

FEAR OF FLYING

People often wonder why it's so hard for people to leave cult groups, even when they're made aware of very damning facts about the group. Even more mystifying is the loyalty people exhibit toward their group, long after they've left on their own or have been kicked out. People who have been horrendously treated by their former "friends" in the group still carry an immense amount of loyalty to them. They can become angry and spring to the defense of their former associates if someone correctly labels them as a cult group.

The Daily Herald of April 6, 1997, ran an *Associated Press* article about a former member of the Heaven's Gate cult whose own daughter was one of those who died in the mass suicide of that group last spring. In the article, Lorraine Wilbur (who claimed to be one of the founders of the group), defended not only her daughter's choice to take her life; but also cult leader Marshall Applewhite. He led the others to their death through his imaginative teachings that he claimed to have channeled from beings of a "higher level" than humans. The article stated that she "disliked the term cult," preferring to call the group "the fellowship." About Marshall Applewhite himself, she complained of media distortion and insisted that he was "a kind and wonderful man."

Although I am aware that the majority of people cannot understand her attitude, especially in light of the fact that she lost a daughter she loved, anyone familiar with the attitudes of former cult members who have not yet come to grips with their past will recognize this as a very typical reaction to criticism of their former group. Lorraine couldn't accept that she had so disastrously misjudged Applewhite, who was *not* a "kind and wonderful man" but a very dangerous religious con man who only *appeared to her* to be wonderful.

We human beings often are very confident we can judge character and truth by outward appearance, but time after time we prove we're not good at it at all. Lorraine's "loyalty" to Applewhite was based upon her trust in her own ability to judge people. This loyalty was likely strengthened by the sad truth that she was, indeed, partly responsible for her daughter's death. *If* she were to accept that her judgment had failed her, she would have to admit this fact of her own part in her daughter's suicide.

I'm sure many readers will remember the interviews of two former members of Heaven's Gate on CBS's *60 Minutes*. The interviewers seemed incredulous to learn that both men still believed that Applewhite was right and their former associates were, at that very moment, speeding through space aboard the spaceship that was hidden behind the Hale Bopp comet. One man's wife was "aboard the craft," in his view, and he regretted that he didn't go with her. Why would he persist in this belief when there was no rational reason for it? The fact is, of course, there's a very rational explanation for the loyalty he showed, as his responses in the interview made plain to me. The man told how he and his wife became involved with the group — how, after they had attended just one meeting, they came home and gave their daughter away so they could join up with Applewhite's separatist group.

Now, let me ask you something. How easy would it be to admit to yourself that you, a supposed rational human being, had *given your daughter away* and run off with a flimflam man who captivated you *in a matter of hours* with a fantastic yarn? It would be much easier to keep right on believing a spectacular falsehood than to face yourself with *that* awful truth. Human beings are driven by pride, and to recognize that one has been deceived

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to that extent can be a tremendous blow to one's ego. Considering how difficult it can be for human beings to admit having made a poor restaurant choice or to having taken a wrong turn on the highway, imagine the devastating embarrassment and shame of admitting to a judgment error of *this* magnitude.

The consequences of this former member's choice were so *horrendous* — his child abandoned by her parents and his wife now dead — that the Hale Bopp theory of Applewhite's just *had* to be true for this man to live with himself. The level of loyalty one exhibits toward the group one left is often directly tied to the magnitude of the sacrifices made, sacrifices that would appear very foolish, indeed, if they turned out to be *needless sacrifices* after all.

Such sacrifices are not always life and death as this man's were, but they still can be compelling reasons to refuse to accept the truth about whatever cult group with which one happens to be involved. For example, imagine you, yourself, had given up years of your life peddling "God's magazines" from door to door for a Brooklyn publishing concern who had claimed to be God's only channel on earth, as many Jehovah's Witnesses (JW's) have done? You had given up holidays and birthday celebrations. You had deprived your children not only of these things but normal childhood activities such as sports involvement or, perhaps, higher education. You had sacrificed your right to vote or hold public office and had even agreed not to *think independently* or to disagree with the leadership in any detail. And those had been the *small* sacrifices! The big sacrifices had involved giving up family members or good friends who disapproved of your involvement or who tried to talk you out of joining the group.

How easy would it be to admit you had been deceived? How foolish would you feel to accept it, no matter how much confirming evidence you were shown that the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society,* though seemingly mainstream, is a destructive cult whose policies have caused the death of *many* more people than Jonestown and Waco put together.

Fear of ridicule is another thing that keeps people bound to their former cult group. They fear that family members or "worldly" friends (friends outside the group) will crow "I-told-you-so" or laugh at their error. Consider this *Associated*

Press interview with the head of the Unarius Academy of Science, another UFO cult:

In a small town outside San Diego, 76-year old Charles Spiegel eagerly awaits the 1,000 aliens who will descend from 'Myton' around 2001 ... He shrugs off the skeptics who note that the Unarius space-ships failed to show up for their last appointment with Earth in 1976. We will have the last laugh, Spiegel said.

You see, Spiegel believes (and is correct) he and his compadres have been *laughed at*. Therefore, he desperately *wills* his religion to be true, against all evidence to the contrary, so he will be vindicated and get the last laugh! That's very sad but supremely human as well. Most of us would rather endure the rack for ten hours than to be laughed at for five seconds. How many JW's remain in that group despite the many false prophecies and despite seeing so many doctrinal flip-flops because they've been ridiculed and their wounded pride stubbornly refuses to give up the hope that they will have the last laugh after all? How many of us can handle humbling experiences without employing similar defensive strategies? Fear of ridicule and/or wounded pride are powerful blindfolds, indeed.

Misplaced loyalty is another trap. Writing in the October 1, 1984, *WATCHTOWER* (p. 22), Governing Body member Karl F. Klein told how his loyalty to the Bible Students was "tested" shortly after his baptism in 1918. (Jehovah's Witnesses were called Bible Students until 1931, when Joseph Rutherford changed the name to Jehovah's Witnesses.):

"World War I was raging," he says, and "the need for Christian neutrality was not fully appreciated by those then taking the lead."

The President of the Bible Students at the time was "Judge" Joseph Rutherford. The Bible Students of that era were permitted to accept being drafted into the Army for non-combatant military service, as they had done under their first President, Charles Taze Russell. Karl wrote that there were *some* Bible Students "who saw the issue clearly, took offense, and separated themselves from the Bible Students." These "Standfasters," as they called themselves, believed that non-combatant service was every bit as bad as regular military service.

They warned Karl that, if he stayed with the Bible Students, he would fall out of favor with God and lose out on being one of the “little flock” of anointed followers. (A very BAD thing, for those of you who are unaware of what that means.) Karl agreed with the Standfasters’ position but wrote that his mother “helped me to make the right decision.” So Karl stood loyally with the leadership of the Bible Students, even though he had become convicted that the Society’s teaching was *wrong* about this very crucial issue. He would not join with the Standfasters, whom he believed were *theologically and morally right!*

“I could not see myself leaving those from whom I had learned so much, and I therefore decided to take my chances with my Bible Student brothers. It really was a test of loyalty.”

Karl Klein gives us a fine example of *misplaced loyalty*. His loyalty was to his religious organization rather than to what he believed was *right*. His “brothers” had become his god.

Of course, in time the Society’s leadership came to believe that the Standfasters view was the correct one — though they certainly made no acknowledgment/apology to the now “apostate” Standfasters — and *threw out* of the organization anyone who did not comply with the new organizational prohibitions *against* alternative service!

[I must, with tongue in cheek, remark that the Standfasters who left the group in 1918 recently have been found to be wrong after all (at least for now). According to the May 1, 1996 *WATCHTOWER*, it is A-OK with God that His followers accept alternative service again. This means, I gather, that God was wrong to ever forbid it, although He certainly could change His mind again, making the Standfasters right again, and so it goes. As I have said before, it would be easier for JW’s to stay in “the truth” if it would just *stand still!*]

Fear of making a DEADLY mistake is another reason people stay put. One lady who called the helpline had been a JW for 25 years. She was very unhappy as a Witness, but she was scared to death to leave. You see, a JW is taught that everyone outside of that organization is going to be soon destroyed by God at Armageddon. It is this *fear* that draws many into the group in the first place, and it is this same *fear* that keeps many of them there, even when they want so badly to breathe freely. She had quit going to meetings, but she lived in fear, not only for herself, which she could tolerate, but the fear that she would be responsible for the destruction of her family who quit going when she did.

Well, we talked ... She was aware of the false prophecy concerning 1975 (because she had lived through it), but her fear of leaving was stronger than her desire to leave. I told her that the Society’s false prophecy concerning 1975 was only the latest in a long string of false prophecies dating back to 1914. In addition, I told her about the seven-foot pyramid at Russell’s gravesite, erected by the Society in 1919, just when they were supposedly being chosen by God as His only channel. I told her about the lies and cover-ups of the Watchtower Society — how they have blatantly misrepresented views of scholars to make it appear that those scholars back JW teachings, when nothing could be further from the truth.

I informed her that the Society used to forbid vaccinations and organ transplants on the same grounds on which they now

forbid blood transfusions but changed their minds. We talked about the lack of freedom within the organization and many other problems it had. I am very happy to say she listened to me and accepted documentation** from me proving what I said and courageously left that organization. She accepted Christ and started attending a church, yet it took a long time to completely eradicate the fear of Armageddon that had been drummed into her. Having realized she had been so terribly deceived by the Watchtower Society, she had a hard time trusting that she had made the correct judgment *this* time.

Another stumbling block is the terrible time human beings have accepting that highly intelligent people whom they know within the group can be deceived. Brother so and so is a rocket scientist, and *he* believes all of this stuff; therefore it *MUST* be true! People instinctively, but wrongly, assume only stupid or highly gullible people would wind up in a cult group, but *nothing could be further from the truth!!!* My JW friends are highly intelligent women. *Intelligence* just has nothing to do with *deception!*

Look how many brilliant people have bought into what Michael Denton*** calls a “fairy tale for adults:” evolution. How many evangelicals (including yours truly) believed Mike Warnke when he claimed to have been a former highly-placed Satanist back in the 1970’s, without ever checking out his story? How many

good people of normal or above-average intelligence believe Benny Hinn truly heals people or that the Holy Spirit has an interest in pinning people to the floor or throwing them into uncontrollable fits of laughter? The fact is even Christians (of *whatever* intelligence) are not immune to *deception*, which is why the Bible warns us time and time again *not to be deceived*. If we could not be deceived, why the warnings (Matthew 24:4; Colossians 2:4, 8)?

Similar is the “but they are such nice people” objection to the cult label. *Of course, they’re nice people; that’s why we’re trying so hard to liberate them from the mess they’re in!* Anyone, no matter how nice, no matter what age or level of education, can be deceived.

If you don’t believe *you* can be deceived, you’re deceiving yourself!

I had a dialog on-line with an agnostic, former JW, who was ridiculing Christians for their gullibility in believing fantastic conspiracy theories and such nonsensical rumors as Proctor and Gamble secretly putting a Satanic symbol on their products some years back. I had to agree with him, because he was right and I know Christians can be deceived just like others. It is part of the human condition. But I cautioned him that skeptics also can be deceived, which was hilariously confirmed when he informed us of a “Christian fundamentalist plot” against atheist Madalyn Murray O’Hair. I was *keenly interested* to learn who was involved in this secret conspiracy, but unfortunately our skeptic could provide us with no evidence or even the most rudimentary details of the dark plot.

Even though every human being can be deceived (and it is not easy for *anyone* to admit it and change course), the *consequences* of changing course for the cultist are often far more devastating on a personal level than for the average person. I may be

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...Better leave that baggage behind!



And Along Came a Spider . . .

A Very DIFFERENT Approach When Witnessing To The Jehovah's Witnesses

by Jay Hess

Witnessing to Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) seems to be a paradoxical ministry. Since the JWs claim to hold to the authority of God's Word, it would seem sufficient to present logically sound biblical arguments to persuade them to abandon their organization and choose historic, orthodox Christianity. But, as anyone who has tried the direct confrontational approach knows, this rarely accomplishes anything positive. Most tell me all their "scriptural bullets just bounce off."

After the initial encounter, when the JW realizes he is talking to someone who is biblically knowledgeable, no further dialogue is generally even possible. Since the JWs report all their activities, any encounters with open critics of the organization or Watchtower Society theology are recorded, and other JWs are alerted to avoid that home. So anyone employing the direct approach gets only one opportunity.

This carries over in a tragic way to the religiously-divided home. The non-JW spouse, wanting a relationship that is not impacted by the Watchtower Society, may try to present critical information to the JW spouse, only to find the relationship deteriorate ... often to divorce. My marriage is one of the few I know where one spouse is a committed and loyal JW (my wife is a full-time Watchtower "pioneer" missionary) and the other is an ex-JW evangelical Christian, and we're still together.

As a JW, I encountered countless Christians trying one of two popular witnessing methods. Either they tried to reason with me by using the Bible alone, or they tried to present *WATCHTOWER** articles showing false prophecies or other embarrassing mistakes. Neither of these approaches had any significant intellectual impact on my belief system or that of my loyal JW friends. Why not?

The answer lies in the mind-set of the loyal JW. Loyal JWs have been conditioned to doubt *their own thinking abilities* and, of course, the thinking of outsiders, long before they will doubt the teachings of the Watchtower Society directors in Brooklyn. The more loyal they are, the more they trust their directors as being the channel of God and the more they resist all persuasion. Even the most well-intentioned outsider is usually ignorant of this fact, hence the frustrating nature of the usual JW/Christian encounter.

Is there, then, any witnessing method that can be effective with the loyal JW, even in a religiously-divided home? I think there is. First, though, we need to examine how a loyal JW has been conditioned by the Watchtower Society to resist the typical witnessing methods.

The loyal JW receives mind-conditioning mostly through what are internally referred to as the *study* articles in the Watchtower Society's chief bi-weekly publication: *THE WATCHTOWER*. These are studied by the whole congregation at their weekly *WATCHTOWER*-study meeting. Since all JWs are expected to go door-to-door distributing *THE WATCHTOWER* magazine, they must prepare by reading the key articles, including the *study* articles. Weeks later, before the actual congregational study of the article is held, they must prepare by reading it, yet again, in detail. Then, during the congregational study, an appointed speaker reads the entire article again, out loud, with the audience answering prepared questions and repeating *THE WATCHTOWER*'s message one more time. All this repetitive study conditions and programs the loyal JW.

Consider these mind-conditioning statements in the following *study* articles:

The first study article from the January 15, 1983, *WATCHTOWER*, entitled "Exposing the Devil's Subtle Designs" said on page 22:

Avoid Independent Thinking

From the very outset of his rebellion Satan called into question God's way of doing things. **He promoted independent thinking.** 'You can decide for yourself what is good and bad,' Satan told Eve. 'You don't have to listen to God. He is not really telling you the truth.' (Genesis 3:1-5) To this day, it has been Satan's subtle design to infect God's people with this type of thinking. 2 Timothy 3:1, 13.

How is such independent thinking manifested? A common way is by questioning the counsel that is provided by God's visible organization.

In the same magazine, the second study article, "Armed for the Fight Against Wicked Spirits," said on page 27:

Fight Against Independent Thinking

As we study the Bible we learn that Jehovah has always guided his servants in an organized way. And just as in the first century there was only one true Christian organization, so today Jehovah is using only one organization. (Ephesians 4:4-5; Matthew 24:45-47) Yet there are some who point out that the organization has had to make adjustments before, and so they argue: This shows that we have to **make up our own mind** on what to believe. **This is independent thinking. Why is it so dangerous? Such thinking is an evidence of pride.** And the Bible says: "Pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."

(Proverbs 16:18) If we get to thinking that we know better than the organization, we should ask ourselves: Where did we learn Bible truth in the first place? Would we know the way of the truth if it had not been for guidance from the organization? Really, can we **get along without the direction of God's organization?** **No, we cannot!**

Soon after this, the March 1, 1983, issue of *THE WATCHTOWER* ("What Is Our Position Toward Opposers of the Truth?") commented on page 25 on the need for a religious body to direct the minds of others and whether God's Spirit could direct the minds of individuals apart from the organizational structure:

Consider some of the other twisted things' used to mislead God's people today. On occasion opposers will question the various teachings that Jehovah's people hold in common ... They may also question the need for an organization to **direct the minds of God's people**. Their view is, God's spirit can direct individuals without some central, organized body of men giving direction.

Consider also how the June 1, 1986, *WATCHTOWER*, page 21, compares the instinctive programming in animals and what loyal JW's are supposed to do in order to live:

He is the One bringing forth ... Innumerable varieties of animal life ... To exist, each of the countless kinds must live as ordered by Jehovah. By means of instinct, he programs into them his orders for survival ... the little blackpoll warbler in Alaska ... is programmed to migrate for survival. So it is with all the animals. They instinctively follow the orders planted in them by Jehovah their Creator. They have no choice ... It is different with people. We are created in the likeness of God, and we do have a choice. However, ... Through his Word the Bible, he gives us his orders for gaining life ... If we use our freedom to ignore them and take a road of our own independent choosing, we will die.

We must program ourselves for survival.

The loyal JW's who come to your door believe, then, that *God is pleased* when they program themselves to instinctively follow the Watchtower Society's teachings while, on the other hand, the *Devil is pleased* if they make up their own mind. They probably adopted this viewpoint before they officially joined the organization through baptism.

So, if you attempt to witness to the JW's by presenting lines of reasoning biblically or philosophically different from what they already believe, you are asking them to violate their conscience and reject a fundamental doctrine that initially attracted them to the Watchtower Society.

Given the above, one might assume the best method would be to present loyal JW's with copies of their own literature — that show either the failed predictions or embarrassing beliefs — to undermine the authority of the leadership in Brooklyn before proceeding to biblical issues. While this method is closer to the right solution it, too, has its problems. JW's are unaccustomed to receiving *WATCHTOWER* articles from even their closest JW friends. JW's normally receive their literature *only*

through authorized Watchtower Society channels. For a JW to receive Watchtower Society literature from anyone else, especially an outsider, would seem extremely odd or even outright alarming to him.

JW's believe the only possible motive for an outsider to give them a *WATCHTOWER* article would be to misuse it. Given the immense amount of trust that the average JW has toward "God's organization" and the immense distrust that has been engendered by the leadership toward outsiders, a JW's natural inclination would be to view any literature you may have as having been tampered with, or taken out of context at the very least. This explains the common experience of so many who tell me, "They won't even look at their own literature when I hand it to them!"

So what method could work with loyal JW's? If they will never consider a contradictory thought or look at their own literature, what alternative method can you employ to help them? The answer is to operate within their agenda (1 Corinthians 9: 19-23) and adopt the **attitude of a newspaper interviewer**. A newspaper reporter asks probing questions but doesn't try to persuade.

As long as the JW's follow the Watchtower Society's conditioning, you should not attempt to *teach* them anything. Do not present any of their literature unless they ask you for it first. It can be highly offensive to many JW's. Instead, you as the interviewer should encourage JW's to affirm some of *their own doctrines* that conflict with the Society's claim of authority. It is much easier for JW's to affirm doctrines they are supposed to believe than it is to persuade them of doctrines they have been taught to refute. If they will not hold to their own doctrines as taught in their own literature and at their own meetings, they certainly will not be persuaded of something different.

Outline of the Method

There are several doctrines fundamental to the JW belief system that, when examined, lead to a serious conflict with the Watchtower Society's claim of authority. Of these, I have chosen four that typically arise on the JW's' agenda as they go door-to-door and that mainstream Christians also believe. These doctrines deal with God's standards of righteousness and what conduct He approves or disapproves of. The stronger the loyal JW's hold to any one of these doctrines, the more it will lead them to doubt the Watchtower Society's authority after examining the evidence you present to them.

In the end, they are faced with the choice of either affirming fundamental doctrines that are repeated at meetings and in their literature *or* choosing to remain a member by holding to the authority of their directors, thereby *denying* the fundamental doctrines they claim to cherish. They cannot choose both. If they see the dichotomy, and openly choose to uphold God's standards of righteousness, the church will expel them, even if they heartily wish to remain a member.

Once exposed to this internal conflict, JW's cannot ignore the issue, for these issues are a very important part of the JW agenda. There will be reminders of the contradictions every time they present the JW message at a door or read it in their literature. One fellow researcher called this a "land-mine" just waiting to go off, again and again, within the mind of the individual JW.

The interviewer starts the entire process by asking the JW's, ***Do you believe God's standards of righteousness change?*** Then as each of the four doctrines arise on the JW's' agenda, the interviewer again asks for affirmation that *God's standards do not* *(Continued on Page 9)*



An Evening With Bill Gothard

by L. L. (Don) Veinot, Ron Henzel and Marty Butz

On December 4, 1997, three members of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. (Ron Henzel, Marty Butz, and Don Veinot) met with seminar minister Bill Gothard at his offices of the Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP) in Oak Brook, IL. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Gothard's concerns about an article entitled "Bill Gothard's Evangelical Talmud" which had appeared in the September/October 1997 issue of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.'s *Journal* and also to discuss Gothard's concerns about a radio broadcast that Veinot was conducting in Chicago about Gothard and IBLP.

Henzel, Butz, and Veinot were accompanied by Rev. Fred Greening, who is a member of the Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Advisory Board and is also Veinot's pastor. Gothard was accompanied by three members of his staff: John Stephens, George Mattix, and Nathan O'Brien.

Before the Meeting

Prior to that meeting, we (Veinot and Gothard) had talked by phone and corresponded by letter. I (Don) was concerned about the spirit of the meeting because Gothard felt he had been unfairly treated and that we had communicated misinformation in our article about him. In fact, after his review of the first article, he wrote me (Don) and stated that our research was inaccurate.

He particularly focused upon a statement in the article that read, "When Dr. Allen attempted to arrange a meeting with Gothard through his (Dr. Allen's) seminary president, Dr. Earl Radmacher, in order to discuss these problems, Gothard told Radmacher that 'he had no interest in meeting with me [Allen] to discuss these matters.'"¹ (Dr. Allen, a professor at Western Baptist Seminary in Portland, OR, had attempted to dialogue with Gothard since 1973.)

Gothard disputed the statement in the article and wrote, "The facts are that I did meet with Dr. Allen and wrote a detailed response to each of his concerns and then asked for a further meeting with him."²

This left us with a big problem as you can imagine. According to Mr. Gothard, our research was incorrect and Dr. Allen's statement was no longer true, in which case we would need to make a public apology to Mr. Gothard for publishing it. Ron Henzel immediately contacted Dr. Allen and faxed him a copy of Gothard's letter for clarification. Ron was told by Dr. Allen, in no uncertain terms, that he (Dr. Allen) had never met with Bill Gothard in his life even though he (Dr. Allen) had attempted to arrange such a meeting for 24 years! Dr. Allen wrote a seven-page open letter to Gothard recounting the history of his failed attempts to meet with him. On page five of his open letter, Dr. Allen responded to Gothard's ac-

count of the meeting that Gothard claimed took place between the two of them and wrote, "These are not 'the facts.' These are outright lies. This is not the result of a foggy memory, a cluttered schedule, a lapse of thought. These are simply outrageous lies. How may there be a 'further meeting' between us *when there never has been one meeting?*"³ (Italics in the original.)

In this same letter, Dr. Allen stated that he wanted from Gothard, "... a brief, no-excuses, no-defenses, abject apology for your blatant, outrageous lies about me."⁴ To date, this apology has not been offered. Instead, Gothard wrote a revised paragraph which read, "The facts are that I did write a detailed response to Dr. Allen's concerns. I addressed my response to Dr. Radmacher because I was told that he requested that the article be written and because he had the same concerns. I then asked Dr. Radmacher if we could discuss my response with him."⁵ It is true that Gothard wrote a response to Dr. Allen's concerns, although it took 17 years of coaxing on the part of Dr. Allen and Dr. Radmacher to bring that about. Both Dr. Radmacher and Dr. Allen deny that Gothard requested a meeting to discuss the issues with him.

Planning the Meeting

Gothard took the initiative to set up the meeting with us. We had notified him several weeks in advance that we would tape record the meeting and leave copies with him, so as to minimize the possibility of misquotation. At the last minute, Gothard wrote to insist that we not record the meeting. In his letter he also wrote, "Don, I need to explain to you that I have scheduled this meeting against the council of a very well-respected Christian leader who knows you better than I do. He said, 'You will be sorry if you have a meeting with Don Veinot, because Don Veinot does not play by the rules.' I am beginning to see what he means."⁶

Gothard's willingness to repeat unsubstantiated hearsay from an unnamed source concerns us since Bill Gothard has a great deal of teaching devoted to the subject of gossip. For example, on page 16 of his *Rediscovering* book he writes: "If a Christian leader gives a bad report about any other brother without having gone to him first in a spirit of love, he becomes a whisperer and damages the wider work of Christ which He prayed for in John 17." We are not saying that we necessarily agree with his reasoning, but there does seem to be an inconsistency here between his mandates for others and his own actions in this case.

Our Board of Directors and our Board of Advisors were

desirous that nothing should prevent our meeting with Mr. Gothard, so we agreed to honor Bill's request and meet without tape recording the meeting. We were not quite sure what to expect when we arrived.

Let the Meeting Begin!

The meeting began promptly at the appointed time of 8:15 p.m., and Pastor Fred Greening opened in prayer. Following introductions, the meeting convened, and Bill Gothard gave introductory remarks to help us get a feel for IBLP from his perspective. Ron had prepared a series of questions to ask in order to establish the basic facts concerning Drs. Allen and Radmacher.

As the evening progressed, opportunities arose to discuss such issues as legalism, the role of the law in the Christian life, birth control, etc. At one point, the meeting broke up into two genial ad hoc discussions on different topics.

Overall, we were pleased at the peaceful tone of the evening. We found Bill and the other three representatives of IBLP to be cordial and genuinely nice men. There were times when we felt that constructive communication was taking place. After Nathan O'Brien closed the meeting in prayer at about 11:30 p.m., it ended on a cheerful note with everyone expressing some positive affirmations as a result of our time together.

Gothard seemed concerned that we did not fully understand his teachings and really couldn't unless we attend the Basic Seminar. He also said that it had been changed since I (Don) attended in the 1970s. At this point, Gothard expressed some degree of optimism that the research of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. would actually clarify what Bill Gothard and the IBLP really do teach and alleviate some misconceptions about those teachings. Indeed, at the end of our meeting, Gothard noted that I (Don) have obviously surrounded myself "with good men." He felt that any honest research would confirm the truth of his teachings and serve to refute what Gothard considers to be false conceptions about those teachings.

To this end, Gothard committed to sending us the tapes of the seminar which we agreed to review in the interest of truth and fairness. If we find that we have misrepresented Gothard's teachings, we will gladly print a retraction to that effect. A few days later, John Stephens, under Gothard's direction, sent transcripts in lieu of actual tapes but offered to send the tapes if we still wanted them. While we appreciate the transcripts, we will request the tapes that were originally offered.

In our meeting, we affirmed that there are some very good things emphasized in Bill Gothard's ministry:

1. A biblical approach (whether we agree that Gothard's views are legitimately biblically justified is another matter).
2. A strong moral emphasis and striving for high moral ideals, which takes sin seriously.
3. Trying to appropriate the Bible for practical guidance for life.

We would not deny that many have been blessed in the course of following Gothard's ministry.

We would not deny that Gothard properly applies some texts of Scripture and that such teachings have been a blessing to others.

Should Christians Criticize Christians?

We have found, through our live radio broadcast experience, that the programs that prompted the most angry audience phone calls were programs dealing with false teachers/teachings within

the Church. Most people in the Christian community agree that it is right and necessary to expose the false teachers/teachings of Pagans, Jehovah's Witnesses, liberals, Mormons, etc. But sadly, too large a number feel that we should not critically evaluate the doctrines and practices of teachers *within the Church*. We do not agree.

Indeed, the doctrines taught by Christian teachers *must* be evaluated, or we are no different than the cults who claim that their leaders are above correction. Such examples would be: Benny Hinn or other word/faith teachers; charismatic excess, such as the Holy Laughter Movement/Revival; evangelicals who make common cause for political reasons with Rev. Moon or Minister Louis Farrakhan; "deliverance" ministries; shepherding movements and churches, etc. Christian desire for "unity" offers no excuse for silence in these matters. Sometimes, doctrine was vigorously and passionately debated even in the early church guided by the original Apostles (Acts 15). Because of the ministry that we are in, we are used to being criticized for being critical, so we are unlikely to be swayed by such criticism. And, we might add, that if Christians criticize us for criticizing Christians, they only make our case for us.

In our scrutiny of Bill Gothard's ministry and in the practice of evaluating and critiquing some of his teachings, we do not presume to judge his motives or his heart. In fact, we believe that he sincerely regards his prescriptions for Christian living as conforming to biblical truth.

Our concern is that Gothard, though sincere, interprets some biblical texts in illegitimate ways, resulting in a possibly damaging misunderstanding of those Scriptures among his followers. We are well aware that false teachings can result in unfruitful or negative effects in the lives of those who accept them, which compels us to pursue this issue. It is our conviction that God can bless His children even when they do cling to false interpretations of Scripture, although such error can frustrate God's work in the believer.

We are certain that we, ourselves, and everyone in the Church at large, are imperfect in one way or another and have an imperfect understanding of the Scriptures. Inspired understanding of the Scriptures is a claim we disavow for ourselves as well as for others. Having said that, however, we believe that through humility, biblical analysis, and the community of other Christ followers, a consensus can be reached about what God does teach us through the Scriptures and how these teachings apply to our lives today.

We believe that all who want to follow Christ and the Scriptures will welcome dialogue and evaluation of *any* individual's biblical interpretation, since the Scripture tells those who wish to glorify Christ and obey Him to "... examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good" (1Thessalonians 5:21, NASB). (Italics ours.)

Finally, the Bereans were considered as having "noble character" (Acts 17:10-15) because they searched the Scriptures to see if what the *Apostle Paul* told them was true. Nobility is commendable; gullibility is not.

Are You Being Fair?

Some have reminded us to be fair. That is something we very much desire to do. In fact, one individual wrote, "... I hope you will apply no finer filter on Gothard than you would on any other Christian leaders (e.g., Colson, McCartney, Dobson, MacArthur, Kennedy, etc.)."

We couldn't agree more wholeheartedly. In fact, we especially like the "filter" illustration because it implies the attempt to re-

(Continued on Page 11)

"Flying" (Continued from Page 3)

embarrassed to admit I have been fooled, but I won't be shunned as a result. But personal rejection and loss of friends and family members are not unusual prices to pay for making the break from a cult group. Almost all of the cults shun former members and consider them not merely misguided but *evil*. Most people, I think, cannot imagine the courage it takes to do the right thing in the face of this type of rejection. I myself don't relish being rejected by *strangers*, much less being thought of as the worst kind of evil person by someone I love, and treated accordingly. Many disillusioned cultists just try to drop out of the group quietly to avoid the personal loss and, for some, that works ... at least for a time. Yet, eventually, most have to decide: Is it more important to tell the truth to those they love within the group and risk losing them or watch their loved ones continue on in their deception?

Former cultists, once out, have still another obstacle to overcome. They have been heavily indoctrinated to believe that all of Christendom was "paganized" in some early century, and no truth can be found in any church. Thus poisoned, they often become spiritually empty "loners," no longer able to believe what they once did but *sure* that there is nowhere else to go.

They also resist the true gospel of the grace of God because of the works mentality that has been drilled into them so effectively. The difference between cult theology and true Christian theology is the difference between being a slave or being a son, between being owned or being loved. The slave's well-being is tied to his performance, the son's to his unalterable position in his father's heart. In Romans 8:15, Paul speaks of being released from the fearful insecurity of the slave as one receives the spirit of sonship. This is a very difficult concept for former cult members to grasp. They're used to filling out time cards, attending meetings, and sporting professional "Christian" attire and haircuts. They're "organization" men and women, bound by rules and by-laws, and they know nothing of the freedom that we are called to in Christ (Galatians 5:1). Free grace is, to them, anathema; indeed, they have been taught to ridicule the notion. Too easy, they scoff.

I have said this before, but it bears repeating: We did nothing to merit our earthly birth, and we needn't merit or deserve our spiritual birth. We've been born into "the Adam family:" born in sin and under a curse; but we have been given the option, through Christ's ransom, to switch sides and be born again into Christ (Romans 5:12-19). It's a free gift with no strings attached, and we receive it by faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). This is, indeed, wonderful news, which is why it's called the "gospel" which

Speaking

- February 1:** 9:15a.m., "*Designer Faith*"
Our Savior Lutheran Church,
1244 W. Army Trail Rd.,
Carol Stream, IL 60188 630/830-4833
- February 8:** 9:15a.m., "*Is The Bible Reliable*"
Our Savior Lutheran Church, Carol Stream, IL
- February 15:** 9:15a.m., "*Cults and the Resurrection*"
Our Savior Lutheran Church, Carol Stream, IL
- February 22:** 9:15a.m., "*Is Jesus Really God?*"
Our Savior Lutheran Church, Carol Stream, IL
- February 25:** 7:00 p.m., "*Overview of Cults*"
Windy City Church, 6131 N. Newark,
Chicago, IL 773/631-9222

means "good news." Peter said it this way:

"... In [God's] great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Peter 1:3-5, New International Version).

Moreover, these gifts of grace and sonship are not limited to an elite few but are open to *all*. Jesus, Himself, said in John 3:16 (NIV) "... **whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.**" If you're a "whoever," you're included in the invitation, but if you are not born again, you will not see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

To believe is to trust in, to have faith in; but sadly, distrust erects the final and, perhaps, most daunting barrier for the former cult member. Having been deceived once, they can be mighty fearful of ever trusting again. You may be able to show them that the Bible says that acceptance by God and adoption into His family is based solely upon faith, but "faith" itself is something they have come to fear. Beware of men (or women!) bearing Bibles, their heart warns. If anyone reading this is in that position right now, I want you to know that fearlessness is *not* a requirement for salvation. You can be scared and have faith at the same time. You may be terrified of flying in an airplane, but if you have enough faith to get aboard, that's *enough* faith! You needn't hold off boarding until you are convinced that you're *fearless*. The plane will fly whether you are scared or not!

The faith necessary for salvation is just like that. You don't need to be fearless or even doubtless. God knows your weaknesses. He is fully aware of what you've been through. He asks you to put your faith and trust in His Son. Just call upon Jesus. The Bible says you will not be disappointed (Romans 10:9-13). Your knees may be knocking or your heart pounding, but get on that plane. *He* will fly you safely home. **W**

Love to all,

Truly He taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace ... Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother, and in His name all oppression shall cease.

— **O Holy Night** —

*a.k.a. Jehovah's Witnesses

**Documentation that comes, oddly enough, from the Watchtower Society's own, self-condemning magazines and books!

***Michael Denton, author of *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*.

Upcoming Events

March 8: 7:00 p.m., "*Designer Faith*"
Cicero Bible Church, 2230 S. Laramie,
Cicero, IL 708/652-4070

Conventions and Conferences

April 3 & 4: *Chicago Sunday School & Church Ministries Convention*
Forest View Educational Center,
Arlington Heights, IL

April 23-25: *St. Louis Conference on Biblical Discernment*
(See Ad on Page 10)

July 1-5: *Cornerstone Festival*
Bushnell, IL
JPSA, 773/561-2450

“Witnessing” (Continued from Page 5)

change. The JW’s will at this point respond in the negative. After the JW’s answer the question, the interviewer asks for further assurance by having the JW’s comment on two real examples, which I provide, illustrating the violation of each of the four doctrines. (The first situation I cite is found in the Bible. The second is an actual, twentieth-century event.) After the biblical event is discussed, the JW’s are again asked, **Do you believe God’s standards of righteousness change?**

Then the twentieth-century example is carefully introduced. The event is described in general, without details and without identifying the specific persons who violated God’s standards. Focus only on the apparent implication that God’s standards of righteousness have changed. The JW will become curious and ask to see the documentation. I provide the documents in my packet of witnessing materials: one two-sided document for each of the four issues.

To facilitate the discussions with the JW’s and to stay within their agenda, the interviewer agrees to study with them in their book, *Knowledge That Leads To Everlasting Life* (1995). This is a key publication of the Watchtower Society as it is used for discipling all new converts. The interviewer encourages the JW’s to specifically explain chapter 5 (entitled “Whose Worship Does God Accept?”). By going over this material, the stage is set to ask them whether God’s standards change and whether He accepts the worship of those who seek messages from demons, worship angels, restrict united public worship, or admire the political wild beast of Revelation. But, as you examine these four issues, it is essential that you *not* focus on the mistakes of men. Focus on the righteousness of God and only ask about issues clearly connected to the Watchtower Society’s own question of “Whose worship does God accept?”

At each appropriate paragraph (numbered 13 through 16), ask about the principles regarding God’s standards of righteousness and then the two events as mentioned in the following examples. The first question deals with a biblical event. The second question deals with a more modern event, and it should be introduced this way: **I read an article that described ...** (Give a summary of the event without specifically identifying the Watchtower Society directors.)

The Four Issues, Each With Two Real Situations:

- 1) God’s standards on seeking messages and guidance from demons (paragraph 13).
 - A. 1 Samuel 28:7-19 (King Saul and the spirit-medium.)
 - B. Twentieth-century pastor advocated a book allegedly dictated by a demon.
Documentation: July 30, 1924, *The Golden Age*, p.702; December 3, 1924, *The Golden Age*, p.150, 151; *Angels and Women*.
These documents show how Pastor Russell, the founder of the Watchtower Society, discovered a book he believed was dictated by a demon to a spirit-medium. He actually believed that some demons could be trusted to tell the truth, so he encouraged a friend to go into business distributing the book to outsiders through the membership as Christmas gifts. Because Russell died in 1916, his successor Joseph Rutherford started to distribute the book in 1924.
- 2) God’s standards on idolatry and worshipping angels (paragraph 14).
 - A. Revelation 19:10 (Apostle John worships an angel.)

- B. Twentieth-century denomination worshiped Michael the archangel the same as they worshiped God. Their charter still references worshipping Michael.

Documentation: April 15, 1995, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.18; Theocratic Ministry School Schedule for 1990, p.4 for March 19 and April 16; *1945 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, title page and p.32; *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1985, 1989), p.202; September 1 and 15, 1893, *Zion’s Watch Tower*, pp.1580, 1581 in the reprints (pp.280-284 in the original magazine); August 15, 1941, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.252; *Make Sure Of All Things* (1953), p.85.

These documents show that the Watchtower Society advocated worshipping Jesus, also known as Michael the archangel, equally to worshipping God, from 1893 until 1953. The Watchtower Society’s charter still says their purpose is, among many other things, to “worship Jesus.”

- 3) God’s standards on restricting united public worship (paragraph 15).
 - A. Daniel 6:7, 10, 11, 16 (Authorities restrict public prayer for 30 days.)
 - B. Twentieth-century religious authorities restricted public prayer for 46 years until 1989.
Documentation: August 15, 1970, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.493, paragraph 16; June 15, 1990, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.28; October 15, 1979, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.20, paragraphs 7 and 8; *1995 Yearbook*, pp.212, 213, 232, 233.
These show the Watchtower Society directed all JW’s in Mexico to stop all public appearance of being religious including public prayer and songs of praise for 46 years until 1989, yet they *claim* to be faithful like Daniel who refused to obey the 30-day prohibition against public prayer.
- 4) God’s standards on admiring the political wild beast described in the book of Revelation (paragraph 16).
 - A. Revelation 13:3; 17:8 (Admirers of the wild beast and image.)
 - B. Twentieth-century religious authorities admired a political organization they later claimed was part of the wild beast’s image.
Documentation: August 1, 1967, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.454; June 1, 1994, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.12, paragraph 17, September 15, 1971, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.560, paragraph 8, October 1, 1983, *THE WATCHTOWER*, pp.15, 16, paragraph 9, February 15, 1919, *THE WATCHTOWER*, p.51.
These documents show that the Watchtower Society *admired* the League of Nations, which they now say was part of the image of the wild beast. They later claimed they did not admire the League like other religions, and that the names of any who *did* admire the League of Nations “are not found written upon ‘the scroll of life.’”
For the discussion of each of the eight events, biblical and modern, these three questions are asked:
 - 1) Did God’s standards change?
 - 2) Did God approve of the persons mentioned?
 - 3) Did God accept their worship as being part of true worship?

(Continued on Next Page)

Help Me Understand

As the second question in each category is being discussed, their material can be introduced with the question: ***I got the impression from it that your church felt God's standards had changed and He now approved of those involved. I tried my best to understand what your church said in the article, but it still seems to say God's standards have changed. Do you think I misunderstood the article?*** This will likely cause the JW's to be curious about the article and offer to help you understand its meaning. Mention you read about this in a photocopy of what appeared to be their literature. Wait until they ask to see the photocopy before showing it to them.

Your discussion might proceed as follows:

I received this article from somewhere. (Hand them the two-sided photocopy.) ***It appears as if this originally came from your church publications. If you would like, I could check my records to try to find out who actually photocopied this. Would that help? Would you like me to find out who photocopied this so you could contact them to learn more about this story?*** (They will likely say 'No' and not later ask where the copies came from.)

Let them examine the photocopy and then say:

If I ever wanted to become a member in your church would I be required to believe these persons were approved by God? I ask this because I want to be careful not to violate Isaiah 5:20 which warns about saying bad things are good. "Woe to those who are saying that good is bad and bad is good, those who are putting darkness for light and light for darkness, those who are putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (NWT) If I conclude from reading your Knowledge book in chapter 5 that those who did these things could not have been tried and found faithful and, therefore, were not kept in an approved state and did not go to heaven, would my worship be acceptable to God?

Their answer to this will tell you if the JW's you are speaking to are firm for God's unchanging standards of righteousness as described in their own literature. Once the JW's have been made aware of the actions of their leaders, they find themselves upon the horns of a terrible personal dilemma. They *know* that God's standards do not change, yet, they will *want* to make an exception for their own leaders.

No exception can be honestly made, and a person of integrity will realize that. They've come to a fork in the road, and they must choose which way to go. They may choose to be loyal to God and thus deny the Watchtower's fundamental doctrine of the "slave who has been faithful and discreet since 1919." This would result in the loss of church membership. The only other choice is to put the standards of men ahead of God so as to keep their membership. Thus, they essentially would be *accusing God* of changing His standards in order to approve the deeds performed by the Watchtower Society's directors.

Because the conversation dwells only on what *God thinks* rather than the beliefs of JW's years ago, there is no conflict between the interviewer and the JW. The only conflict is in the mind of the JW as he ponders the consequences of this information. Some JW's will reluctantly respond that God's standards in the four areas do not change, thus implicating their leadership in spiritism, false worship, idolatry, and fear of man. But those wishing to keep their membership will feel pressured to say God nevertheless *did* approve of the directors, even for entrance into heaven. These will water down God's standards of righteousness and, in

essence, accuse God of saying what was once bad is now good and what was once good is now bad.

As sad as this fact may be, anyone who asserts God approves of sin would not be happy in the true Christian community. This is where God's word is the final, unchanging authority and God's righteous standards on spiritism and idolatry do not change. There is no point in continuing to talk with these JW's about other issues. If they will not believe *their own literature* when it says God rejects all forms of spiritism and idolatry, then there is very little chance they will be convinced of any doctrine not taught in their literature. Wish them a "good day" and invite them to return if they ever decide God never approves of spiritism or idolatry (read Galatians 5:20 and context). **W**

*The bi-weekly publication of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, a.k.a. Jehovah's Witnesses

The Journal would like to thank Jay Hess for untangling this issue's "Spider's Web." Jay was a "baptized and dedicated" Jehovah's Witness for over 23 years. Wishing to defend his faith, he self-published newsletters and, eventually, a book entitled, *Jehovah's Witnesses are not False Prophets*. Near the end of his stay in the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (the legal corporation representing Jehovah's Witnesses), he was invited by their Writing Department to contribute articles for publication in their semi-monthly magazine, *THE WATCHTOWER*. In 1991 and 1992, two Special Judicial Committees appointed by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses found Hess guilty of "causing divisions." This was due to his advocating the worship of Jesus, and they expelled him from the group. He is still married to a full-time missionary for the Watchtower and has three children. He teaches adult Sunday School, including apologetics, at Providence Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC and coordinates their cult-outreach ministry. Hess works as a computer programmer and has a Master's Degree in Applied Mathematics.

Jay Hess can be reached on the Internet at jayhess@pagesz.net or through his web-site at www.pagesz.net/~jayhess (soon to present this method). You can contact him by mail at P.O. Box 14554, Durham, NC 27709, or by phone at (919) 954-9283. His toll-free number, 1-800-366-7608, is meant for hardship situations.

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"Gothard" (Continued from Page 7)

move impurities. We agree that great caution should be urged in trying to "purify" someone else's biblical interpretation. As we have already pointed out, there are hermeneutical impurities to be found in every denomination, group, and even individuals (including ourselves!), and it will only cause unnecessary division to go on a crusade against all of them. We readily affirm that we have our differences with Colson, McCartney, Dobson, MacArthur, Kennedy, and so on. Some are more substantial than others — and yet, so far we have not been compelled to write articles about or have meetings with them.

On the other hand, based on our observations, there are a couple of things that set Gothard apart from all these other teachers whom we have just named.

1. Gothard holds to a whole string of rather unique and aberrational teachings, not just one or two. In fact, the more we research his teachings, the more we get the impression that his view of the Law is closer to Seventh-Day Adventism than it is to evangelicalism. At the end of our meeting on December 4, Gothard spent a few minutes trying to persuade Ron Henzel that if he had a son, he should circumcise him — not for salvation, of course, but because it is in the Law nevertheless. The medical reasons he cited simply served as an apologetic for his view of the Law. In other words, the medical evidence was simply used to verify that when God would tell [supposedly] Ron to circumcise his future son, He had good reasons.

In Intertestamental Judaism, one strain of teaching held that during the Messianic Age, the Law still would be strictly applied, but God's rationale for deleting some of the more inscrutable commands would be explained. Of course, we know that Paul did not argue that Christians should practice Mosaic circumcision with the proper understanding; he said Christians should not practice it at all (Galatians 5:2-12)! Gothard's view sounds more like one of the Intertestamental Jewish views than it does the Apostle Paul's. It also more closely resembles Seventh-Day Adventism with Gothard's habitual resorting to Levitical ceremonial cleanliness laws regarding abstaining from sexual relations for so many days after the birth of a child, and even the mistaken dietary requirement of keeping milk and meat separate [based on an Intertestamental misinterpretation of "You shall not boil a kid (young goat) in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19)]! To our knowledge, neither Colson, McCartney, Dobson nor any of the others come anywhere close to Gothard on these issues.

2. Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., Personal Freedom Outreach, and others have received many reports of people basing their entire lives around Gothard's teachings to an extent that we have never encountered with Colson, McCartney, Dobson, et. al. We are not saying that those people do not also have their fanatical fans. We are saying that those people, to our knowledge, do not have such an organized and devoted following for themselves as Gothard has for himself.

If what we are saying here is true, then Gothard is glaringly different from other popular Christian teachers. And if this is the case, then it should be true that we do not need a finer filter in order to catch Gothard's errors. A less fine filter should catch them equally as well. A finer filter would only be necessary to catch tiny little errors that are probably not even worth discussing. That would be nit-picking in the extreme. In our view, so far we have not been dealing with tiny little errors that can be ignored. Thus, the hermeneutical roots of those errors should also be rather easy to catch.

Having said all of this, we must confess that it has still been a challenge to trace Gothard's exegetical errors back to their hermeneutical causes. It would appear that the explanation to just about

all of them is found on page 3 of his Basic Seminar Textbook (1981 edition), *Principles for Applying Scripture*. There he seems to make "meditation" a hermeneutical principle in such a way that, for all practical purposes, he elevates it to a source of extra-Biblical revelation. Even if he doesn't go all the way to a concept of extra-Biblical revelation with that practice, it still undermines the doctrine of perspicuity of Scripture. If I must meditate on large sections of Scripture in order to begin to see the underlying principles of the text, or as he also says, "... go far deeper than the facts of the text" to discover its application, then the entire doctrine of Scripture as a clear, self-interpreting revelation begins to fall apart.

We must hasten to say that we are firm believers in meditation, but NOT as a hermeneutical principle — i.e., not as a means of arriving at the meaning of a text. It is true that the Holy Spirit can enlighten our minds to better appreciate the meaning of a text. We sometimes refer to this "understanding" in a sense that is different from cognitive apprehension, which is the normal sense in which we speak of understanding a text.

Sometimes, the Holy Spirit may even help our minds to uncover the actual literal meaning of the text when we are having problems interpreting it. But, that meaning will never be any different than that which could be discerned from a literal, historical-grammatical hermeneutical approach. Yet, we feel that Gothard has used his "meditation" principle to do exactly that; to bypass standard Protestant hermeneutics, with the result that he gets meanings out of the Bible that God never put "in" it!

Of course, we are all guilty of this from time to time. We are taking that into account. The concern that we and others have is that, with Gothard, it happens so frequently and seems to have gotten much worse in recent years. It has extended into medical advice (Cabbage Patch dolls interfering with the birth of children), adoption (tracing family lineage to bind ancestral demons), and other mystical elements (hedge of thorns, umbrella of authority/protection, sins of the fathers, emanating light, the effects of troll dolls).

We will make every effort to be fair, and we appreciate Gothard's willingness to meet with us. We appreciate Gothard's quest for truth and share his enthusiasm that our research will get to the bottom of what he really teaches. Ultimately, such research may not be without criticism of Gothard's teachings.

Nonetheless, we all share the belief, along with Gothard, that the truth of what the Bible teaches, properly understood, is of benefit to us all. In that regard, we are all on the same page. Ron, Marty, and I are willing to have our research tested by Scripture. We look forward to future meetings for clarifications as we interact with the teachings of Bill Gothard and the Institute in Basic Life Principles. W

Don Veinot, Ron Henzel, and Marty Butz

1.) "Bill Gothard's Evangelical Talmud, Part-1," Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal, September/October 1997, Volume 3, No. 4, p. 9. 2.) Letter to Don Veinot from Bill Gothard, dated October 25, 1997. 3.) There You Go Again: Bill Gothard and "The Facts," An Open Letter to Bill Gothard, by Ronald B. Allen, Th.D; November 7, 1997. 4.) Ibid., pp. 6,7. 5.) Letter from Bill Gothard to Dr. Ronald B. Allen, dated November 29, 1997. 6.) Letter from Bill Gothard to Don Veinot, dated November 28, 1997.

A Note From The Editors

No, you did not miss the January/February '98 issue of the Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal. For several reasons, we did not produce one. We will make every effort to prevent this from happening in the future.

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal

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"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"
 - Galatians 4:16 -

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. works with several other ministries that operate help lines. The information on these lines is changed on a weekly basis. Individuals can call anonymously and simply listen, or they can request additional information. If they desire to speak to someone immediately, they are referred to our LIVE line.

The phone numbers for the pre-recorded lines are:

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 ☎(312) 774-8187
 ☎(502) 927-9374
 ☎(815) 498-2114

For Mormons:
 ☎(630) 736-8365

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