertwine Gifts across the miles. Pride is a big problem. *Why* did the folks in Corinth and “the household of Chloe” feel so comfortable traveling many miles to give Paul a very detailed account of all the problems in Corinth? Because it was GOD’S Plan to utilize these Gifts to build up and protect His Body! The neglect of the Gifts He has given to help solve the problems will allow unnecessary tragedy in our lives and environment, more often than not. Whenever we refuse to call on those gifts that can help us (out of pride or laziness or man-pleasing or lack of understanding), the unnecessary harm to the Body of Christ, to teens, to young children, to marriages, to the neighborhood is very sad. Let’s not be afraid of the Ways God has set

out to help His People! Remember this: GOD HIMSELF chose this Plan (Ephesians 4 gifts) for helping His People prosper. Why should we be ashamed or afraid of it?

Need to take off—the whole Church will be together in a few minutes... (Actually, now that I look at the clock, they've been together for a pretty good while now, and I'd like to get there.) *Love to you!*

P.S. Now *finding* disciples of Jesus with these foundational Gifts—Gifts that lead people toward Jesus and away from sin, and bring Vision and order to God's House so that all the gifts can function on a daily basis in Life—now that's a little harder than simply believing it's necessary. But we have to start somewhere. (And a person that teaches about it—ain't necessarily "it"! By their *fruit* you'll know them, not by their leaves. Jesus said, "Wisdom is proved right by her children." Look for real, living babies.)

Here's the deal. If we're not "asking the Lord of the harvest" because we don't see the need, we've missed the starting place. *PLEASE* don't "wait" on some ribbon-cutting ceremony, or for someone on a white horse to show up to be our hero and "plant" us. *BUT*, let's at least, while we're along the river worshipping, be asking that God would give us, or bring us, whatever "*tools*" are necessary to build His House in this location! And receive them as He provides. If they're the real thing, they won't push themselves on you, anyway. Only the pretenders are boastful and ambitious. Good night.



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# He “Determines the Exact Times And Places Where Men Should Live”

*Friday Morning, May 25, 2001*

*Question: Brother, I am receiving a blessing from the Lord in the articles sent me. Thanks. I get the impression you don't try to get people moving up there to join in communion with the believers in Indianapolis. What is a “loner” to do who cannot in pure conscience expose myself and my family to the wickedness in the institutional church, and doesn't want the “home meetings” if they are more of the same. I am going to have to move soon and desire to relocate to be around some elders of the faith. What is the reason that you all aren't trying to get people to move there? Are you exclusive, or wanting to avoid corruption, or something altogether different?*

**H**i Roy... As for moving here? I'd like you to read, “Are You Exclusive?” I'll send it along again, if I haven't already sent it. It is *seriously* important that “the Lord add to our number” rather than any humans doing it. We could have easily many hundreds here (many, many hundreds—based on the number that have expressed the desire) if we did what most do: *recruit*—or *advertise* or *promote* or *allow* folks to move here based on anything external. Many have moved here, over time, but it is a *very* important issue to consider wisely. God's House “is built with Wisdom.” And, “Unless the LORD builds the House, its builders build in vain” (Ps. 127:1). What a crummy thing that would be!!

Something I said years ago, to a brother who was a “pastor”/“elder” of a large body of Believers, on the subject: “What if you woke up tomorrow morning and you had an extra ten children sitting at your

breakfast table? Would that be “exciting” or “heart-warming” or “ego-stroking” for you? Or would it be *frightening*????!!!! If we’re talking about “joining an organization” (a program, an orphanage that pays by the head)—then *recruit away*. Nearly all do, because nearly all are. More bodies equal more talent, more money, more power, and more prestige. Jesus didn’t seem to see it that way, did He? Ozzie Chambers once said that everything Jesus seemed to accomplish on earth before He was killed...could fit in a rowboat. And yet, the *world* was changed because He built well. He wasn’t “recruiting” numbers. See John 6, for example, where He intentionally scared off the numbers! And the “rich young ruler” *could have brought so much to the table!* Now *who* would have intentionally done that to a recruit of *that* caliber—except Jesus? As Paul would say, “It is the same now.” An organization desires numbers, influence, money, and talent—so recruit away! But if you’re a Family—there is a responsibility that is *off the scale* in caring for them and all that they are and all that they’ll become. You had *better* make sure “the LORD added to the number”—or you are committing *suicide*, and *homicide* (for others who will be harmed) by “*recruiting*” people.

Hebrews 13:17 speaks of “giving an account” for the *outcome* of a person’s life. That is not something to take lightly. I can give no “account” or “vouch for” anyone that does not *LOVE THE LIGHT*. They are destined for much harm. And how do we know if they “love the Light”? Only through *relationship*. There is nothing to “attend” in the Church here. There are NO “services” per se, here. There is *zero* on the “calendar” for “scheduled” anything! Most folks in most cities, content in their middle class soccer and piano lesson and occupational/recreational worlds *don’t even want* a life that is *fully* given over to “doing nothing that the Father is not doing.” They *think* they do—but they would chafe when it comes down to it. “‘Religion’ is supposed to be comfortable and fun and without cost or pain, and is meant to serve *me* on *my* schedule.” Well, that’s not how family is, though, is it? Right? (Though, Families can have *much* fun, and we surely do!)

Yet, *mostly*, it is about mutual concern. See 1 Corinthians 12. *Mostly*, it is about “wrestling to present one another complete in Christ.” *Mostly*, we are “in the pains of childbirth until Christ is fully formed” in one another, and they are “no longer infants tossed to and fro,” but exhibiting “the full measure of the stature of Christ.” And we pay a very high price to see that in one another, as Paul said, and he and Jesus demonstrated. In Family, that’s just how it is. Doesn’t a mother

or a father lose sleep at the slightest choking sound from their child's room at night? They're *there*, and they *care!* How many parents ("I write to you fathers, because you have Known Him who is from the Beginning") have sacrificed *immensely* for their children's well-being, care, clothing, housing, training, education...and the child never even knew it was happening because the parent suffered in silence, out of love. A family is a *costly* thing. An organization—well, that's another story. And we're all familiar with that story, as well as the *outcome*, the *fruit* of that particular unBiblical thing (services, programs, hierarchies, choreography, "ministry" ego stuff, youth groups, etc.) whether in a home or in an edifice.

God's desire is that we be true Family. "A hundred" *close relatives*, not third cousins. "I was like a father to you; I nurtured you as a mother... night and day, house to house, with tears." "You have 10,000 tutors—but you know the *real* thing is about *Fathering*," said Paul to his Family. Jesus said, "I didn't lose any that you have given Me, Father." Jesus "lost" almost everyone he met ("Jerusalem, Oh, Jerusalem! I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but YOU would not!"). And yet *some* the Father "gave" Him—and He didn't lose ANY of those. The FATHER builds our lives together, at HIS discretion. And we need to be *listening*, not reacting or getting our human fingerprints on His Things. Make sense?

So, approximately 108% of the time, we strongly encourage folks to Work very hard in the relationships that they currently have. *Very* seldom are folks *really* working hard to make certain that *everyone* in their current world has *every* chance to consider the Truths that they have come to Experience! Why should God's People, wherever, not have *every* chance to consider Truths that you or I have had Opportunity to consider? To pull up and leave before every effort has been made, would be like leaving an apartment building to move somewhere else. You or I sneak out and load the moving truck in the middle of the night, pull the children out of bed and vanish. Maybe you have discovered that toxic radiation is leaking into the building where you have lived from a waste dump the apartment was built on. To leave? That *may* make sense, if you love your family. But to NOT tell your neighbors, and make every effort for them, too? How wrong that would be! SO, for those who are working hard in their locales for Jesus, we may work some with them to help God's People, if that seems "good to all, and to the Holy Spirit." If, in the end, we get to know a person in another city

better by co-laboring with them, and it appears that Father wants them (maybe months or years or decades later) to move here, so be it. That's HIS Business. BUT, it comes out of the dynamic of Life shared, and Relationship—not a cool thing to do or an escape from anything.

There may be, and have been other scenarios, but you get the idea. Family is a *serious* matter, and we've got to do it all God's Way, or we have nothing and can be of little Use to Him. Wood, hay, and stubble—does the religious world need to be any more flammable than it already is?!!

Is it important to be careful for the other reason you mentioned, too. Sure, “a little leaven leavens the whole batch.” Of course, we have no interest in charlatans, hyper-reactionaries, or egomaniacs that are looking for a “platform” for their so-called “ministries,” or anything like that to “corrupt” (as you put it) the Lambs. Of course not! “A *little* leaven leavens the whole batch.” Would you invite unknown people randomly into your home and let them hang out at their whim, doing as they please with your wife and children while you're at work? Surely not, if you loved your family, “those the Father has given you.” You would be “worse than an infidel” if you were that careless with your family's well-being. And “*many* will say to Me on that day” that they are fine Christians—who “*never knew Him.*” It happens. Jesus said that “*many*” would be in that category. As I said, in an “organization,” that doesn't really matter. Nickels and noses are what it's all about, and since consciences are seared from bad building and disobedience (Heb. 3:12-14), no one much notices. And those who notice are ostracized, generally. So, with no conscience about, “Without Holiness, *no one* will see the Lord”—the organizations (houses or temples) can recruit. “Come to our great building and mega-pastor and programs and pre-practiced Spirit-led Worship!” or, “Come move to such and such place and see *real church life* in action, as you've never seen it before since the beginning of time and before that!!” *That* is just a shame. There is NO Jesus of Nazareth in that. Ohhhhhh, sigh. You've probably not witnessed anything as blatant as that, but it's out there. And YES, we are willing to be ridiculed and slandered if necessary, to avoid that and find Peace with Jesus, the Builder of the House. Is that more answer than you wanted, my brother?!! ☺ It's your fault—you asked!!!!!!!!!!

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# “Crisis” In His Churches??

Wednesday Afternoon, January 6, 1999

*Most young groups of Believers are faced with crisis before very long. One common “crisis” is that someone who doesn’t love Light in their lives, and doesn’t “see” the value of a “Kingdom of Priests” living DAILY for Jesus (rather than being meeting centered, or man centered)...such a person will “leave” and go back to “attending” something. And, generally, the potential for broken hearts, insults and injury are right there. Here is a small portion of a note to one such group of Believers having just experienced someone turning on them, and then turning away from them. Every situation is different, and there are always things to be repented of on both sides. AND it must always be our objective to personally learn from EVERYTHING that happens in our lives—no matter how seemingly unjust (as David did, even with the evil, unfair accusations of Shimei). And, like Paul crying out for the Corinthians’ safety, you may want to make ABSOLUTELY sure that you’ve done all that you can to help them “see.” This is how Jesus said it would be (Jn. 10) for those that love God’s Lambs. But, in the end, Jesus never runs after even precious ones such as the “rich young ruler.” We will always “look at them and love them,” but can’t offer an “installment plan” that the Head has not offered. We can never run after anyone (Lk. 9:57-62, 14:25-33). Keeping all of that in mind, here is a brief thought to a small group of Believers encountering the inevitable kiss on the cheek—and stab in the back...*

**H**i, again. A maxim that we’ve lived by for most of fifteen years now is this: “If they *can* leave, they *should* leave.” And God has favored that foundational thought very much, it seems. One well-known man in the very early 1900s was on an ocean voyage. He spoke to some folks one evening spontaneously about Jesus, and several people gave their lives to Jesus (or, as Finney would often say “presumably gave their lives to Jesus,” or “hopefully converted,” since initial reactions are not always true. Some, to put it in Jesus’ words, “spring up quickly, with great joy.” But, it is a “flash in the pan”

and does not end up in Eternal Fruit). So, sometime later a woman who had been “presumably converted” came to this well-known man and said, “Does this mean that I have to give up smoking?” He said, “Lady, if you *can* still smoke, you *should*.” And would say no more. He knew, as Paul did in 1Thes. 1, that the demonstration of *True* Spiritual “Knowing” is that it comes with the Holy Spirit’s “deep convictions.” Meaning, if a person doesn’t really care, then trying to convince them to go a certain direction with their life would be disastrous. If you were able to convince them to stay, they’d be a pain in the neck, and “use up the soil.” If you weren’t able to convince them, they’d just mock you and trample the pearls anyway. So, just stay relaxed and “on Course.” He’ll captain you in. Since we are NOT trying to build anything or hold anything together, then we are also not shaken when various things like that come along. Compassion for them as individuals is a Good response. But, any consideration for whether there are 300 folks or 2500 or 8 is wasted energy. Just concentrate on pleasing Him every day. Don’t consider whether “the demons submit in His Name” today, or not. “The government is upon *HIS* shoulders” and our “job” is to just be available, sacrificial, loving, and courageous every day no matter *WHAT* anyone else does. He’ll handle everything else. Don’t let yourself or anyone you love get caught up in defending yourself (though you may defend others that you love). Jesus didn’t even take the time to “appear” to Herod or Pilate or the Pharisees after He arose from the dead. What a great opportunity to prove a point. But He *only* wanted to talk to those that *cared*, and *wanted* Him and His Truths. It is the same with His followers today. We have nothing to prove to anyone. His vindication in the End is all we need to make us happy and content today. And we will have that, by His Blood, His Word, and His Spirit. If they can leave, they should. The best question is to look around, as Jesus did in John 6, and say, “Aren’t you going to leave too?” There is great Peace in that. It could be that the “leaven” of “Achan’s tent” is what causes the defeats y’all have encountered at Ai anyway. Perhaps some or someone leaving will be the best thing that could happen to you. We just take one day at a time, do the best we can, concern ourselves very little for successes or failures, per se...and leave the rest to the One who builds Churches that the gates of hell cannot prevail against!

And a p.s. from some mutual discussion in a letter...

One person gave an example of something that happened in his experience in a home group situation that is worth saying a word or two about. Here's his quote:

*"I remember seeing this very clearly one day at a 'small group' home meeting when I noticed that a girl who had come to the group 'faithfully' had not shown up for a couple of weeks. I was amazed to find that she had been offended by something and had left the group, and that the 'leader' actually seemed to be indifferent about it. There were no tears or heart wrenching when she left. It was more like an ATM transaction. Easy come, easy go. A Nigerian friend of mine was standing by and heard the story and started asking if anyone had gone to her to ask what the specific offense was. No one had pursued her because they felt she was causing trouble by asking questions about something that looked man-made to her. She was 'a troublemaker'—and it was best if she left, they felt. My Nigerian friend grabbed a sister and me, and we immediately went to this girl's apartment (that night) and pleaded with her to talk with us. We pleaded with her to open her heart with others, as a disciple of Jesus. She did, and went back to mend some relationships.*

*So, how does an obvious 'success' in bringing this sister back relate to Jesus' encounter with the 'rich young ruler'? Of course Jesus didn't make a mistake with the 'rich young ruler' by 'letting him go'—but didn't this group I just mentioned make a BIG mistake by 'letting this precious sister go'? How can we tell the difference between the RIGHT time to 'let someone go' and the totally wrong, selfish, foolish time to hurt someone by 'letting them go'? How can we know the difference?"*

Hi, Rob. I think I understand what you're asking. It's a great question. Clearly Jesus was totally committed to BOTH things:

**Compassion** (with the woman caught in adultery, and the woman at the well, and Mary washing His feet with her tears for her sin)...and **Truth** ("Go and sin no more!" and, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off" and, "Unless you forsake all, you cannot be a Christian.")...

[footnote: a "disciple" and a "Christian" are one and the same, as of perhaps 43 A.D., when the word "Christian" was first invented in human history—(Acts 11:26)]

Here are the two sides of it, mentioned earlier:

1) “And, like Paul crying out for the Corinthians’ safety, you may want to make *absolutely* sure that you’ve done all that you can to help them ‘see.’ This is how Jesus said it would be (Jn. 10) for those that love God’s Lambs.” Many tears will be shed for those that Jesus desires to “gather as a hen gathers her chicks.”

2) “But, in the end, Jesus never runs after even precious ones such as the ‘rich young ruler.’ We will always ‘look at them and love them,’ but can’t offer an installment plan that the Head has not offered. We can never run after anyone” (Lk. 9:57-62, 14:25-33).

There *were* times when Jesus ran after those that were rejected by common religious thought, and brought them home! He *came* for that reason. And so must we. There were other times when He wouldn’t receive an *obviously* great new addition to the “Church” He was building. “Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the counsel of God!” How incredibly important it is to understand “which is which,” and how to respond to these different scenarios. Much foundationally, in any group of Believers or any true Church, depends on Knowing how to handle these matters!

Really, Rob, the example you gave in your letter (sad, but incredibly common, as you know) is an example of “trying to pound a square peg in a round hole.” This young lady certainly was not in the classification of the “rich young ruler” that should have been “let go”—according to the Ways and Commands of Jesus and His Apostles. She was *not* a person that had proven herself to not desire to “follow the Lamb wherever He goes!” Nothing had been done for her, and her “problem” was NOT that she didn’t care about loving and obeying Jesus. She wasn’t one that had decided to “love the world”—and therefore had become “leaven” and an “enemy of God.” There was no evidence that anyone was aware of that she was “lukewarm” and therefore “using up the ground.” This was instead, seemingly, an honest lamb that was a victim of “falling through the cracks”—in a faulty “paradigm.” She was hurting and confused, and seemingly no one was there for her. (I can’t tell you how many hundreds of times we’ve heard of similar situations in the mechanized attempts to “have church.”) Those truly in the “rich young ruler’s” situation are NOT those that are honest seekers that disrupt the system, and fall through the cracks. There are no “cracks” when the whole Church, “from the least to the greatest” is

totally involved—and 100% of those around us are cared for DAILY (instead of some meetings on the calendar).

If we build GOD’S way, as a “wise master builder” would, everyone would have a *chance* to look at Jesus and make a *real* decision about following *Him*. “Disappearing acts” couldn’t happen, unless a person had every opportunity to turn away from known sin, and hands of love and kindness and forgiveness were extended again and again. Then, out of a common, daily, Light-walking relationship—that *defines* the Church locally, and every single person in it—a person is in the “valley of decision” about *following Jesus!* Personality stuff, hurt feelings, misunderstandings, differences in eschatological guesses, and the other silly stuff *cannot* break relationship. (Refer back to the discussion about “Church Planters” for more about “Apostolic Foundations.”) But then, as much as we’d *love* for everyone to “make it,” it won’t happen that way. It didn’t with Jesus Himself, and it won’t with us. It obviously wasn’t Jesus’ fault that He “would have gathered them, but *they* would not.” And it is still that way. There just are “kinds of soil” Jesus mentions (three out of the four) that we will *not* be able to cover for, forever. Sooner or later, “one more year” comes into play. “Using up the ground” is *forbidden* by the Head of the Church. 1 Corinthians 5 is pretty clear about whether or not “leaven” can co-exist indefinitely within God’s Family. It mustn’t, according to God.

“The field is the WORLD” is how Jesus put it. He did NOT say, “The field is the CHURCH.” The wheat and the weeds will be mixed together in the WORLD. We are “in the world, but not of it.” Weeds mixed into the world until the angels come and separate them out? Of course. But it would contradict Jesus and the Scriptures to say that weeds must be mixed into “the Church.” Jesus said, “The field is the world”—NOT, “The field is the Church.” It’s extremely important that we understand this often-mistaught Principle, or we will be forced (by this misquoting and misapplication of Jesus’ Teaching) to contradict and disobey Him in Matthew 18, 1 Corinthians 5, Titus 3:10, and a bunch of other clear Scriptures.

So, I guess I just mention all of this to say that I feel very badly for this young lady, and the hundred thousand or more like her. She should have an honest shot of growing and prospering and being able to function, offer her Gifts in humility and honesty, give and receive Light and Food...really *just live* as God intended!! (1Cor. 12). The complications and contradictions come into our lives and the lives of others when we

try to apply Biblical Principles—to an UNBiblical paradigm. You *can't* write COBOL code into “C++++” code and expect the program to function. You can't take your kazoo to a funeral and expect it to go over well. You can't grow an orange tree in Alaska. It's the wrong paradigm. Reading all of the books about proper soil nutrition for orange trees won't help. It's just the wrong place for orange tree life, and fixing some jots and tittles won't change the fact that the basic foundation for that kind of life is wrong. And so it is with our young sister. I'm relatively sure that even the people that weren't getting the job done for her spiritually weren't all bad. They may have *meant* well. But, they too are victims of an unBiblical paradigm that makes everything ten times harder and more confusing than it should be. And the “cracks” appear faster than they can be denied, or “programs” designed to try to plug or cover them up.

OH! For the church to be the CHURCH, the Bride with the personality and wisdom of her Groom, a yoke for Him, “bone of His bone”! And then we'll *know*, by His Spirit working in us together, how to stand *exactly* where He stands with the lukewarm, and the pretenders, and how to extend hugs far beyond reason to the weak and confused and hurting.

Maranatha in us...and then to us.

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# Romans 14

## *“Disputable Matters”???*

*Tuesday Night, July 23, 2002*

*Question: As I've been reflecting on Romans 14-15, I've sort of hit a bit of wall in reconciling the “whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God,” with attempting to speak Truth in various situations where major problems and sins crop up within view....Much Love to the Family there... John*

Hi John, ☺

Okay, let's take a short peek. ☺ Just an overview, as “Food for thought.” ☺

1) Notice in Romans 14:1 (as well as Romans 1:7-13) that Paul was speaking to a **local church** 2) about internal squabbles over things that were “disputable” and therefore “unclear” to the majority. “Disputable” means that there *could* be a “dispute”—that is to say, reasons can be given honestly, thoughtfully, and conscientiously on both sides of the question, based on Truth.

1) again) The fact that it was to a **local church**, not “Christians in general” is very important. If you were part of the local Assembly in Rome, and knew “your leaders” and those who would “give an account for your soul” (Heb. 13:7, 17), an obligation exists to those leaders and the cohesiveness of the Local Body. The Spirit of Life must be honored above our own personal viewpoints on many issues, and talk talk talking about our view of “the Tribulation” or some such thing would be destructive to the “joined and knittedness” of the Body of Jesus.

Thus, 2) again) Keep such things which are “disputable” (there are valid points that might be made from the Scriptures “on both sides,” and it's hard to “know for sure”) to yourself, “between you and God.” *In a local assembly*, it is not wise to get caught up in a lot of discussion about things that others can't “See” yet. It is potentially divisive to the younger believers who try to figure out what things to believe to be “of

Cephas” rather than “of Apollos”—when Cephas and Apollos had no such problems between each other!

3) Since the “issues” are issues of “FAITH” anyway, those with “weaker Faith” who drag along their baggage into the Local Assembly, but are legitimately in love with Jesus, need to grow in FAITH!—not “information” or even “Scripture knowledge” that you have and they do not. *More trust, more abandonment, more love result in more insight!* He tells “His friends” His Secrets (Jn. 15). It is “a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere Faith” (1Tim. 1:5-6), as well as a “body offered as a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1-2) that result in “knowing what we are talking about and what we so confidently affirm,” and knowing “the good, perfect, and pleasing will of God.” It is “clean hands and a pure heart” which allow us to “ascend God’s Holy Hill” to See what He Sees. It is being a *spiritual* man, rather than driven by flesh in our personal lives and choices that allows us to “discern all things” (1Cor. 2:7-3:3). Therefore, helping one grow in *faith* and *obedience* (two inseparable entities! 1Pet. 2:8; Mat. 7:21-27; Jn. 14:15; 1Jn. 2:4, 5:2, etc.)—*that* is the calling of the “fathers” and “young men” (1Jn. 2:8-14), not to “inform” everyone else in their local assembly of the matters that they are messing up on, and the matters they have convictions about.

Again, these “issues” are not about anyone ignoring those who are committing *sins*—because *everything* under discussion in this chapter is related to true Believers in the Local Church who are doing what they are doing “*unto the Lord*” and out of conviction and love for Him, whether “uninformed” or not. There is nothing Written here about allowing others to gratify the flesh at will, and “we must not speak to them about it.” This “chapter” is about those “weaker in Faith” and Revelation who go *too far* in legalism, thinking he is doing it “for the Lord.” Paul is not writing about “protecting” those who indulge the flesh, and calling that “liberty.” Clearly Paul would be contradicting himself if *that’s* what he meant (1 Corinthians 5—“Remove the leaven from the batch”), and we know the Spirit does not contradict Himself.

4) Obviously, since Paul was *not* a part of that particular Local Congregation, he didn’t have a problem equipping for “works of service” and “unity of the Faith” (Eph. 4:11-16), since he did *not* “keep it between himself and God.” !!! He actually told them which “viewpoint” was Right, in each case, rather than just keeping it “between himself

and God,” and spoke of those who saw it “wrong” as babies in Faith, and weak. Is that not “passing judgment” (Rom. 14:13)??! Paul *did* what he encouraged them *not* to do?!

For example, “As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced no food is unclean in itself” (Rom. 14:14). Ahhh! Paul has not “kept it between himself and God” on the very matter that he instructed *them* to hush up about! Why? What’s the difference? Paul was “extra-local” and an “equipper” and “master-builder.” He was not being “divisive” or arrogantly trampling on the unity there because of his “stronger Faith,” but rather equipping them in Understanding while **emphasizing character** in his Teaching in this letter to his friends. LIFE IN CHRIST is *not* “about” things like “food and drink,” and Paul would not *let* them focus or divide over such things, even if there *is* a “right and wrong” in God’s Sight. Paul was saying that rather than “food and drink,” rights and wrongs, the *Real Deal* is about “righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost!” (Rom. 14:17). As an “equipper,” Paul *did* take on and correct *many* “errors” in virtually every letter he wrote. Clearly Paul didn’t believe that whatever anyone believed or practiced was automatically right before God, and anything different should just “be kept between him and God.” Paul surely didn’t do that! ☺

With *character* and *Life* as the substance of their oneness together, patience in daily life is mandatory in the local assembly. This is what Paul was saying. He was *not* saying that it is okay to be “weak in Faith” and “believe anything you want”! Is “weaker faith” okay with God? Is Paul saying that “weaker faith” is fine, so leave them alone? No way. Hebrews 11:6, “*Without faith it is impossible to PLEASE God.*” Weaker Faith brings less pleasure to God! What *true* Christian would allow that of himself, or of others who wear Messiah’s name?

So, what is the point being made here? It is this: **Patience** is in order for those who are, according to Paul here, clearly passionate about obeying God—but just misguided on HOW to do so. ☺ *This* was the topic of the Chapter. We *all* “GROW in the grace and knowledge” and it is a process—just as children are expected to grow in aptitude and understanding and coordination and wisdom. Therefore, those in the congregation might, by your taking daily “liberties” right in their face (Amplified, vs.15), be “pained” or have his “feelings hurt” or be “injured” unnecessarily. This would be “no longer walking in love.” And yet for Paul to raise the issue and Instruct and Encourage towards Jesus’ Best and Highest was not similarly unloving or divisive or flaunting of his liberty, as it would

have been for Believers *in that local church* to flaunt their liberty in their brothers' and sisters' faces, when there is not yet mutual Understanding and sufficient Growth to comprehend what is happening.

Instead of just going ahead and doing whatever they pleased, even if it was confusing and frustrating to other honest and diligent Disciples, Paul encouraged those in the Local Assembly to be patient and to help one another to grow in Faith and Love and Obedience *so that they would eventually see* (Php. 3:15-17). Then the topic, any topic, would no longer be a “hot button,” but be easy to discuss without offense. This, as opposed, to creating cliques and divisions and “heroes” of various topics. All such “building” around topical conformity and “issue” agreement, rather than on total surrender to Jesus (“Faith”) is a house built on the “sand.” “Here’s the right thing to believe about this and that. Agree, okay? Then you can be part of us, and we can be unified.” *That* is nonsense, of course. Matthew the tax collector, and Simon the zealot, settled their differences *on Jesus*, not the intellect. As they “beheld Him” they were “transfigured, by the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2Cor. 3:17-18).

Once again, a reminder that we are not talking about overlooking sin in others' lives—or many other Scriptures must be thrown out to do so. God is not a liar, and *HE* is not confused. Romans 14 is speaking of those who are *passionate* about doing ALL Father desires, and simply don't understand how much is “baggage” and “shadow” (Heb. 8:5, 9:23, 10:1; Col. 2:16-17, 20-23) in their “belief system” and how much is truly Father's Desire, fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

5) Paul also encouraged those in the Church in Rome to not be man-pleasers, but to *find conviction* on these matters (Rom. 14:23, 14:5b), knowing that the very *search* will benefit them, and benefit all.

6) In addition, arrogance and judgment were unacceptable during that Holy search, since all of those involved are passionate about pleasing God, and “do so to the Lord, giving thanks to God” in a very Vertical way. This is the basis for patience, trust, and love as the Process of growth unfolds.

Well, there are *some* thoughts about it, with just the few moments I have right now... Hope they shed a bit of Light on the Chapter—and let's keep chatting about it as much as you'd like!

*In Jesus, with you all, mike*

p.s. Just a quick *extra* note on Romans 16 and the subject of “house churches” in many of today’s books-for-sale...

Regarding Romans 16, and particularly verse 5: For *sure* Aquilla and Priscilla had a “hive” of Activity “in their home” in the Church at Rome. Of course, though, this does not mean that Paul’s Letter to all of these folks (that *knew each other*) was to a bunch of *different* “Churches” in Rome. Paul was saying “hello’s” to a bunch of people at once by saying “hello” to “the Elect often found IN the home of Aquilla and Priscilla”—not some institutionally separate entity called “a Church that meets at their home.” I’d recommend, for a number of reasons that we do *not* “translate” that word in Romans 16:5 as “CHURCH,”! but rather “Elect Together in their home.” And the word “meet” is *not* in the Text, of course.

Paul refers to “the Chosen often in their home,” just as I am seldom in the Fulbright’s home, but many of the Saints often are, due to their proximity that I don’t have. There are many dozens of Saints in a sixty second walk of their home, and many dozens more within a sixty second walk of my home. The *spontaneous* Life tends to happen in the closest proximity, doesn’t it? Can you imagine the *loss* if you lived in a different home than your children? The Fulbright’s home and “Hive of Life” is somewhat different, day to day, than mine—though there is *much* overlap in the Issues of Life in every way, and *deep* relationship between lives across all neighborhood lines, without prejudice. And yet there IS a somewhat different “Hive” of Life there. And we live *very* close together, by comparison to the Roman Believers, considering both distance and transportation problems there. It is a two minute trip for me to the other neighborhoods, not a *full day’s journey*.

Picture, no doubt, hundreds of Saints in that one Local Church in Rome. And remember (I have to keep emphasizing this, because it is so *unlike* today’s world, if we think of Rome as “separate house churches”), they *knew each other*, according to Paul. How could this be??!! ☺ Rome was then a city of 1.5 million people (larger than today’s Washington DC, Boston, or San Francisco), and the largest known city in the world. Now remember that they lived with *no decent transportation*—no automobiles, few personal-use vehicles of any kind, and no busses or subways. They simply *could not* travel far to be together Daily (Heb. 3:12-14, etc.). There were no “Meeting Halls” or BARF’s (“Buildings Appropriated for Religious Functions”) until

280 AD, and the vast majority of homes in the city being “densely packed diseased-ridden tenements” (“Great People of the Bible, and How They Lived,” p.387). They had very few choices of where larger numbers of people could be together (Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47—Jesus’ *culture*).

As *you* know from your travels, most homes in most countries even today can gather no more than ten or twelve people in line-of-sight with one another in the largest room in the house. Now you can imagine that some of the Saints would find themselves *often* at the home of Aquilla and Priscilla, which was probably larger than most due to their ability to make a living, well-documented in the Book of Acts. For Paul to refer to their home as “the Elect’s Hangout” in “the home of them” doesn’t seem strange at all, and certainly doesn’t mean there were “multiple churches!” in Rome. The “Holy Hangout” (“the Elect as One around their home”) might also describe the situations of Asyncritus and Philologus.

Though I understand why you mention it, there is truly no reason to superimpose the modern cult era—the “so-called ‘church’ on every street corner” world, instead of one Local Assembly, with one “Church Government” (Heb. 13:7,17; Php. 1:1, etc.) into this Letter and Picture. Add to the confusion that bad translation of *ekklēsia* as “church” in this verse, and the imaginary word “meet” injected into the Text—and it’s easy to see how men are once again describing *their* world by their translations, rather than what is really there, in many cases. There is nothing here that means there was “more than one Church in Rome,” and the evidence to the contrary, throughout the various Letters is not negated in a couple of words in Romans 16 that are added or mistranslated.

We really have to keep this in front of us: in Rome they *knew* each other on a “first name basis” in a city of 1.5 million, with no decent transport. Not only does Romans 16 demonstrate they knew each other, in spite of the geographic and technology problems that would *end* any interconnection in our modern shallow religious world, but Paul knew them by name too. They were all *truly* interconnected. How could that have happened in a city that large, with wooden-wheeled and expensively rare transportation, over the cobbled-stone pitted roads, covering hundreds of square miles...if it was “a bunch of *different* Churches?” Not happenin’. It wouldn’t make good sense to invalidate so much evidence of “one Church per city” and the evidence

of reason (some of which I've related above) about their relationships and situations, in order to embrace the idea ("a church on every street corner" in Rome) that men today justify themselves by, to their own stunted Growth and sometimes demise. We need to at least have the *goal* of having what God Intends "NOW, through the Church"—the *DEEP, INTIMATE, DAILY RELATIONSHIPS* of the entire Fabric of Christian Life in a city, as One Church. This Quality of Life is seldom seen even in one *living room* full of people, never ever seen in a larger so-called congregation, and "unrealistic" to even *dream* of for a *city*.

Well, let's *dream*. And *obey*. "Baptized by One Spirit INTO ONE BODY!"



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# Head Coverings? Or Just COVERING?

*Tuesday Afternoon, May 7, 2002*

*Question: I wanted to write you about head coverings. But first I wanted to say that we've really appreciated the materials that you sent to us. God is using what you are about to stir in us again—the desire for the intimacy that living “close” to one another can produce as Christ is allowed in a real, tangible way to come forth. The reason I say again is that at one time we were meeting daily for prayer meeting and working together, etc. We met like this for seven years, but in the end the pastor left. (We did have “clergy,” which we now know with your help by showing us in the Scriptures—was deadly.) The thought of getting close again seemed too much. I'm sure that our chaos and problems and issues are a situation probably played out many many times in other places.*

*What developed was what we have now. We have no elders as such, but the men of the group (six families) meet twice a month and discuss whatever needs to be voiced. We have open meetings as there is no pastor or emcee. At this point, any man or boy can speak. We used to “allow” women to share, but a new group has joined us in the last three years that is definitely against women doing this. We have some very different “theological” viewpoints. Most kids are home schooled (not that that is a merit badge, but does help to describe certain things about us). Until recently, we have had a brother here that believed he needed to force-feed Calvinism and infant baptism to us (very strongly believing that what you believed gave unity rather than who you were connected to). He has since left, but until recently there has been a real “controlling” thing come on our meetings. There is still one strong “reformed” brother in our midst, but his approach is much more “organic,” realizing that when the soil is not ready, it is not ready, so he doesn't force his views on others. So anyway, probably a fairly typical small group.*

*But what I'm writing about is this: We appreciate the tapes on women being silent in the church (and the other tapes as well). Our women, to the most extent, are submissive in the spirit of Christ. It's not a forced, legal-type thing. Several of our wives have been wearing head coverings for about ten years. We still have not been able to come to a resolve about it. We know it is not a requirement for salvation or law (although it can and has been subtly made a law that can kill the women), and actually I wish the verses were not there. Even if our women wore nothing on their heads (some don't), they would be submissive. It doesn't help that the camps of other believers who are walking in Life with the Lord are seemingly divided about this issue. We've read much and still not come to a conclusion.*

*So, what I want is to hear what you, as a church, have been able to work through with this issue if you feel like sharing that. Your thoughts on women being silent in the church seemed to me very balanced, with clarity on headship. So, share if you would. We appreciate it. Thanks again for everything.*

**H**i there, I've appreciated your perseverance in asking about this several times now. ☺ However, I think the reason the Master doesn't allow me yet to answer with any perspective that might free y'all up a bit—is that “diversity” that you mentioned in your midst. It sounds like *Lordship* is too big an issue to not be *the* issue in your midst. We have *never* had all of those problems you mentioned, in over sixteen years with multiplied times the number of people, and many ex-”pastors” and other “experts” as part of the Church here. But, what you describe can *only* happen when Lordship is at stake in some of the lives.

The self-will and attitudes being exhibited don't mark those lives or places where Jesus is Lord of all, “from the least to the greatest.” If we are wrestling continuously with “issues” and “problems” such as these, there is something fundamentally wrong with the “Foundation” of “Obedience of the Faith.” So, to address the “topic” of head coverings, or whatever, would only create more controversy and bring out more “opinion” in all likelihood. And you're right—it's not just your “group,” of course. Many “groups” of folks that are not on the Foundation as a whole (say, 98% or so of what's out there), could tell horror stories as bad as or worse than what you've described. I have to say that it fatigues me and hurts me to even *think* about ever living life in an

environment of chaos and opinion and schism and half-trust, as is the case in most places. It is anguish to even imagine going through that. So, what to do?

*Unfortunately*, most people prefer the cost of the chaos and half-trust to the cost of a Cross and a Foundation. (At least they get to be kings of their own opinions and tiny plot of ground—though Jesus is only figure-head and kewpie doll in such a case.) Until the *REAL* issue is resolved, the “details” really don’t even matter. More will spring up or reappear, forever and a day. “Is hell real?” “Should we be allowed to break bread other than in our homes, because, ‘Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in?’” And, “What about foot washing, which Jesus seems to command?”...and a few hundred others we’ve heard in various cities and countries. So, it’s hard to see how to answer about certain “subjects” considering the environment that you describe!

I’m not saying it’s your fault at all. But it’s a bottomless pit and echo chamber when the Quality is as you describe, regardless of how “normal” it is to human existence. It’s not God’s habitat to be so full of chaos, self-will, opinions, and “stirrings” as you describe. “Of one accord,” “being many are ONE,” just AS the Father and the Son “are one.” “Unity of the Spirit” *and* “Unity of the Faith,” and therefore “no longer infants tossed to and fro by every wind of teaching.” Humble hearts—all absolutely under His Lordship, and Apostolic Gifting in Foundational relationship there...and the problem is solved. Either of those two missing, and you will absolutely never have the Peace that you desire and might have had—so you’ll have to get used to it as it is, and just take one “fire” at a time.

It’s just like trying to build a house on sand and wondering why everything looks good for awhile, and then eventually some of the doors don’t close right, and cracks are appearing, and the floor is separating in the corners... We can keep filling in with plastic wood and Spackle—but the real problem is not going away, even if hidden for a time. The Foundation has to be Right, and the Plumb Line true.

Although you *certainly* didn’t describe “a bunch of terrible people” (and *trust* me, I’m *not* taking it that way at all!), you did inadvertently describe something we’ve seen and heard all over God’s green earth. You described a “normal” situation where both Lordship and Apostolic Gift are missing (and these two are inseparable when we’re desiring a Lampstand—a local CHURCH rather than individual lives scattered

here and there). I don't blame you or think less of you or anyone there, but I'm just trying to say that *those* are the real issues to be watching and praying and acting about—not head coverings at this point.

NOT the answer you were counting on, or the one I planned on giving when I began writing. But, if I just play the game like “everyone else” and give you a formula and yet another opinion and some clever “how to’s” to speed you along the cheery path, I wouldn’t be honoring Jesus, or really helping you. There are *plenty* of gimmicks out there, and self-appointed “I’ve planted 48,219 ‘churches’ in 918 countries, and this is how you do it” kinda guys. But, those things end up just like what everyone already “left”—except with a few extra bells and whistles, and, in some ways, some much *larger* dangers than what they left behind at the “institution.” So, I have to tell you the truth, even if it’s not what you wanted. . . . But actually, I think I’ve heard your “voice” in past dialogue and conversations we’ve had enough to believe that you really DO want the truth, whatever it may be. Thus my willingness to write a little more, at a little deeper level than the “how to” and, “Here’s what to believe” religious words.

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# Cleansing, Discerning the Body

*Saturday Morning, April 6, 2002*

*Question: Hello, I would much rather be writing to you for the first time under sunnier skies, but Jesus has lovingly brought in storm clouds to wash us and clean us up. If the Lord gives you insight to what I am about to share with you, would you please share with me? Thanks.*

*I was to bring a challenge before the saints here, to have them EXPLORE past building practices, and express Jesus' desire to expose the deep regions of our hearts. This is how my note to them began: "We must learn **now** from our past ignorance, being careful how we build."...*

*I have questions for you. Is a man who desperately desires the truth a sinful man? Is a man who sincerely seeks revelation of who Jesus really is a sinful man? Is a man who seeks relationship with TRUE Christians sinful?*

*I am sad for this state we are in, but am confident Jesus' Higher purpose will prevail.*

**H**i. I appreciate your sincerity in this, but there are some Spiritual Truths you'll need to understand in order to "process" this correctly. In one summary statement, which I will explain a little bit more completely: YES, the man you refer to, "sincere" as he seemed, was leaven. And he even admitted it numerous times in his letters to us. I'm not certain of the value of trying to identify what "was" rather than being ever watchful over what "is"—except for the educational value. But, since you all have *many* more years of opportunity to serve our God as Priests, the "education" can serve you and protect you well for years to come. So, that's a good enough reason *in this case* to try to discern "what was" in the case of this man.

The other man's condition is obvious, as you say, and was of great concern to everyone here as well, all along. We were concerned about his "meteoric growth" primarily because he said "too much, too soon,"

and crops don't generally grow like that. Though we're always open to something God may want to do for His own Purposes that is unlike His normal Ways, *usually* if a crop grows like that (instantaneous and flowery acceptance of Truths that will cost him every ounce of his life, when his "track record" is self-indulgence and meaningless religion), it is mutant, not healthy. "Springing up quickly with great joy" is *not* necessarily something to be excited about, as Jesus taught us clearly. And so, we were very guarded with him, though desiring to be hopeful that whatever "returning to his vomit" that may lie ahead for him would be followed by a second, more humble and sober and *true* conversion. So far, of course, he has not yet returned from his vomit, unfortunately. And he may never. The road IS broad that leads to destruction and *few* will be those who find the Road of Life.

BUT, back to the first man you asked about, since that is the major part of why you wrote and the current "disagreement." You'll have to stay with me now and hear this *whole* thing out, which I'll have to take in stages. Here we go—and stay focused all the way through, because this is *very* important for the rest of your lives in being a part of building in Jesus and with Jesus....

YES, the ones you mentioned you are having this disagreement with regarding "what is leaven" are correct, and he himself confirmed in letter after letter: he was leaven. What he is now is up to him and God. Right?! 😊 But, YES, there were *very* serious problems there. He admitted himself that he was little more than a corpse (and how could that NOT be leaven?), and then his "efforts" (sincere as they may have been) were made almost exclusively out of human *flesh*—which is also leaven! "Get the slave woman and her child *out of my house*" says the Lord (Gal. 4:30). So, beyond *any* question or dispute, YES, he was leaven. Sincerity and human effort are *not* a substitute for walking in the Spirit, and *only that* is an aroma acceptable to the Lord. *All* else is leaven, until and unless it is being dealt with, in the Light. So much of what he wrote was grotesquely oozing with human flesh and filtered entirely through the human mind, uncontrolled by the Spirit (Rom. 8). That is far from "just" my discernment. It was firmly unanimous from everyone who has demonstrated they Know God and His Heart and Ways, who read his letters.

Now, know this! That *can* be just a stage a person goes through. John 12:24—*everyone must die* to their egos and "the way that seems right to a man, but leads to death," and their incessant appeal to "the

tree of knowledge” for their peace and satisfaction and direction. *If* a person is not so thoroughly shielded from the destruction of their flesh (by their own egos, by dark forces ordering circumstances to confirm them in their sins, or by well-meaning humans who love their own flesh and can't stand to see anyone else suffer for *their* flesh), then the stage of life of the decomposing of their wisdom from the flesh, “which is unspiritual and of the devil,” can be only a stage that moves them closer to the Real things.

However, it is essential that we not run after Hagar and Ishmael and let our pity for them overrule God's Decree that *flesh* is not permitted in His House. We have asked people to leave over the years who would *do anything for you*, and *were agreeable to every conceivable thing...* but it was all *flesh*, and therefore *leaven*. “What do you want me to do?” “What do you want me to believe?” “What is the right way to act to be accepted?” *These too* are flesh, and are *just* as much leaven as someone who always wants to be disagreeable, question or second-guess or be in control of everything. “Prove it to me.” “That's just *your* opinion. I have my *own* relationship with God. You just want me to conform.” ***Both are leaven:*** the one who let's *others* be their God, and also the one who *is* their own God. *Only* that which is discernibly born of the Spirit, regardless of personality type or quirks or current maturity level, is NOT leaven!

If your question is, “Was he leaven?” Of course. But he *decided* to be leaven, because he had choices to make in the middle of this recent journey, and he *chose* the way of the flesh. He wasn't, in all likelihood, just utterly deceitful from the beginning. He was being *offered* Life by the Spirit of Christ, and he played mind games and manipulation games, *in addition* to some legitimate opportunities he was being offered by God, out of God's *very* unmerited favor. But to this point, he has returned to his vomit, where at least he can be god of his own vomit, if nothing else. A kingdom of vomit, to some, is better than someOne else sitting on the throne.

If your question is, “Was he leaven?” Beyond question. There was essentially no Spirit Life in anything he said, or anything he did—*regardless* of how sincere he may have been, or how much he desired it. *There is a supernatural battle*, not of flesh and blood, not born of human decision or natural descent or a husband's will—and he was *not* “on the other side” of the battle between flesh and Spirit. No way. And that is the only way the matter can be evaluated. If we *ever* start building out of sympathy (“But we feel sorry for them!” “But they might commit

suicide!”) or good intentions (“They’d give you the shirt off their back!” “Look how hard they try!” “Look at all they’ve given up for God and His Kingdom!”) or human desire or human talents (“We could really use someone like that to give us credibility, because they have a big name!” “We could really use more numbers, or more musicians, or someone with some serious money to advance the cause of Christ”)... If we *ever* start building *that* way, we are *dead*. A little leaven leavens the *whole* batch, and even Ai will destroy us. Uzzah, Nadab, and Abihu, Korah, Cain, and Balaam, and all they have deceived and leavened will all die. What is *NOT JESUS*—is *leaven*. What is *NOT IN HIS SPIRIT* (and I’m not speaking of mistakes, or maturity, or even “sins” per se), what is *NOT BREATHING THE AIR OF HIS SPIRIT* as its natural habitat, having a Supernatural interaction with the GodHead—all of that is leaven.

And, beyond any question, he was more surely leaven than the other man was, months ago. Why? Because he had a chance to See, and chose not to do so. He was blind as a bat, and was yet to have found the Door, and was not yet facing his Chance at that time because of an arrogant and errant view of himself. Oftentimes people in this state also have other unrepented-of hidden sins that blind, as well. But the arrogant and errant view of oneself is sufficient all by itself to keep a person in the natural away from the True God and Miraculous Life, and essentially *blind* to the fact that there even IS anything more than what they “have.” “I’m as good as so-and-so. Who do they think THEY are? What about THEM?”

So, hope that clears it up for you. ☺ I know this is Lofty stuff, but learn it well. It will save your life and the lives of many others in the years to come.

Please send this to the others involved. I think it’s essential that everyone is moving together towards the Goal without any petty fights or immature viewpoints. It’s time to move *forward*, without allowing pride or “hurt feelings” or misunderstandings steal the Future that Father has planned for you. Lot’s wife looked back. We don’t. Let’s “put our hands to the plow” and *not look back* any longer. There are plenty of real things to deal with today, and more experience with the Cross and its shame and its suffering that you will yet encounter if you take the High Road (instead of man’s ways, which lead to death).

Let’s go forward. The one will make his choices, *Today*. He will make his, and demonstrate who he is and who he hopes to be...*Today*. You will as well, as we all will. *Today* is the day of Deliverance. Grace and Peace to you...

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# Truth is Non-Negotiable

*Wednesday Night, December 24, 2003*

*to a brother in an area where a number of folks say they WANT a Lampstand... but this is PAINFUL for them... Of course ☺*

Hey... We will certainly continue to pray for you and all, as you have asked. ☺ Thanks for desiring to understand “what” I said, and “why” I very intentionally said what I did to you about your Hope for a Lampstand there. It is quite encouraging that JESUS wants that there even more than y’all do! But, there is more I need to say, because it won’t just “happen”. Never has, never will “just happen” out of good intentions or doing a “chinese fire drill” of running from religious gimmick to religious gimmick, personality to personality. In just a few more short, quick thoughts, let me say this: until you can embrace what I said to you of Jesus’ Teaching, hard as it seemed to you in the last letter, and why I said it (as unpopular and “optional” and maligned or ignored as many of Jesus’ Teachings continue to be), there is NO chance you will ever have a Lampstand there. A Foundation from the Christ of God will only be a Foundation of “obedience of the Faith.” You asked, remember? ☺ Truth is non-negotiable—and the fruit of destroyed or wasted lives is all that comes from the \$24.95 solutions from the “authors” who are “practicing medicine without a license”—not living in anything more than what anyone came out of in the first place. They are playing pretty violin songs—on a re-painted Hindenburg—while they fleece the sheep for \$24.95 a pop, peddling for profit books on “body life” and “relationships” and the like. And angling to collect their “love offerings.” It’s a very large problem, no less than in Martin Luther’s day.

Radical problems cannot be solved with cute sayings, web sites, and book sales. The tragedy of heaven-filled lukewarmness (even in an “intimate” “house” environment where everyone gets to “talk”) will just go on, and on, and on, and on..... as it has. Year after year,

until “ashes to ashes and dust to dust.” A few months of “excitement” is all that dulls the pain—just like the “excitement” someone in the world has when they get a new house, or new computer, or new clothing. But, in time, as thousands have told us worldwide who have attempted to build “churches” and “house churches” based on cute ideas and personalities... it will come back to nothing. Just more torn lives and marriages and teens, for resisting JESUS’ Ways, and the Cross, while embracing another gimmick. No one can have Holy Ground, unless they take their shoes off and deal with the Real Issues of their lives. (Heb.3:12-14; 1Cor.12; Gal.6:1-2; Acts 2:42-47/Lk.9:57-62) My hope and prayer in carefully writing to YOU as I have, is that this is what you ultimately want out of Life. Few will pay that price, of course. It’s too offensive. It’s the Naaman thing.

*10Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, “Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”*

*11But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. 12Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.*

*13Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed!’” 14So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.*

Most want a “politically correct” solution that offends (and changes) no one. Jesus was not and is not like that. The REAL thing, that everyone SAYS they want, is RADICALLY different than that which they have always done. Not a “fix ‘er up”—a good book and a visit by a “speaker/author” who “has planted 318,412 ‘churches’ in the last 72 hours. And NOW... he can ‘do’ you too, while he’s in the area. Hang the posters and plan the potlucks! Yay!”

The Kingdom of God does not consist of clever “types and shadows” extracted from obscure scriptures to entertain and impress us until the next “meeting,” as everyone “goes back to their real lives”. The REAL

thing is born in the AMAZING and PERILOUS “Skandalon” of the daily Together-Life CROSS.

Few want THAT. Someone’s feelings might get hurt.

And yet, “All who have stood in MY Counsel will turn My People from their sin.” And, “The Son of God was manifest to destroy the devil’s work.” And, “God has elevated Him above His peers, because He hated wickedness and loved righteousness.”

Few want THAT. Someone’s feelings might get hurt.

“YOU BROOD OF SNAKES!” Whew. No room there... for anything other than a “death wish.” Like Judas implied, “Jesus, you can’t start a kingdom by offending all of the wrong people.”

Why DID Judas stay around, in John 6?

Well, AGAIN, I was glad you wrote, and EXPECTED you to do so! ☺ And I find NO fault in your letter, or the spirit of it. That was never a question. And, as I said again and again, “most of these guys are mighty nice fellows” and “I don’t doubt their Salvation.” That was never a question, either. But, you don’t NEED more “pretty words” or even “radical WORDS”. Unless you want more of the same man-made confusing shallow things and religious pertinacious otiosity that you have seen your entire life, and most consider “acceptable”—since it allows them to continue to live for themselves and still feel “radical” in their “religious expression.” I think you want, at the heart of it, MORE than that. Perhaps even something that “the gates of Hell cannot prevail against” and that is “the Pillar and Foundation of Truth: the Ekklesia.”

“GOD’S Intent, is NOW, through the EKKLESIA, to make known His many-faceted Wisdom, even to the Principalities and Powers!” That will get you killed, if it’s the REAL thing. The stuff you can “buy” will not even cause any perspiration, let alone blood.

The reason I CHOSE to write to you what I did... was because there can BE NO LAMPSTAND, PERIOD in a place that is borrowing words and platitudes, importing figure heads for the franchise, or searching for “ideas and concepts and methods”—rather than seeing and being willing to experience the rejection and pain and humiliation of a Corporate Cross. Men can “plant” a little happy club about anywhere. But, my assumption is that a happy club that lasts 9 months before the first split, and 36 months before 75% of the teens run into the

world (the percentage that christendom admits to) and the divorces begin to happen all over again..... my assumption is that you want a Lampstand, not a happy club of independent and leavened folks, mind-blocking all of the uncomfortable compromising in order to hope against hope that sitting in a living room is better than sitting in an edifice. That is readily available. BUT, I think you want MORE—and I KNOW Jesus does. And SO... I chose to say what I said to you, and ANTICIPATED that you would have an initially “pained” 😊 reaction as you did (which you handled quite well), and that all of this conversation would then take place, in some form or another.

So, here we are. 😊

And still praying. 😊 Looking forward to the Future. There is AWESOME Stuff available for those who are willing to “search for Him with all their hearts!” And, I really believe you want that, though you will be hated for it. “No man is greater than His Teacher. If they hated Me, they WILL hate you.”

Hallelujah. Maranatha!

*Love, mike*

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# One Characteristic of a Lampstand, a Place Where “Christ Circulates” ☺

*Monday Afternoon, January 12, 2004*

*In a messed up world that can only honestly be characterized as filled with Death, Depravity, and Durr...*

One distinguishing mark of those in a Lampstand—is that they look for SOLUTIONS and ways to Help change all things that need changed into His Image. (Whereas, the unregenerate or selfish or the disconnected outside of a Lampstand...will merely judge and withdraw.)

Interestingly, the Loyal commitment to the Lamb and His Garden—is all that saves THEM, or any of us. As with Moses and Jesus, the House and the Builder of the House, those Loyal to Father “do not wish to Enter In, unless they can bring their Family with them!” It’s all about sacrificing whatever is necessary, personally, to “be a ransom for many”—in the Spirit of our brother, Jesus.

By withdrawing or judging, as one will when living outside of a Lampstand, they are ironically sentencing THEMSELVES, and others, to Death, Depravity, and Durr—satan’s habitat. Self-protection, fear, laziness, judgment, lack of love... these all play right into the enemy’s hand. That, of course, is not Jesus’ heart for His Lambs.

*“I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH... and the gates of Hell shall not prevail.”*

*“I have need of you.”*

*“God’s Intent, is now, THROUGH THE CHURCH, to make known His many faceted Wisdom to the Principalities and Powers.”*

*“His Body is the Fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.” ☺*



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# True Freedom

*Friday Afternoon, March 26, 2004*

*Answer to another city, about the sort of “christians” in their area—who don’t want any of their actions or decisions “questioned” by other Believers. Sokay. ☺*

Vouch: v.intr.

1. To give personal assurances; give a guarantee: vouch for an old friend’s trustworthiness.
2. To constitute supporting evidence; give substantiation: a candidate whose strong record vouches for her ability.

**H**i Guys, ☺ This is REALLY simple. Jesus spoke of “those the Father has given.” (For Jesus Himself, this number of “those the Father has given” did not include very many people around Him. Though He cared, and though He WEPT over Jerusalem, “THEY would not”—and thus, according to Jesus Himself, were not “those the Father had given” Him. He lost NONE of those. Likewise, Hebrews 13:17, 1Cor.12, Eph.4, 1Jn.1-3, Gal.6 and elsewhere make it clear that we will “GIVE AN ACCOUNT” for the souls of certain ones. “Jesus, this is what I did to help them. This was their soft response. Please credit their ‘love of the Light’ to them as Righteousness. I ‘vouch’ for them. I am willing to give an account for their souls. I know You had “given” them to me, and as with the heart of Moses, Stephen, Paul, and Jesus—I don’t want to come In without them.”

Contrast this with “I would have gathered them, but THEY would not.” Jesus could NOT “give an account for their souls” and they DEFINITELY (Biblically) were NOT amongst those “the Father had given Him”—of which He said, He “did not lose ANY.”

Here’s the Deal: Jesus builds HIS House with Wisdom. It is HIS House that that Hell cannot prevail against. IF Jane and Jack and Fred and Elizabeth and that lil group of disConnected folks and someone’s mother and someone’s grandma all want to “do what’s right in their own eyes”—that is TOTALLY FINE. It’s simply that WE will not

ever be willing to “give an account” for those who live carelessly and lawlessly and proudly and independently. GOD laid out the Way to Live together (Acts 2:42-47, 1Cor.12, Heb.3:12-14, 1Cor.5, Mat.18, Eph.3-4, etc—also read the “Convictions” booklet for “disagreements” amongst those that the Father HAS given you, because their obedience and love and loyalties are well-tested). Now, for those who DO “love the Light” (rather than run from it, because “their deeds are evil”) and are saved, we must “build the House with wisdom”. And, of course, ONLY those “the Father has given us” are obligated to US to live as God Commands, and work the details through with us in “the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.” The others (the “broad road” is packed, Jesus said, with those who claim to be Christians, but are not—so this is not a surprise, in any event) can go do what they please, as they please, and we will only weep for their rebellion—but not in any way do anything to STOP them from living foolishly, if that is their eyes-wide-open choice. And, if they are for Real, that will become clear in time. In the meantime, (real life issue here) if a “babysitter” abuses one of their children, or their teens “fall through the cracks” into Hell, or their marriages are crushed under the weight of sin,—so be it. If we tried to help, but they “would not”—it is outside of the realm of our responsibility. Those things happen everyday all over, and all we can do is try.

The “freedom” to live independently and stubbornly and proudly and secretly is TOTALLY available to everyone, along with all of the automatic COSTS of this proud and independent and unBiblical form of powerless religion.

If you have understanding of, and love of your own biological children, you can surely understand that you must “interfere” at times with the actions of those “the Father has given us.” Only an “illegitimate” and “unloved” relationship would be so worthless to us that we would not “interfere” with their decisions and actions at times. Likewise, we may ONLY “interfere” with the dangerous choices of “those the Father has given us.” Everyone else is “on their own” (with some encouragement or warning, carefully timed and worded, at most) if they choose to build on sand. If we “would have gathered them as a hen gathers her chicks—but THEY would not”—as with even Jesus Himself, we can only weep for their stubborn and blinded choices. WE are ONLY able to build His House with Wisdom and by His Commands and Ways. If they want to “build” another way, they MAY. But not with us. If they want to claim they are Christians and do things “their own way”

(we've all seen the fruit of THAT prideful and man-made agenda), they CAN, FREELY. But, we will NOT “associate” with them —other than to reach out to them, not affection or common Life (“fellowship”) with those who live in compromise. The Master has forbidden us to build according to the patterns of the world, and we will not. And thus, we are unwilling to “give an account for their souls.” They can do WHATEVER they want! Go for it! But, “not in HIS House.” Anything goes, total “freedom”—for anyone. But not in HIS House, or amongst us. WE will Build His Way.

We've all already tried THEIR way, and it is chaos and darkness and despair and proud, evil energy—man-made psycho-babble religion that destroys great percentages of the lives of those hiding there from Light. And yet they are not all innocent. Most who are blinded by it, and given over to it, are part of that intentionally, due to their own lusts and fears, their own ambitions and appetites. But, “at least they're free”—right? Like the person who sleeps under the bridge is FREE! Sleeping in the cold, lack of food, lack of clothing, lack of protection, lack of true love, lack of growth. Freedom! Hallelujah! No job to show up at, no responsibilities, no burdens or anyone to please or answer to. No alarm clock, no stressful people, no anything! FREE! Okay, fine. If THAT is freedom to YOU..... you've made your bed. Lie in it until you REALLY are willing to “pay the price” of true Freedom. And that is a matter of the HEART, not geography. But, He offers A MORE EXCELLENT WAY! The Way of the Cross, to the Freedom beyond the Grave. “His Intent is NOW, through Ekklesia, to make known His manifold Wisdom!” And so it is, in the Body of Christ.

*Love, mike*



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# “Church Life”? Ready for the REAL Thing??!!

*Saturday Morning, May 18, 2002*

## To Our Growing Family in.....

We feel the need just now to encourage you. We're "not unaware of satan's devices," and how the little pimple-head satan tries to steal the heart and vision of newborns. So here we go. You have recently "left all" to "save yourselves from this corrupt generation." You have embraced "the full message of this new Life" together in Jesus. You have accepted and responded to the Truths regarding the Nature of His Life in His Body. You have loved the Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles about His Church being daily intertwined life in the Head and the Body—rather than "a show to attend." This is excellent. However...

By *now* you must be realizing some things. You must by now be discovering the "pressures" of not stepping directly into "utopia," but encountering instead, the *cross*. When you first gave your lives to Jesus and were washed in His Blood, giving up your idols of family and the world and hocus-pocus, man-centered religion, you found that satan opposed you, as did men. Remember? As was true when you walked into the Gospel of Jesus, is it not also true that the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 8:12, 28:31; 1Cor. 12:12-13:3), the walking out Together of the Life of Christ Jesus, is also now opposed by satan, and man—and causing you some difficulty? Is it not true, in your experience now, that "the Kingdom is entered with much tribulation" and, as the Lord Himself has said, only "the violent take it by force"?

Can you now feel in your bones that we have entered into the ultimate War? Why do "the angels long to look into these things"? Can you feel it now? Do you understand now how it could be said by God, "NOW, through the CHURCH, the manifold Wisdom of God is made

*known to the principalities and powers*?! The galaxies were created as the stage for the training and the raising up of the Bride of Christ! She is made Whole and cleansed—not by “lots of participation in a ‘meeting’”—but by the opposition of satan’s fallen followers, and his earthly stooges and pawns. Will this “feel” like “really sweet ‘church life’” and a fun, utopian neato church? NOT if you are opposed by satan, and Chosen by God. The other “way to have church” is just a counterfeit and gimmick and distraction to try to steal good people away from God’s Intent and Purpose.

The Real Desire of Father, the Betrothed of the Son, is attacked by the Dragon and hated by both the religious world and the world system. How could it be any less, when the Head “had no beauty or majesty that we would be drawn to Him”? How could we look for fun and utopia and a way-cool church experience, when the First to live this Life was *murdered* by compromisers, the pagan government and politicians, and the well-known religious leaders... in only forty months of “church life”? Jesus, living TRUE “church life” perfectly and sinlessly, in love and unwavering Truth, was chased, accused, hated, lied about, and experienced betrayal and unbelievable pain. The Real Deal is not “utopia” and “fun church life,” but rather a *cross*. “I want to *know* the Anointed and the power of His Resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in death” to “share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His GLORY!” Ah... the *Real* thing. IS that what you signed up for? The Glory of the *cross*?

Any wonder *at all* at this point why True Life is so rare, and cheesy religion and compromise and disjointed rituals, shows, and hierarchies are *so* common? Human flesh *hates* a cross, with its stench and pain and humiliation and inconvenience. True “Church Life” is about a *cross*, not externals. Well, many of the religious “externals” ARE disobeying direct Commands of Jesus and the Apostles, from God the Father.

But *besides* that. The only reason to discuss “Sunday Services” and “hired ‘pastors’” and “liturgies” and “programs” and “religious buildings” and the other unBiblical “traditions of men” is this: The bogus religious externals and faulty building of the religious world and its traditions and hierarchies and flashy gimmicks and sentimental, humanistic programs... HELP the flesh hide! *Everyone* is tempted to take the shortcuts and the road most traveled! And then, comfortable and “affirmed,” they will curse the Cross as being unfair, too hard, or just plain “wrong.”

Maybe you haven't yet been tempted that way, but everyone is eventually. At least everyone who is on JESUS' Trail. "Take up your *cross*" is an invitation to ugly, painful, lonely, humiliating, and confusing *death*. This is *exactly* why you can travel all around the world and find very, very little that bears much resemblance to the Together Life of Christ. Jesus is not truly Head where there is "leaven in the batch," refusal to deal with sin ("Let the Holy Spirit do it, rather than obey these Commands to lay down my life and help rip them from the fire"), 30% to 90% lukewarm or unknown "periphery" (forbidden by God Himself), abuse, manipulation, ambition, hero-worship, or compartmentalized lives (my "work life," my "family life," my "church life," my "social life"—forbidden compartmentalization of life!).

Whew! Most want "benefit" from "Christianity" or "Church"... but the *cross*? That's got to be "wrong." Skandalon can't be right, can it? Frankly, it cannot be GOD'S Will or Jesus' Church if there is not *plenty* of the disgrace of the Cross. Like the Head, the true Body has "no beauty or majesty that we would be drawn to it." It ain't no faddish fun house, if it's the Church Jesus is building that will demolish the gates of Hell. The rest is a detour and delusion. You can see now why "the nations *rage*."

A "Cross" is just to *talk* about, not to experience, for most. That kind of *LIFE* is way too radical and embarrassing and misunderstood and rare—so it must be wrong. "Give me cool teaching and good singing and a friend or two, and that'll be enough for me."

***But what did Jesus live for, die for, and what does he desire?!*** That's the real question. Is a religious group that is "about" Jesus... good enough? OR will you DIE before you will accept anything less than... the *substance* of Jesus?!!

Those are the questions that satan loves to put in front of people. And Father allows satan to bombard us with these questions, and various patsies of satan to try to make us feel guilty, or to confuse us, or to pile up difficult circumstances to make us second-guess and tempt us to take the easy road. Father allows satan to bombard us with "coincidences" and "chance meetings with accusers" and painful circumstances. WHY would He allow this? As always, "to find out what is in our hearts" and to show Him, ourselves, and others our *motives* for "coming after Him."

His Call to us is *the cross*. Not a cutesy, utopian “way to have church.”

*“Unless the seed falls to the ground and DIES, it abides alone. But IF it dies, it BEARS MUCH FRUIT” (John 12:24).*

The Real thing only comes through Skandalon. And that will *never* be an easy decision. *Few* will be those who will take it past “deep teaching” into the ramifications of losing their very lives, and all that they hoped for and dreamed of....

Be there? We’re praying for you. The Church here is praying that you are busy about the loves of His Life, saturated in Worship!

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# Re: “Church Life”? Ready for the REAL Thing??!!

*Saturday Afternoon, May 18, 2002*

*Question: Hi, A few of us were talking earlier, and I believe we know what the word “skandalon” means, but would you define it for us anyway? Thanks ☺ Love, Anna*

“Skandalon” (Mat. 13:41, 16:23, 18:7; Lk. 17:1; Rom. 9:33, 11:9, 14:13, 16:17; 1Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11; 1Pet. 2:8; 1Jn. 2:10; Rev. 2:14, etc.)

“Skandalizo” (Mat. 5:29-30, 11:6, 13:21,57, 15:12, 17:27, 18:6,8-9, 24:10, 26:31,33; Mk. 4:17, 6:3, 9:42-43,45,47, 14:27,29; Lk. 7:23, 17:2; Jn. 6:61, 16:1; Rom. 14:21; 1Cor. 8:13; 2Cor. 11:29, etc.)

4625. Skandalon; *the trigger in the trap on which the bait is placed and that springs the trap when it is touched by the animal, causing the trap to close. The word and its deriv belong only to biblical and ecclesiastical Gr. Its counterpart in the Sept. is the word pagis (3803), trap. However, pagis simply implies a reference simply to the injury lurking or hidden in the ambush and not so much to the suffering; whereas, skandalon involves the conduct of the person who is thus injured. Skandalon always denotes the enticement or occasion leading to conduct which brings with it the ruin of the person in question. In the NT the concept of skandalon is used both positively and negatively, and is concerned mainly with the fact that it incites certain behavior which leads to ruin and rarely denotes merely a hidden, unexpected cause of ruin (Rom. 9:33; 1Pet 2:8). In most cases, however, the skandalon is something which gives occasion to conduct leading to ruin; the course of sin leading to ruin or to a fall (Rom. 14:13, 1Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11, Rev. 2:14). Ta skandala are things which lead others to turn away from God’s salvation and thus to come to ruin (Mat. 18:7. Lk. 17:1).*

4624. Skandalizo; to commit that which leads to the fall or ruin of someone. Without reference to the element of deceit, it means to throw someone unawares into ruin; to give occasion for ungodly conduct resulting in the mischief incurred thereby (Mat. 5:29; 18:8,9; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; 1Cor. 8:13, cf. Mat. 17:27; Jn. 16 1; 1Cor. 8:13); to craftily entice or lead to ruin, allowing someone to adopt a course in which he will unknowingly come to mischief and ruin (Mat. 18:6; Mk. 9 42, 43. Lk. 17:2) in the pass, to fall into ruin unawares, to be offended or to be caught or affected by a skandalon, (4625), trap, or to regard something as a skandalon.

## OFFENCE (OFFENSE)

### A. Nouns.

1. skandalon (4625) originally was “the name of the part of a trap to which the bait is attached, hence, the trap or snare itself, as in Rom. 11:9, RV, “stumblingblock,” quoted from Ps. 69:22, and in Rev. 2:14, for Balaam’s device was rather a trap for Israel than a stumblingblock to them, and in Mat. 16:23, for in Peter’s words the Lord perceived a snare laid for Him by Satan.

“In NT, skandalon is always used metaphorically, and ordinarily of anything that arouses prejudice, or becomes a hindrance to others, or causes them to fall by the way. Sometimes the hindrance is in itself good, and those stumbled by it are the wicked.” Thus it is used (a) of Christ in Rom. 9:33, “(a rock) of offense”; so 1Pet. 2:8; 1Cor. 1:23 (KJV and RV, “stumblingblock”), and of His cross, Gal. 5:11 (RV, ditto); of the “table” provided by God for Israel, Rom. 11:9 (see above); (h) of that which is evil, e.g., Mat. 13:41, RV, “things that cause stumbling” (KJV “things that offend”), lit., “all stumblingblocks”; 18:7, RV, “occasions of stumbling” and “occasion”; Lk.17:1 (ditto); Rom.14:13, RV, “an occasion of falling” (KJV “an occasion to fall”), said of such causing a hindrance to another; 16:17, RV, “occasions of stumbling,” said of the teaching of things contrary to sound doctrine; 1Jn. 2:10, “occasion of stumbling,” of the absence of this in the case of one who loves his brother and thereby abides in the light. Love, then, is the best safeguard against the woes pronounced by the Lord upon those who cause others to stumble. Sept. Hos. 4:17, “Ephraim partaking with idols hath laid stumblingblocks in his own path.”

## OFFEND

skandalizo (4624), from skandalon (OFFENSE), signifies “to put a snare or stumblingblock in the way,” always metaphorically in the NT, in the same ways as the noun, which see. It is used 14 times in Matthew, 8 in Mark, twice in Luke, twice in John; elsewhere in 1Cor. 8:13 (twice) and 2Cor. 11:29. The RV renders it by the Verb “to stumble,” or “cause to stumble,” in every place save the following, where it uses the Verb “to offend,” Mat. 13:57; 15:12; 26:31, 33; Mk. 6:3; 14:27, 29.

Notes. (1) In Jas. 2:10; 3:2 (twice), KJV ptaio, “to stumble,” is translated “offend;” see FALL, STUMBLE.

So! Here’s the deal. **Count on** Jesus “scandalizing” you and testing you! **Count on** Him taking you to your limits of strength and skill and willpower, and finding the areas where, like the “rich young ruler” and our father Abraham... “*This one thing you lack. Kill it!*” JESUS sets a “trap” for us to “find out what is in our hearts.” HE is “the Stone that makes us stumble, and Rock that makes us fall.” Jesus is the StumblingStone upon which the Church is built, as the Chief Cornerstone. As Simeon said to even Mary (“blessed amongst women”): “This child is destined to cause *the falling and the rising again* of many... He will be a Sign spoken against...the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed, and *a sword will pierce your own soul, too!*”

The very nature of Salvation is that we would be “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37) causing the humble, like Bartimaeus, to cry out “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mk. 10:47-48). As Jesus Himself said of the Salvation that He alone could bring, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” If we are poised and mostly comfortable, rather than wrecked by our need for Messiah, and wrecked by the Call to abandon ourselves (also known as “Faith”), we cannot draw near to the Great Physician, Jesus of Nazareth. He *offends* us; He *skandalizes* us in order to know what’s in our hearts. He won’t be “used” as a “genie in a bottle.” He is the KING of GLORY! At the Name of Jesus, “*every knee buckles and collapses.*” He takes us to the brink, presses all the right buttons, and exposes us for who we are—that we might finally see who HE is—and decide. He is the *stumblingstone*, the *offense*. Jesus is *not* how Hollywood has portrayed Him. He’s *not* a cute bearded Anglo, humming sweet songs as he strolls nonchalantly down the cobblestone streets of life, tossing flowers and candy to those along the way. He is a Mighty Warrior, *God Incarnate*, YAHWEH! He’s Coming for those who

are “sick” that He might be their Healer. It’s not the well, but the sick that He bends for. He wants to “lay bare the motives of our hearts”—as He is “the Stone that makes men stumble, the Rock that makes men fall.” “Petra-Skandalon”: the *rock of offense*, “causing the (necessary exposing and) falling—and the (glorious) rising again of many!” This is your God. Bow at His Name!

We must. I must.

*Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

*“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes!”*

*“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Matthew 21:42-44).*

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# Helping Those in the “Valley of Decision”— With Wisdom and Courage

*Saturday Afternoon, April 27, 2002*

*Question: Would you briefly give me some direction on how to possibly reach out to someone or walk with someone that you are attempting to reach out to, but cannot actually embrace at this point? I am talking specifically about \_\_\_\_\_, and I know you know a great deal about the situation. He seems to be trying. Most of the times that we get with him, there is a Teaching situation of some sort. Sometimes it would look like this: we sit in a room and listen to a tape, and then we dialogue as best we can, hoping that he will open up. It gets real awkward, and I’m certain he feels somewhat uncomfortable. He always seems to be holding back something, or at least there is no Spiritual connection for some reason. At the same time, he seems externally to be a really “good guy.” Is there a way that we can sort of plug him into things (golf, etc.) as well as listening to teaching, but do it in a way that can solve the awkwardness problem? You know what I mean? Also, does Deuteronomy 11:18-21 apply in any way? We all are open to what God may show us in this area.*

**H**ey. As for the dude you mention who has been hanging out some, whose wife is noticeably more for Real with Jesus than he is, I guess you could say, as Jesus did, that “those the Father has given us” (Jn. 17) would be the “children” of Deuteronomy 11 that we would commit the intimate areas of our lives to, in the “rising up and sitting down and walking along the way.” If you *know* the guy is a lifetime commitment

of y'all's, entrusted to your care and lifelong intertwining, then certainly "golf" and other things such as the ballgames, lunchtimes with the brothers, and a hundred other things should be there. On the other hand, if you can't honestly say that about him—that he is in the picture of "a hen gathering *her* chicks," and the "WOULD" (Jn. 17), instead of "would not" (Mat. 23)—then "awkward" is an OKAY description. If he, when his time is "up" ("one more year") still has no obvious Reality in him (Mat. 16:18—a LIFE that "flesh and blood did not reveal to him," a LIFE that is *not borrowed vocabulary and borrowed "manners,"* but straight from Heaven itself—miraculously "from the Father" Himself), it will NOT help him to pretend. If he is only responding to you and "Jesus" to please others, to avoid the consequences of being "cut off," for his children's sake, to be involved or for the fun he might have, or to go along with his wife—then you *must* say "goodbye" to him, even if he is still living nearby. (The "stench" of self-life, religious or otherwise, is hard to miss if you are discerning.) Certainly, we cannot build with sympathetic leanings, or naïvely accept what Jesus "vomits" or "hates" because we think ourselves more loving and wise and patient than God. We *cannot* build with GOD and still close our eyes to avoid unpleasant situations or interactions (such as having to say "no" to someone). That is more of MAN'S religion—and we know how pathetically that turns out. It is *rebellious* (1Cor. 5) and, "If you *really* love Me, you will obey Me."

So then, some things will be "awkward" until such a person gives their life away, for *REAL*. "The Valley of Decision" is a tough (and certainly "awkward") situation for those going through it, as well as those around them. It's just part of the deal. Don't try to escape it or think that it's a "bad" thing. Childbirth is bloody and dangerous (Gal. 4:19; Acts 3:19-23, 26). If you've ever (I'm sure you have) had to cut someone's hours at work for performance or corporate cut-back reasons, or had to fire someone, or issue a suspension or written warning for a policy violation or performance issue—there just is NO WAY for those "decision points" to not be awkward. And if we water those moments down by making promises or "softening the blow" too much with "work-arounds" or dishonest compliments, then we have sabotaged the value they might have found in it all. They *need* to suffer a little bit and not receive benefits they should not be welcomed to—in order to have enough incentive to *really* change. Otherwise, a little Bactine and a Band-Aid don't get the job done. You can see the analogy, I'm sure.

So, the Wisdom that must come into play is to make sure that the point being made by *not* being “included” in many situations is *clear* to them! You don’t have to “prove” anything to them, or “explain” it perfectly (unlike the “work” analogy above, where you had *better* be able to explain all of the issues and prove everything to the arbiter!). You simply need to say, when appropriate, “\_\_\_\_\_, it’s hard to explain. It seems like you’re ‘trying,’ but there’s no question that there is something very wrong with you. God’s favor is not upon you and you are not shining with His Countenance or emanating His Spirit or Wisdom. This is in your mind and human will, but the fact that there seems to be little of GOD in it, and there is this continual awkwardness, there *is* a reason for it—between you and GOD. You *are* hiding some sin in your life, whether we can ‘prove’ it to you or not. Maybe a sin of commission, perhaps sins of omission where you are holding out on God. While perhaps we can’t ‘prove’ it to you, or tell you ‘exactly’ what it may be, here are some possibilities: \_\_\_\_\_. Whether it is one of these or not, it is *definitely something*. Make no mistake about it. The Testimony of the Spirit—‘ABBA! This is one of Daddy’s boys!’—is not there, and there is *always* a real and tangible reason for that: hidden pride, or deceit, or secret life, or secret loves, or a past coddled instead of repented of and held in disdain sin, or family idolatry, or ‘conditions’ on God of some sort... *something*, beyond question. We’re *with* you, if you want to continue to seek for Him with *all* your heart! We’ll keep trying to help you be set free if you ‘*want* to be Healed.’ But expect us to be ‘awkward’ at times with you, *of course*, since (Gal. 3-4) a child and slave are *both* treated differently than one in SONSHIP”

And that way of functioning in *His* House is not our choice. It is what Jesus and the Apostles *commanded*, if it’s *really* His House. And think about it. It’s just as reasonable as a kitty cat wanting to be accepted in a litter of bear cubs. How can it happen? In the natural realm, it cannot! *Species* matter, *especially* in the Spiritual world. So, we have to say in cases as you describe, “We have a problem, Houston! Don’t ask us to pretend since YOU are the one who would suffer the most from us ‘pretending’ out of carnal sympathy or peer pressure. So, want to proceed and try to work together, awkward as it may be, to try to find out what is between you and God as life unfolds?” *That* is honest, but not compromising, *nor is it unkind*, nor ignoring Spiritual Truths to avoid “awkwardness.” It’s everyone’s best chance. Hope that makes sense...



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# Those “the Father Has Given”

*Monday Afternoon, April 29, 2002*

*Question: I did read and consider again what you wrote a couple of days ago about those the Father has given us, versus just good deeds and “working” for Jesus with no regard for what the Father SPECIFICALLY thinks, case by case. I can surely see that with my previous mindset, I would have gladly welcomed Ananias and Sapphira, or the man from Corinth (1Cor. 5) without any thought whatsoever because, “It’s always right to invest in someone” with my OLD philosophy. I’ll live a little deeper now.*

*Let me share a couple of thoughts that entered my heart after I had read your e-mail and the scriptures you referred to, and PLEASE, if I am off track let me know. First of all, the scripture in John 17:8 convicted me, especially the RESPONSE from the disciples that Jesus was referring to: “For I gave them the words you gave me and they ACCEPTED them. They KNEW with CERTAINTY that I came from you, and they BELIEVED that you sent me.”*

*The fact that their response was “deep conviction” and “certainty,” got me to thinking that this type of response has possibly been lacking in our times together with others. Have I really prepared my heart and sought God’s direction PRIOR TO our times together? One brother said yesterday that he didn’t even know what we were going to share with a marginal man (potentially an unBeliever), until he arrived. Shame on me and I think you get my point. I think that when I originally asked you about our times together with others that I was more concerned with the “methodology/execution/format” of our times together—than focusing on actually the eternal principles at stake.*

*I am right with you on your point regarding “awkwardness,” that when dealing with life and death Issues, it’s okay. My wife and sister played us a song last night that basically said, “I am growing (in the Lord) and*

*I don't like it." Growth can be very painful/awkward at times, but it is also very wonderful! In reflection, some of the most AWKWARD times I have ever been through have been my BEST TIMES. I forget that sometimes. ☺ God is Good.*

**W**hile this might sound odd at first, it actually may be okay to not know what you're going to share with a marginal(?) man, or anyone, at any given time. Or I could go further and say that it may be okay to have NO idea what one will ever say, *if anything*, in living rooms full of people in Dallas or Oradea, Romania or in an auditorium in Poland or Mumbai, India. Often pre-planning is a way to lose God's Words by allowing fear to cause us to depend on our own minds. Consider carefully Matthew 10:20. Sometimes one may have a basic idea of *what* to address, but have no idea *how*. And that is FINE. And handled in the Spirit rather than as "speakers" and mere men do, even the "what" we might have in mind to address always remains subject to God's Thought of the *moment*, so we can easily change directions *radically* and never miss a beat. In *fact*, we could get cut off by someone with greater Revelation two sentences into what we had thought to say, and that would be *great*, if we are building GOD'S Way. And that is possible due to how the situation is "set up" (1Cor. 14:30). (This is a far cry from the little note cards, outlines, and practicing voice inflection, hand gestures, and emotional altar calls in front of the mirror—that they teach future "pastors" and "preachers" to do at Bible College and Seminary! "Those were the days, my friend. I thought they'd never end. La la la, la la la la la." ☺ Slight diversion there. ☺ )

All of that to say, it is our whole heart and trust that we will not "speak one word that we do not hear the Father speaking"—regardless of any external pressures. That's what we do anyway, if we truly believe He is *alive* and allowed to be Head of HIS Church rather than a figurehead or icon or historical figure to be worshipped and emulated. He's ALIVE. Let's live like we believe that He speaks through *anointing*, granted "as He wills" amongst the Gifts that He has deposited upon ALL of His People, not just some unBiblical "clergy" and "speech" system where the "laity" are relegated to some "extra" time, but *dare* not interrupt the "man of power of the hour" who is the automatic or designated "speech giver." We *all* are to Listen for His Voice, and respond at any given moment to what He is saying or doing. And all of this without a *lick* of "hyper-Spirituality" of, "I think the Lord is saying...blah blah blah." THAT is NOT Jesus' Style. That strong-arming and manipulation,

as well as drawing attention to oneself, is yucky. Everyone feels it—except the one doing it, and those who have been conditioned into being gullible by many years of that unBiblical way of relating to God and each other (Jer. 23:16-40). Jesus is far more Real and simple and unobtrusive than that. And those who really know Him will trust that “the sheep know the Shepherd’s Voice,” and His Lambs don’t need coercing in this Covenant.

Anyway, to be *prepared* to speak into a situation is Right. But the preparation I speak of is *not* “the words or how to say them” (Mat. 10:20 again), but rather a focused heart and mind for the gravity and importance and the *substance* of the task at hand. It is the same “sensitivity” that we discussed last time I was in your city. It is the same “sensitivity” to all that is around us every moment that is required to be a true “night and day” worshipper, rather than a religious “singer” or “praise-word repeater” rather than a *true* Worshipper that “the Father seeks.” This “sensitivity” lives “noticing all the details” around us at any moment. The jagged rocks, the dancing trees, the river bed crevices carved by the now-flooding, tumultuous brook. These sensitivities to the moment give us the potential to “worship in the Spirit” rather than in the mind, at some certain time and place that has been set up for a religious “experience” by men.

In a *similar* way, to Hear God in the Moment and to be useful to Him in the lives and situations of others, we must *also* be similarly sensitive to every moment. If our own “ego motors” or loud voices or fears or worldly appetites have deafened and blinded us, then we can only regurgitate the borrowed words of others, and not Hear God. Be *sensitive*. Notice the mannerisms, the voice inflections, what those in the room care about or don’t seem to care about—regardless of what they “say.” All of this so that you can then draw on Insight and Timing from God, that they may be HIS Words, and that the words “won’t return void”—as our words alone will certainly do. Even if we can “emotionally” get a response by rehearsed or conjured ideas and clever word-crafting, it will still “return void” in a matter of time. The weeping “at the altar” will revert to the same sins and weaknesses and tragedies within days or weeks if it is not truly GOD speaking. It looked good during the “special occasion,” but there was not “fruit that lasts”—so it was not Him at all.

On the other topic above, that was a good thought you brought up about folks who are “*accepting*” His Words. Clearly, this is requisite for

those “the Father has given us”—that they *accept* His Words. But allow me to speak for a moment to another side of what “accepting” His Words may mean that is easy to miss. We DO know some who “accept” His Words as His, but have little strength, and obey seldom. We can sense that they can HEAR Him, and “the sheep know the Shepherd’s Voice.” So we have persevered with such as these, though they are not welcome to live and move and have their being amongst us if they do not obey Him from the heart. Jesus was clear on this matter of whether those who disobey can be in our midst, as was Paul. “If they love Me, they will believe the right things about Me.” Wrong. “They *will obey me*.” “Depart from Me, I never knew you. You did not DO the Will of the Father.” “Remove the leaven from the batch.” “You must listen to everything Jesus tells you. Anyone who does not listen to Him will be completely cut off from among the people” (1Cor. 5; Acts 3:19-23; Mat. 7, etc.). But there is *still* a level of those “the Father has given us” that does not include being daily in our midst (as the above Commands clarify for us), but does involve a commitment on our part.

There is a young woman named Tanya who is an example of one who seemingly can “Hear” but will not soften her heart and obey. She has been dear enough to us that we have paid her mortgage payment, for her and her husband and three children—eight months of the last 36! There is a softness there in her heart still, in spite of her poor behavior over the years. She clearly has not been turned over by God to the “strong delusion” that she would “believe the lie.” She still, in fact, abhors the lie and is soft enough that *in spite of her behavior*, it still seems God’s Call is on her life. In such a case, we have a responsibility to her forever, regardless of what she does or doesn’t do. As long as GOD hasn’t “turned her over,” and as long as she still seems to hear His Voice, we will not turn our backs on her either. Weird, huh? She’s not a part of the Church here (notice the Commands above, again), but she can still Hear. So we are obligated to her (and love the privilege). We will continue to keep tabs on her, and care for her and try to watch out for her. She is, on one odd level, one “the Father has given us.” As long as Father is still in it, so are we.

Others we have known, by contrast, seem to have no ability to hear the Shepherd’s Voice, realistically. It would only be wishful thinking, but not discernment, to credit them with anything Spiritual. They try to cooperate and “keep their nose clean” and *try* to go along with “as much as they can.” But they are restless and ugly on the inside and *don’t*

respond to a Living Jesus, but just to their own wills and judgments and foolish, arrogant, small minds. There isn't an ounce of SUPERNatural or Heaven-Life in their bones or minds, but they try to DO all the right things to "stay out of trouble." Maybe they "behave acceptably" for the children's sake, or to please men, or to not be lonely, or because in their BRAINS they "know it's right" or some other worldly "of the devil" reason to "act right." But IN them (Col. 1:26-27) there is no heart, no passion, no humility, no softness, no true Life. Although they *behave* well, that category of person is FAR less welcome in our lives than the young woman I spoke of who behaves poorly, but can See what "flesh and blood has not revealed." The Father has *not* "given to us" (Jn. 17:8ff) those who "believe the right things" or "behave well," and yet there is no discernable LIFE in them. *That* is the "deposit"—the "guarantee"—the "proof." "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. What counts (alone) is a New Creation." This is *not* "theory," but impressive Reality—when it is REAL.

To those who are play-acting, and "are still their own" and not "bought for a price," they are NOT those "the Father has given." And therefore, we refuse to "give an account for their souls" (Heb. 13:17) or let them think that we will. To God we will say, instead of "giving an account for his soul": "Father, we do not know this man, and will not vouch for his soul. He inspires nothing in us, and while we tried to help him turn the corner, he continued to only worship himself, with some strategic (but transparent) religious jargon and good deeds thrown in. He's on his own. God have mercy on his soul."

Such as these, who do not "accept" Jesus' Words (though they may "behave" better in "keeping the Commands" than one who can "Hear" and "Accepts," but still must yet soften their hearts to obey), are "dead even while they live." And yet full of religion (at times even a borrowed, "deep knowledge of God" and impressive words and deeds—[Mat.7]), they do not "accept" His Words, even though they seem to, if judged only externally. They may behave well for self-motives (rather than from "Hearing His Voice"), but, "The Spiritual man indeed discerns all things." It is not that hard to see through such a person, even when you can't "prove it" with a list of "sins" or a lawyer's argument. Nevertheless, those who have no antennae in the Spiritual Realm, *even though they behave fairly well*—the Father will not "give us." We need to *act* on this Truth by *not pretending* that they are okay! It is for *them* that we must act. "Times of refreshing come from repentance" and we are *robbing*

them of the Opportunity by not Representing Jesus properly and “vomiting” at what makes Him vomit (Rev. 3:16). Those of mere mud and clay, but without the Wind of Heaven in their lungs and the Blood of Jesus in their veins, are not Family to be cared for indefinitely. Act like it. They must not be received the same as those who have those “Spirit-antennae.”

As Jesus said, “ONE MORE YEAR”—and that’s it—for those without Spirit-Antennae, those who cannot “accept” or “receive” His Words because they live in the wrong language and “receive” on the wrong “frequency.” Do not let carnal sympathy, biological ties, fear of man or any such thing cause you to build as men build. “In the end it leads to death,” and “the work is burnt up” when we build on the sand with such wood, hay, and stubble.

Well, there’s a little more on the topic. This will save you from poor Building—and *much* grief and collateral damage of innocent ones. If you’ll take it to heart and have the courage to apply it, it will help “bring many sons to GLORY.” Pass it on to the Church with you there, as you’re inclined.

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# Building Wisely

Thursday Evening, November 22, 2001

**H**i! ☺ Don't let yourselves be pressured or blackmailed by anyone anytime who wants to "join in" to "the church life." I'm not saying some meals now and again with those of questionable devotedness to Light-Walking aren't fine sometimes, just don't be pressured by them. Anyone who "sees something happening" and wants to "join in"—is suspect. They either already love Jesus, and you, and are demonstrating that "through thick and thin" in daily non-elaborate life, or they may well be "using" God (and His Work) to gratify self-life (though "religious" self-life *seems* so noble!) TRUE Christianity is a CROSS, not a theme park; it is a love relationship, not a "hot date."

To continue with this rather foolish and worldly-minded thing called "dating" as an analogy: When you're young—a pretty face motivates the average unSpiritual young person *dramatically*. Attractive appearance, money, complimentary words, a "fun" personality, charm, upward mobility and worldly measurements of intelligence, the "right" age or education or skin color...these are *extremely* motivating to the average young person seeking a relationship with the opposite sex. Even unregenerate men and women, as their hormones settle and they grow and are sobered into wisdom by life experiences—even those without the Spirit—usually come to realize that when they were young, *they weren't even looking for the things that mattered the most!* The most important qualities of a relationship are *not* the shape or color of the bag of carbon and water, or their money or wit (those things can, and almost certainly will, change dramatically as seasons come and go). The qualities that *really* make a relationship weren't even considered in those early years, as the ego and hormones and childish foolishness and worldly training by parents, peers, and Hollywood had made them blind. The truly important issues emerge from the haze of self-life and worldliness as we grow older and wiser. Loyalty, trustworthiness, patience, endurance, selflessness, sensitivity, vulnerability, humility... the fruit of the mighty tree of God-like love. Those things, and others like them, "last." The others are sugar-coating on *some* kind of "pill"—but WHAT?

So, you see the analogy (as also illustrated in a recent letter to a man presumably seeking Jesus, below). The family you speak of, and 10,000 others like them, can never (must never) be intertwined into and included in the daily Events of our lives based on words or notions or so-called “vision” or so-called “doctrine,” or compliments or excitement or loneliness or biological bloodlines or geographic proximity, or common history, or same-aged children, or personality or age or home educational or health food preferences, or conferences attended or common books read! *Only skandalon* can build lives into HIS “Church Life”—rather than the conjured man-concocted nonsense that uses that name, or “house church,” or “community,” or whatever the next fad will be. We either “lay down our lives for our friends”—through thick and thin, when there’s nothing to join, nothing to belong to, nothing to be invited to—or it is a counterfeit of Life.

Would YOU tell your 3-year-old baby boy that you will love them and be there for them—but only after you’re not too busy with other things, and when they’re old enough to be more interesting and to give you something back? If a person only wants to “come out and play” when there’s something in it for them, they are like the foolish juvenile looking for self-gratification, mentioned above. Or like the deranged “parent” mentioned above. Love doesn’t function like that. And since “God IS love,” the Body of Christ *must* be built on *Christ-like Love*—not a “cause” or an “idea” or a “movement” or a “way.” Those things take care of themselves. True Life is born, not in the mind, or out of human desire or need—but is born at the foot of the Cross, with the only goal to *live out* Isaiah 53, together *daily* with those who, “from the least to the greatest,” ALL (Acts 2:42-47; Lk. 9:57-62) will live that way as well. “ALL” their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Christianity, rather than man’s sentiment, guilt, fear, ego, superstition, and loneliness—using the Bible as a credo for fulfillment of religious self-life and “community.”

An author of a best-selling golf book recently told me of a bunch of families (golfers) who were wanting to buy some land together in California or South Carolina so they could experience “community.” As long as you have a “rallying point” or common thread to scintillate the flesh, any pack of animals can “nest” together and feel “spiritual”! That is *not* the Church Jesus said would batter and destroy the very gates of Hell with its hatred of sin and the devil. It is a humanistic, self-serving counterfeit, better known for its cringing at the Light of

exposure in daily life, than for its dismantling of the evil empire and its ways in people's lives.

Moral of the story? Those who will love Light (vulnerability—Jn. 3; 1Jn. 1; Jas. 5; Heb. 3:12-14) and are “not offended” in Skandalon, who are there for a Cross for others—not a show or a club or a buddy or a movement—only those people are welcomed into our lives. The others, those who “would not” (“would not” be gathered—as Jerusalem, as the “rich young ‘ruler’”—and those who “would not” have this Man to be KING over them, they only want to “belong” and have their own way) can only be “visitors” in our lives, until it all means enough to them that Brokenness is evident, and selfless living for Jesus and His is their only priority.

*Here is that letter to the man I mentioned earlier who is hopefully finally seeking Jesus:*

Hi Eddie... Good to hear from you. I have waited patiently for you to See some things for years now, wanting the *REAL* thing for you rather than “a good environment for the boys,” or “good day-care” or “free day-care,” or “I want to live a better life,” or “These drugs and evil things are going to kill me if I don't stop them, so I should get some religion and some good folks to help me quit the bad things and do good things.” *All of these things—every one of them* (re-read the list!) *is total evil self-love*, no matter how “admirable” they sound to most religious folks. Those things would just be adding more sin to all of the other sins.

You do what you do for JESUS, no matter what the cost, or if you ever get *anything* out of it—or it is *not conversion* at all. There are no “conditions” on Jesus and no way to “use” Him for your own gain or purposes, no matter how “noble” those purposes seem to YOU. That is humanism and self-love and false religion—and we weren't going to give in to any of those things with you.

I tell you all of this, waiting anxiously (as I have been, we all have been) for many years—to hear of the *REAL* thing—a *LIFE SURRENDERED TO JESUS TOTALLY*, without self-centered “strings attached,” or you would feel like you got a raw deal. When it is the *real* thing, and you are truly Encountering and Saved by Messiah, the Son of God—you will serve Him with all your heart, whether or not you *ever* “get anything out of it” or not. You will lay down your life for *others*, regardless of whether you ever get anything in return, or are ever appreciated or

recognized or respected or included or *anything*. You would even gladly go to hell itself for the privilege of loving and obeying Jesus for your short lifetime here. Self-indulgence, drugs, worldly lusts for goodies of any kind—***do not have any bearing on your decisions***. You are abandoned to *whatever* He wants for your life. You are motivated by, “HE IS WORTHY”—not by your own desires. *That* cannot be sabotaged by the enemy, nor can it ever become stale or boring or undesirable. *That* is how JESUS lived, and the Cross He invites you to “take up daily” for others.

What do you think? Is *that* what you’ve come to, or are you still trying to climb the fence, rather than to come through the Door? (Jn. 8-10).

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# A History Lesson for All of Us

*Saturday Morning, October 10, 1998*

## Breaking The Cycle Will Take Courage!

*“The Rise and Fall” or “Fall and Rise” of LIFE*

All that is truly HIS voice *“shall cause the falling and rising of many—and be a sign spoken against—so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.”*

This is the formula for the “Rise and Fall” of civilizations, written 200 years ago by Alexander Fraser Tytler describing the decline and fall of the Athenian Republic. I thought maybe it should be fair warning for all of us, God’s People, regarding our own SPIRITUAL Pilgrimages. Don’t you think there’s something to this?

### *The Rise and Fall of Life*

From bondage to spiritual faith;  
From spiritual faith to great courage;  
From courage to liberty;  
From liberty to abundance;  
From abundance to selfishness;  
From selfishness to complacency;  
From complacency to apathy;  
From apathy to fools;  
From fools to bondage.

**B**y God’s immense Grace, and our unwillingness to allow sin and sloth to rob us of our relationship with Him and with the Saints, we really don’t ever need to fall into this cycle. Surely, we’ve all tasted the possibilities of it in our flesh. But for the sake of the King and His Lambs, to the absolute humiliation of the enemy (Col. 2:9-15;

Eph. 3:10-11; Mat. 16:18-19), what do you say, by the Power of the Spirit of Christ and the authority of His Eternal Word... what do you say we break the cycle?! 😊 Maybe “from abundance... to extravagant waste and Love” would break the cycle? 😊

*For the Carpenter/King,*

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# Architekton— House Church Notes

January 2001

*Excerpts (unrefined, unfinished) from an upcoming book, and series of Email teachings... This represents approximately 1 or 2% of the topics that will be addressed, ultimately. This has been done for the sake of, and at the request of those scattered in 100,000 different locales desiring to express Jesus organically in a Body of Believers, “joined and knit together by every supporting ligament,” “contending as One man for the Faith.” Many find themselves tripped up and frustrated by problems in their lives together—problems that might have been avoided by using better “Building” Principles earlier on. As Paul was to say, “Now each of you must be very careful how you build upon that Foundation.” It matters how we build. If we build on sand, or with leaven, or foolishness, or fad, or with ego or fear...we will make certain a collapse “when the storms come.” Yet, if we build as Jesus built, look to Him for Truths of Architectural Principles, He WILL build HIS Church. And HIS church (as opposed to a few true believers scattered here and there, or groups that are not truly churches) will be distinguished from those built on wishful thinking or violated Truths. HIS will stand.*

## Don't Shop 'Til You Drop—Work 'Til You Drop

Do they know WHY they want to leave where they are, to come to where you are? Are they “shopping for a better ‘church family’”? Oh, groan...

And is it really as Pure as “just wanting God’s Will to be done”? Usually not. Very often there is a mixture of self-centered and shallow motives that need to be purged in order for them to *really* hear God’s voice as

to where they should live. That's one way you can help them. Don't let them bail out on where they already live so easily as they may desire.

And to be honest, if they aren't *acting on* what they've learned *where they are at*, they will likely be trouble when they move to where you are.

Remember the story of the caterpillar that *needs* to break free from the cocoon, and the chick that *needs* to break out of its own egg in order to be strong enough to LIVE once they get out of their "bondage"? These are good "visual aids" to what is absolutely the case in the Spiritual Realm. People must do what they *can* do in the place where they are, or He will grant them nothing more anywhere else. Jesus promised this would be true on several occasions.

We must "walk as Jesus walked, if we claim to be in Him." And, Jesus "did nothing in secret." He made it clear, "daily in the public places" exactly where He was coming from. He "would have gathered them... but *they* would not." If we're living Jesus' Way, then we won't just "sneak out the back door of the burning building" and leave everyone else in the dangerous and unBiblical situation that we know to be untenable with God's Heart and Will and Commands.

We'll "do nothing in secret," and deeply desire that all come along. If they "would not" after we have spilt blood and tears for them, then the Kingdom will go to those who will bear its Fruit. To just "sneak out the back door," or allow anyone to move to where you are that has not spent themselves tirelessly and with great risk, "from house to house with tears," and giving out written things and encouragements "daily, so that none are hardened and deceived" is inviting trouble later on. Everyone must give themselves to the current relationships that Father has granted them, and fight for their souls and obedience to His Ways, until they are warmly received, or rejected or thrown out. This is God's Way in most every case, because it is Jesus' Way.

Oh, *how different* this is from the "recruiting nickels and noses" that virtually every religious group is so known for! God's Way is to help His People learn to *obey* Him, that they may learn to *hear* Him. (Rom. 12:1-2; Jn. 7-8; Gal. 5; etc.) If we help everyone to respond to His Commands so that they may Hear Him better, then HE can build His Church as He pleases, without us getting our fingers all over it! Hallelujah!

## Hospitality

Hey, I know you're tired, and you've taken care of so many folks in the last several months. Many even stayed at your house. I know your husband has taken off days from work and lost pay in order to be with those that have come from other cities and other countries. I know it's been difficult, and the various personalities and repetitive questions can be challenging. Clearly so. *And yet*, didn't Father call us to be "*philoxenos*"—lovers of strangers? Didn't Jesus speak much about that cup of water, and brothers in needs of various kinds, and through one of His servants speak of "entertaining angels, without recognizing them as such"? Yes, it can be challenging, whether a street person or a visiting "VIP," so-called. But what is life all about?!! Sure, we have to protect God's Family, and ours, from the enraged, or the psychoprophetic self-proclaimed "gifts to the body," from those who confuse hippy life for Jesus Life, and from the "Fairy Dust" fakers, and the ecclesia tourists, and the others that aren't coming to Him, truly. BUT, while discernment is mandatory, if our motives are Right and we are sharing "wisdom in the multitude of counselors" as we Work together to Hear His voice, there is also a time to break through the comfort zones and stretch out our hands. Philoxenos. Lovers of strangers. The "good Samaritan" that Jesus so honored didn't have all of the answers in advance, either. Give your life away. It's the Way of the Cross, and the most rewarding way to live that any human could ever imagine. Don't lose the Opportunity! Who knows if He'll give you another. No complaining, or you are unworthy of the Assignment.

## I Want to Visit!

*"I'd like to come to see the Church there, in action!"*

Really? Why?

*"Ummm...to ummm, well..."* Maybe to get ideas to take back home?

Please don't come. Jesus isn't like that. He can't be franchised—only loved.

Maybe just to experience "the church"? Leave your Nikon camera and Bermuda shorts at home. ("Oh, look, Marge! Come see the 'church life'! Over there—look!") Tourism and "community hopping" is a spectator sport that is encouraged by pretenders and demi-popes and marketers, but if someone, somewhere, something anywhere is for Real—then

recommending or allowing anyone to come to look at anyone but Jesus is just one more gimmick and counterfeit. Don't let anyone sell you that bag of spoiled groceries. That's not Him.

Perhaps one would want to come to judge, or critique. Or, perhaps it's all a game to play—a kind of religious chess game that intrigues them and they would like to dissect how the “game” is played where you are. Don't let them come. No one has the right to slice and dice God's family in the veg-a-matic of their proud minds.

Do they collapse “at the name of Jesus”? Do they *revere* Him and His Hand and His Work—or is it something for *them*? A platform? A curiosity? A fad? A self-serving way to fulfill their loneliness or find a “spouse”? Is it to them, a “home school support group,” or “a child-raising seminar coming to a neighborhood near you”? That is utter nonsense.

No way can one be welcomed with such ulterior or sinful motives. Do they love Him desperately, or sincerely desire to do so at any personal cost? You need to know. And they need to know Jesus can't be found *any* of those other places, no matter how many miles they've traveled to “see the show,” or how many oceans they've swam across in order to visit.

Jesus and His Life can't be found by external observance, according to the Master Himself. Until we help them get their heart right, they won't find HIM anywhere—and nothing else matters. We're NOT helping someone by letting them visit for the wrong reasons. Don't be sheepish or manipulated or carnally sympathetic in these matters. If they come in through the wrong door, they will end up in the wrong house. Those doors can never lead to a Place where THEY will find Him, even if everyone there is.

## Is There a Reason to Live Close Together?

Is there a reason to live close together? *Absolutely*. Fifteen years into the expression of the church here, and it is beyond dispute that saints living “within an apple core's throw” or closer to one another has shown infinite value in the growth *and* work of God's People in Him.

Many who had lived up to 45 minutes from one of the areas where the Believers are packed in close to one another have eventually desired to move into the “eye of the Storm”—the neighborhood where other

Believers express His Life with one another in the streets and homes daily. They will tell in profound terms how this move has changed their lives for Him forever, even in surprising ways that they would never have predicted, far beyond what they could “ask for or imagine.” Others that simply lived two apartment buildings away from where many Saints were living, eventually couldn’t contain themselves, and actually moved their possessions and homes a hundred yards into the apartment buildings where other Believers were living—and will tell you that the difference has been phenomenal for them!

Everyone lives where they live for a reason. What you are “seeking first” is clearly demonstrated by where you choose to live, whether the city or the neighborhood. As a president of a home building company once said, people make their choices about where they live according to the priorities in their lives. Some make the quality of the “school district” their highest priority in why they choose a house and a neighborhood. What are they “seeking first” in their lives? The Kingdom? Clearly not. There is another “god” that has influenced their decision more than Jesus and His Kingdom.

“Seek *first* His *Kingdom*, and His Righteousness.” Jesus didn’t say, as obvious as it would have seemed to us to do so, “Seek first the KING!” Surely a King-dom that is not focused upon, and deeply in love with, the KING is not part of His Kingdom at all, but simply religion. And yet, Jesus was very clear as to what He would have us *seek first: the expression of His Reign in His People*. So, why does any person live where they do? Because of what they are “seeking first.” It is quite the revealer of what’s in a person’s heart.

Some, the home building executive said, choose to live where they live because it is close to their workplace, or have moved to the city because of a job transfer. What is such a person *seeking first*? If that is *why* they moved to that place, they are *not* seeking *first* the Kingdom.

Some, he said, move to a particular place because of living close to biological family members, or because of “standard of living” homes and neighborhoods, or because of climate or access to parks or sports. Surely it is not difficult to understand that “idolatry” (idol worship) is not any more complicated than this: allowing *anything* to influence our decision-making other than “seeking first the King and His Kingdom”! Some people worship, then, the false god of genetic family who are often pagan or lukewarm at best. Some worship the false god of materialism

and desire to live in a certain quality of home or neighborhood for their own worldly motives, often rationalized by “noble”-sounding justification. Some, then, worship demons (idol worship, idolatry). Let’s not soft sell anything! Without even knowing it in most cases, it *IS* idolatry, and thus demon worship, to allow *anything* to be the true primary decision-influencing factor—*other* than “seeking *first* the expression of His Reign in His People.”

Now, that is not to say that everyone ought to move to some particular place or another where other believers are living. (If those believers are truly led by the Spirit, rather than their own egos or ambition, or naïveté, they wouldn’t let you move there anyway—before you have done your job faithfully where you already live!) *However*, you *surely* had better assess honestly *WHY* you live where you do, or are wanting to move where you desire to move. Anything less than “seeking *FIRST* His KINGDOM, His visible Reign in His visible Body” will be revealed by fire as the work is shown to be wood, hay, and stubble, and is burnt up in judgment.

Of course there will be times that the King would have someone in an odd situation, by His Choice. In such a case, it would *not* be “seeking first the Kingdom” to move somewhere where Jesus is expressing Himself in His Rule and Life in a true Lampstand. It would be disobedience to move somewhere *other* than where He wants you to be. But, more often than not, excuses and selfishness and fear and worldliness and idolatry or money or laziness or lack of fire in the heart for Jesus and His Purposes are the *real* reasons a person chooses to live somewhere. That’s no good! Let’s turn that around, okay?

Life is too short to squander, wouldn’t you say?!

## Pop the Bubble!

When you’re speaking to someone, even someone you don’t know well, don’t be afraid to “pop the bubble.” SO much harm has been done when one of the Saints has had an “inkling” of an idea that there is a problem in some area or another with a person they were speaking with or near, but was afraid to ask about it.

Perhaps the procrastination or refusal to speak up or ask about the perceived problem was due to a false humility. “Who am I, anyway?” Maybe it was under the guise of, “If it was *really* an issue, someone else

would have asked or said something already.” Or, “I’m probably just imagining it anyway, and it’s just my problem.” But truthfully, if you don’t understand yourself to be a Priest of the Most High God, and an Ambassador, “as if God were making His appeal through you,” then you’re not likely to be of much use to Him, you know? You have to *see* yourself as one who can be entrusted with the very riches of God, and His deepest secrets, and most important tasks in changing lives! You know the Scriptures for each of these things, but do you *believe* it and *act* like it’s true?!

Be willing to “pop the bubble” of comfort and expectation and protocol! Don’t be rude, or arrogant. Do be gentle as best you can be, and humiliating someone is never the objective, of course. But Simon the sorcerer, Jannes and Jambres, Elymas Bar-Jesus, Alexander the metalworker, Ananias and Sapphira, the Pharisees and many others discovered that Jesus isn’t always socially and politically “correct” either.

Be willing to “pop the bubble” if you wish to hear and serve Jesus and be a “prophetic people.” The alternative—a “pathetic people”—isn’t very attractive. And that’s what satan would make of God’s People that are afraid to Represent.

“Be thou strong and courageous”—but gentle and wise at the same time. Don’t worry, the One who invented that idea lives inside of you, if you’re His.

And, functioning in the Body of Christ, you’ll get the feedback, safeguards, wisdom, correction, encouragement, and ‘equipping for Works’ of service that you need to grow and serve Him well. That’s part of the Plan too. The Treasure in earthen vessels.

## Singles’ Household?

What about that “singles’ household”? Great idea, huh? NOT!

*“God sets the lonely in families.”*

God never intended a “sub-class” of those that are unmarried! “Neither Jew, nor Greek”—but “single” is okay? No way. We’ve seen it in city after city and many countries where we have been with Believers. It is inexcusable and destructive to unmarried adults, young or old, to be separated from the other Saints, functionally. We *must* not selfishly

“focus on the family,” instead of “focus on the FAMILY” as GOD defines “Family,” by the second birth!

Picture this: The Church in a city has four Believers of Chinese origin, four black Kenyan’s, and three Thai Believers. What would you think of the wretched blindness of anyone who would encourage the four from China to live together in a house or apartment, and hang around together...and the four blacks to be roommates and closer to one another than to any other...and the three from Thailand to be roommates and be with each other most of the time? Can you think of anything more *pathetic*? To recommend such a thing, or allow such a thing to emerge without resolving it somehow would be disgusting, wouldn’t it?!

Do we really need to apply the point?! Why should a person who has remained unmarried for Jesus be segregated or receive prejudice in any way? (By the way, anyone can get married if they are willing to compromise Jesus and yoke to one that is unfit in Christ to yoke to. Therefore, any true Disciple that is unmarried has done so as a Gift to Jesus.)

There are few things more ugly than the blindness of those that would allow those unmarried to be “left out” or lumped together in some automatic fashion in a “singles’ household.” Those that have died to self for Jesus are to receive “a hundred mothers and brothers and sisters, lands and possessions.” To permit the unmarried, or the Thais, anything less than all-inclusive, fully-enabled and privileged Life—relationally, financially, and in every other way—is disobedient and short-sighted on our parts! We must care for *all* as we would for “our own” (the pagans’ perspective of “family”), because Jesus DID make us One! “There is no difference then...!”

Practically speaking, does that mean that unmarrieds should never live together? No, it doesn’t mean that. But FAR better that we would seek other solutions, regardless of the *alleged* personal cost to those that have married. Know what I mean? And, the so-called cost is actually a privilege with rich blessings and gifts hidden in the package!

Frankly, we have seen at times in other cities something which seems almost unbelievable, but is true. Sometimes “singles” *want* to be independent and unaccountable and “footloose and fancy-free.” They don’t *want* to talk about what they’re doing, who they’re close to, what is happening on their job, why they go where they go, or work where they work. Perhaps they’ve been trained to be unChristian in this way by the

religious system's flawed life, and would change if given the chance. Or perhaps those that don't want others' involvement in their goings and comings and life in general...are not Christians at all, in some cases. Jesus and Paul *did* both say that "loving the Light" and "loving the Truth" are essential as evidence of Salvation. If a person doesn't WANT involvement in their lives, whether married or unmarried, there is something seriously wrong with them, and any relationship with Jesus is Biblically seriously in question. That's just simply what God said about it, and since this is virtually never acknowledged or dealt with in institutional religion (whether in the home or a religious facility), it is worth bringing up. God speaks of it often, and we're obligated to say what HE says about it, I would think.

So, back to the point? If unmarried Believers have some significantly different lifestyle than those that are married, there is a problem that must be resolved in order to find Jesus and His Best. If an unmarried person's evening and weekend level of involvement with children and opportunities are different than those that are married, there is a serious problem and loss that must be resolved. Somehow you are Building improperly if Jesus and Paul and Timothy would be left out of anything where you live, simply because they are unmarried...YUCK! Shame on your world if it shows this sort of prejudice—based on color, age, education, or marital status!

GOD sets the lonely in Family! Let's go there, where God can be found! And, we're not talking theory. It CAN be done!

*"We now see NO man after the flesh, though we once saw even Jesus this way."*

## Sometimes Don't Live So Close

*Sometimes*, it is NOT appropriate to live super close to each other. Can you believe it? It's true, in certain situations. *If* a person is still untested and all you have of them is their words, but no *proven* willingness to walk the way of the Cross and endure *skandalon*, they *should not* be allowed to live next door or across the hall.

If a person or family or one of the spouses are not truly known under the pressure of the storms that Jesus said would come, it is *far* better to suggest they live a block or two away (which is generally far closer than they've ever lived to God's People before, and they don't likely see the

real benefit of being closer than that anyway). Even a mile or two away is okay, in a case like that. Renting an apartment or flat or home is far, far better than purchasing, and this should be made very clear to the new person or family before they come, if they must come.

As time passes, if the newcomers demonstrate by their lives (not their words) that they are truly sincere followers of Jesus, willing to leave “father, mother, brother, sister, lands and possessions” for Him, and to endure the skandal of “walking in the Light”—then living next door might make sense and be far superior to being a block or mile away. But don’t make the mistake of inviting an untested person to live next door to the Saints! You may regret that for years to come.

The grief of dealing with smooth talkers, but those that turn out, in Light, to be haters of the Cross, is no fun at all. And to be constantly running into them, even in your own driveway and when your children are playing outdoors, is grief that no one should have to bear. Much pain and confusion and many energy leaks can be avoided entirely by simply avoiding foolish Building Practices or premature invitations into close proximity.

“THIS is HOW all men will know you are MY disciples—by the Love that they observe you are having for one another in daily Life.” Unless men can SEE you loving on each other as you rise up, and sit down, and walk along the way with your brothers and sisters, they will be *robbed* by our poor decisions and selfish decisions of how we spend our time and where we live. This is not “one way”—but HOW!

One story amongst a thousand: A driver of a snowplow truck, an unBeliever, stopped me on the street a few nights ago. I was returning from walking some sisters to their homes, up the street a few houses, one winter night. A snowplow came roaring up to me, swung around, and the driver’s-side window rolled down. The snowplow driver then said, “I just want to let someone know that I really look forward to plowing snow over here. This seems like the perfect neighborhood. Everyone really seems to know each other and take care of each other, just plowing snow over here encourages me.” I asked where he lived, told him that Jesus was the reason for what he was seeing, and told him to come back when he had more time to talk, and that we’d keep a house in the neighborhood reserved for him and his family. ☺ He was quite gracious and focused as we spoke. “*This is how all men will know!*”

Barbeques, taking each other's trash out, mowing the lawns, repairs, help with children, ride sharing, grocery shopping together (going to the market together), passing a football ("grid iron" ball, for you Aussies!) or playing basketball with the children, parades of folks heading from house to house in the evenings, bearing food, love, and gifts of the Holy Spirit—all of these things are far more obvious and observable than you know! How much love do the unBelievers see you having for one another on Sunday morning in a religious facility (or weekly/weakly living room meeting) during a ritual? Just about zilch! What will we do about the Master's Words? "THIS is HOW all men will know that you are of Me—by their observation of y'all loving on each other in the course of living life!"

## Two-Headed Monster

How about this: What about two families sharing the same house or apartment indefinitely? As cozy and spiritual as it may sound, it is very rare that that would be a good idea. We realize that you may not understand "why not" at this point. It just sounds like fun, and so "christian," doesn't it? Nevertheless, two "heads" in one home, when there are two families living under one roof, is an unsustainable situation. I'm not suggesting that mature followers of Jesus would be prone to sins of selfishness and pride and materialism and therefore would have a difficult time "getting along." I AM saying that fundamentally and principally speaking, it will create dilemmas that are unnecessary and problematic. It is simply bad Building, and it would be very rare that this bad Building would not result in spiritual problems that could have been avoided. At the cinema, anything with two heads...is a monster.

Certainly, there will be times where "bunking up" in the midst of tragedy or transition is necessary and proper. However, it should be clear that the stay is to be considered short-term, and that one family is the "guest" of the other family. These two factors (even if the stay ends up being a little longer than anticipated for whatever reason) will keep the spiritual contradiction and problem (of "two heads" in the household)—at bay. As on any team, if everyone knows their role, it is helpful. And, since we must not be "unaware of satan's devices" it is best to avoid co-ownership and co-occupancy issues, which can become unnecessary stumbling blocks or distractions. Let's reserve our energy for what we really ARE supposed to be doing with our lives and relationships!

## We Used to Be Like That... and Other Deceptions

If you ever hear someone say anything like these statements, rest assured they have NO idea what a church is, or what they are speaking of.

“Hey, we used to be like that back when we were small and could all fit in a living room, too”—or,

“That’s fine now, but when there are 30 of you (or 50, or 120, or 250, or \_\_\_\_\_), THEN you’ll have to institutionalize... Ummm, I mean... ‘organize’ (Ummm...maybe you mean ‘fossilize?’)...like us.”

Or, “Participation and deep relationships are only *possible* in small, intimate settings.” (How many did Freud say was the maximum for group therapy? Wasn’t it Freud who said “Split into more ‘house churches’ once you have more than thirty?”)

Seems to me that God had a different paradigm in Mind when He added 3000 in a single day with never the slightest *hint* of “breaking them up into small groups,” or “assigning” anyone to anyone, or to any small “group” or “house church”! Intimacy is *essential* and anything less is rebellion and unBiblical—but why are humans SO intent on birthing Ishmael, instead of Isaac, by getting their “bright ideas” smeared into God’s Ways?!

It IS possible to have *all* of the Benefits of intimate Life with Jesus and one another, daily “joined and knit together by every supporting ligament”—without a single program or rule or code or “mission statement” or assignment or officials or automatic *anything*. Just like it was with Jesus when He was here the first time! Why would we accept anything less?!!!

A true Lampstand is a very Holy thing, and not an intellectual trifle or casual club: “I can start one of them things—no problem!” That is a serious abuse and Jesus is *very* jealous for what dares to call itself His Bride. The *clubs* need quotations like those above in order to explain their failures and “fading Glory.” But it was never intended to be so. Not the Real thing.

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# Growing up as the Local Expression of the Body of Christ

*Wednesday Morning, March 7, 2001*

*While it is true that compromise, lukewarmness, disconnectedness, leaven, and unwillingness to empty our lives out and risk for one another together, daily—will destroy any chance of Jesus' Life being manifest on any significant level in a church or locale, the thoughts below are VERY IMPORTANT! Even with the heart and willingness and obedience God is calling us to, GROWING UP STILL TAKES TIME! And, if we're doing OUR part in self-sacrifice, obedience and daily Life love...it's OKAY that things aren't of instant mountaintop stature. Enjoy the Journey! -m*

## Thoughts From a Sister...

*What follows here are a few thoughts that I had one day when I was considering the relationships in the Church—how it takes time for them to grow and develop, and the process of learning to walk life out together (Php. 1:27). It helped me to not feel rushed and to not have an expectation of running a spiritual marathon everyday. At the same time, I see that it takes work, practice and time—for learning, growing, coaching, and serious (often painful) training. I want all of that. Here's what occurs to me, as I consider the Journey, the Process: -a sister*

## Establishing Links and Relationships....

**TIME!** It takes time for the human body to develop from the infant stage to adulthood. There is a process of growth, a process of trial and error. When a child is born they don't immediately get up and walk out of the birthing room, begin speaking, and caring for themselves.

It takes precious time and energy for a one-day-old infant to become a bubbling 5-year-old, the 5-year-old to become a 10-year-old and the 10-year-old to become an adult.

The human body is a very delicate and intricate mechanism/Masterpiece. A 30-year-old has spent 30 years with their fingers, toes, legs, arms and other body parts. They have spent 30 years perfecting their own movements and introducing each part to the other (so to speak). Every day tasks of walking, eating and drinking that a 30-year-old doesn't think about but does as second nature, can be a very difficult process for a 1-year-old. Take the process of eating a bowl of cereal. The process of making your arm, fingers and hand work together to put food on your spoon, balance the food while your arm carries it to your mouth and opening your mouth to eat it. If you watch a 1-year-old, you'll notice this is not as smooth a motion as it is for a 30-year-old. The 1-year-old will spill half the food off the spoon and onto his lap before it reaches his mouth. What does reach his mouth will end up mostly on his chin and nose before he gets it into his mouth. In order for a 1-year-old to become efficient at this process of feeding himself, he has to repeat the process over and over and over and over again. (Heb. 5:14)

If you peel back some of the layers and look at the interactions of the body parts involved in eating a simple bowl of cereal, it's quite amazing. The brain tells your right or left hand to pick up the spoon. Your body feels the spoon in your hand. This sends a signal to your brain that the spoon is in the hand and is waiting for the next command. Then the brain sends a signal back to the hand telling the hand to turn in such a way as to pick the cereal up in the spoon. The hand sends a signal back to the brain saying that it did this. Then the brain sends another signal telling the hand to balance the food while it tells the arm to move so many inches to the mouth at the same time telling the mouth to open so wide. It then tells the mouth to close over the spoon, the hand to pull the spoon out of the mouth and the arm to move away from the mouth, etc. This is just a small inkling of the interactions going on in your body to just take one bite of cereal! There are a thousand and one things happening all over your body simultaneously. You of course don't think of each step along the way broken down like that because your body has learned how to do these things without giving them much thought. They have become second nature to you. At one point and time you did have to give much thought to it though, while you were learning and training.

You've trained certain parts of your body to do certain tasks. Try brushing your hair with the opposite hand that you normally brush it with. Or try writing with the opposite hand. You'll find yourself having to give much thought to something that you've trained your other hand to do with no thought at all. Your hand that is familiar with a particular task has a relationship with your brain and your brain knows this is the hand that does it. You could train your non-dominant hand to have that kind of relationship with your brain for that task, but you would have to train it. You would have to establish that relationship.

People who have had neurological damage to their brains in some way, have to re-learn/re-train a lot of the things they taught themselves when they were younger. Some of the connections/relationships that had been established between their brain and body have been erased. So they, just like a 1-year-old, have to go through the process all over again of re-establishing the links they once had with their legs, arms, and any other parts of their body that were affected.

So, would it be fair to expect our 5 and 8-year-olds to go out and win Wimbledon? Run a world record marathon? Place first in the Tour de France? Cure cancer? These are things that take time and experience. They have to teach their head, arms, legs, and body parts how to work together. They have to teach their feet how to work together. (Amos 3:3) (Left foot here, then right foot there, left then right. Put your foot here if you want to turn and then put this foot there. Don't lean your body too far back or you'll fall. Don't lean your body too far forward or you'll fall). Every day from birth on we teach our arms how to work with our face. We teach our feet how to work with our bodies. We teach our bodies how to work with our head. All the parts are "getting to know each other." After we have taught our bodies the basics of life there is even more to learn if we want to excel in certain areas.

All of these same principles can be applied to the Body of Christ today. When we interact with others in the Body, we are learning how to work together. We're teaching ourselves how to run in unison with the other parts, the other believers. We train for spiritual marathons. It all starts very simply from day one. First, we learn how to roll over, then crawl, then stand up, and then walk. How to pick things up with our hands; use the thumb and fingers together to grab a hold, lift your arm, etc. We establish relationships and links with one another through thousands of interactions. We learn how the other works so that we can work together to attain a goal. We spend time together daily,

learning how to walk, talk and live together. We are being “*katartidzo*” (Eph. 4:11-12) “equipped”—literally translated “mended together.” We see an area that someone may excel in, so we help them train and work with them. If they’re trying to establish links that will benefit the whole body, we must all work together to help them so that they can perform this task. If my left foot wants to keep walking around and the rest of my body is sitting, this will create chaos for the whole body. Imagine it. It is not possible for the whole body to attain a certain task unless it works together. Again, “*Can two walk together without agreeing on the direction?*” (Amos 3:3). Imagine running a marathon and the left foot says to the rest of the body, “I’m going to take a break here, you guys go on.” NOT! Sorry, it doesn’t work like that. It’s all or nothing. What one does, whether good or bad, affects the whole.

So, like a newborn babe teaching all its body parts to work together, the Church in most cities and boroughs and villages is learning to work together with all of its parts. If the church has been deeply together for 5 years—even if it has intimate relationships with Foundational Gifts [Eph. 2:20-22, 4:11, 1Cor. 12:28]—it will still likely look like a 5-year-old child in its knowledge and abilities. After 15 years of God’s Habitat of daily Life, it will look like a 15-year-old—not a 40 or 60-year-old, or (thank God) still a 5-year-old. Even a 15-year-old is just a pup! If we’ve been trying to make the connections and links (truly giving our lives away daily, confessing sins one to another, bearing one another’s burdens, being “mended together for works of service,” etc.) for five years, we’ll still be just five. We won’t likely perform together at the level of people who have been learning Jesus’ ways for 20 years. Only as we build deep, vulnerable and true relationships with others, and their Gifts, will we progress past babyhood, as a Body of Believers. But, regardless, IT TAKES TIME, even in the Best Environment, to grow up. (After 15 years in Jerusalem, they were still trying to work out some of the Basics! Though wonderful things had happened, Acts 15 shows there was still much more to do, even there. That local church was still just a teenager!) Babies will ALWAYS get oatmeal on their faces, and young groups of Believers will never be all that impressive when they’re still babes. And they’ll still have a lot of work to do as they go through their teens.

Although “growing up is hard to do,” OH, the Holy Result! Jesus’ Bride, “making Herself ready” for the return of Her Betrothed! No longer a pimple-faced, temperamental, self-serving, opinionated, “do

my own thing” little girl, but a beautiful, and radiant, and spotless angelic Bride! This is *not just theory* brothers and sisters, if the Bible is to be BELIEVED!!! The Real Deal—it’s our inheritance, and “HIS inheritance, in the Saints!!” A City set on a hill... *THAT CAN’T BE HIDDEN.*

*-g.l.*



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# Question It All

*Wednesday Morning, August 28, 2002*

## Where Will YOU Draw the Line in Your Allegiance to Jesus Christ?

Saints, I do realize that we are writing to Family in many nations, on every continent, as we say what follows. These thoughts, this commitment, trumpets forth from the many unified Believers that are a part of the local Lampstand here in Indianapolis, in the United States. In one sense, we view this brief note as a Spiritually bellicose “call to arms” for ourselves, and all who wear His Name. We know a great many of you, from conversations and visits, have the same heart.

Because of our daily intermingled Life in the Church here, “from the least to the greatest,” I know we speak as One in this matter that follows. There is no “committed nucleus” here, surrounded by “attenders” who we could know nothing about. There is only One Life, and nothing to “attend”—but to attend to one another and to Jesus 24 hours a day—so it’s not difficult to know and love one another “deeply from the heart.” Having said that, who among us would not leave our nation of birth and residence, in spite of personal cost? There is not a single Disciple of Jesus, Believer in Yahweh and His Son, who is a part of the Church here that would be unwilling to act decisively in this matter we are discussing: a willingness to move to another city or nation, should it be apparent that this would please Father.

Can you describe your country as we might describe ours? Though none of us chose to be born here, this is a description of our current home nation, the United States: shameless arrogance, drunken materialism, blatant deception, and international tyranny... There are perversions and vanities too numerous to mention. Addictions to food, to entertainment, to electronic devices, and to who-knows-what. Duped by the narcotic of the “World Wide Web”—the Internet and its twisted chat rooms and forums, its infinite variety and types of mental and perverted and materialistic pornography, and its amazing

possibilities for criminal thievery of God's Right to our time. On top of all this, this nation, for the most part, rages in its rampant apathy towards Jesus—hidden under a righteous façade of ritual and form and clever programs and personalities, with persecution of truly committed Followers of Jesus right around the corner, it would seem. When Jesus described His generation as “wicked and perverse”—His had nothing on ours.

Is there a time and circumstance where “flee that city” (or some other country) might actually become appropriate? COULD that happen? Is there a time where the situation in a city or country, or simply the lack of fruit in the Work of God in that place, would make a move to another city or country expedient? COULD God's Call, in some situations, warrant departing unregenerate physical family ties, comfort of culture or climate, stability of occupation, and even knowledge of the local language—for JESUS and His Work? You had better believe it. That is, if it's *True* Christianity we are a part of—the one in the Bible—rather than the omnipresent cultural and emotional placebo. Certainly there is Biblical precedent even for a willingness to be beheaded for His Cause and Life. “Fleeing” a location is small stuff, by comparison. Even Jesus Himself while still a child, when called to do so, fled a nation for a time.

We may never see the day, or know of a reason to do so. But are we *prepared* to be Christians, in the likeness of our Lord and His Followers who have gone before us? Are we willing to pay *any* price for that Pearl of Great Price, and the inseparable Calling on each of our lives? What is our perspective of what we are doing here on this planet?! Do we live in the location we find comfortable and convenient, and then try to “add” our “religion” (faddish attendance-based stuff—in a castle or in a living room—that ignores Holiness and Obedience and Daily Love of One Another) to THAT? Will we be satisfied with externals without true substance, so we can be comfortable and unchallenged? OR is our heart to leave all behind, if necessary, to go to another city or country or culture... when it is His Call, or Warning, to do so. Is that *possible*, for you? Let it be so. Be soft in His hands.

A few of the “examples” of leaving a place in response to ugliness, or unfruitfulness, in that location... just to ponder:

*Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whatever city will not receive you*

*nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for that city!” (Matthew 10:11-15).*

*“And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. And they were proclaiming the good news there” (Acts 14:5-7).*

*“Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:21-22).*

*“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes” (Matthew 24:15-18).*

*“And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another” (Matthew 10:22-23).*

*“Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God” (Revelation 12:6).*

*“Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod” (Matthew 2:13-15).*

What is your culture and country like, from GOD’S vantage point? Does it matter to you what your nation is made of? Mere church-goers can, of course, be blinded by “conforming to the patterns of the world” and not even see it clearly. What is your culture’s morality, its quality of life, its religious opportunities or cultural slavery? We’ve already described our situation, growing in intensity year by year, above—and it is abominable. What to do? We’re listening. Willing to die to stay in the middle of a metropolitan area, as we are; willing to leave all

for more fertile Ground of His choosing. It's His business—not the decision of any doulos.

What is it like where YOU live? In Australia, the recent national Census has registered 70,000 who claim their religion is “Jedi”—the imaginary “Star Wars” nonsense of George Lucas concoction. Some nations are drunk on immorality and witchcraft. Some countries take pride in the fact that they will listen to no one, and are arrogantly independent. Some cultures are steeped in materialism. Others are pummeled with fear and emptiness. The world is a preposterous mess.

In the midst of this, Father has made it clear that governments are to be honored—as all authority emanates from Him. We attempt to honor and obey, “as unto the Lord,” in as far as we are not told to compromise our Faith and Obedience to our one true Master. WE do not “pledge allegiance to the flag,” but are “foreigners” and “aliens” and “strangers” and “pilgrims” on this planet, in this realm.

We are “in the world,” but surely “not of it.” As our brother Paul said, by the Holy Spirit, *“From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away”* (1Cor. 7:29-31). THAT is “radical,” but is surely how our Master lived...and died...and ROSE, in Newness of Life. *“Then He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’ And another also said, ‘Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and say good-bye to my family.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God’”* (Lk. 9:59-62).

What am I saying? Only this: be sober-minded and realistic about the world around you, and then ponder what price you are willing to pay for His Sake, for His Cause. This world is *not* “neutral” as some who compromise their children and their own lives to the world would have you believe. And *yet*, do nothing and “move” *nowhere* out of ambition, or fear, or “movement seeking,” or some dramatized hallucination and power play of a “prophetic word,” without confirmation in Life. Never make a decision out of guilt, or wanderlust, or emotional energy. Maybe you need to risk your life for Him where you are, particularly

if you've risked nothing so far. However, we must always, if we wear His Name, be *willing* and *ready* to do absolutely *ANYTHING* for Him. That's the Deal. To this we were called. "We are not our own—we were bought for a Price."

*"Who are these, here, in Heaven?" he asked the Angel* (Revelation 7:13).

*"These are the ones who are here by the Blood of the Lamb, by the word of their Testimony, and who loved not their lives, even to the point of death"* (Revelation 12:11).